

Risk Reduction Tips

Victims of rape are not to blame for the violation. The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (www.rainn.org) provides strategies that may help to reduce an individual's risk of sexual assault or harassment. An individual should always:

- Maintain awareness regarding surroundings and others that are in the vicinity at all times. A person should scan the environment and consider which nearby individuals could be called upon to assist if a situation were to arise.
- Try to avoid isolated areas, as there are fewer opportunities to seek help.
- Walk with purpose and the outward appearance of confidence, even when lost.
- Trust personal intuition when a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Try to walk unencumbered to appear less vulnerable (e.g., keep hands free if possible).
- Carry a fully charged cell phone at all times.
- Refrain from being in an isolated location with an unknown individual.
- Remove music headphones or earbuds (from at least one ear) and remain conscious of surroundings at all times.
- Attend social gatherings in a group of trusted friends; arrive together, check in with each other, and leave together.
- Contact law enforcement immediately if something suspicious occurs (i.e., call 911).
- Never leave a drink unattended while talking, dancing, using the restroom, or making a phone call. In the event that this happens, get a new drink.
- Never accept drinks from unknown or untrustworthy individuals. If this cannot be avoided, go with the person to the bar to order the drink, watch it being poured, and do not allow anyone else to carry or handle it. At parties, do not drink from punch bowls or other common open containers.
- Develop a culture of caution such that friends watch out for each other. If a friend seems incapacitated, overly intoxicated for the amount of alcohol consumed, or is acting out of character, get him or her to a safe place immediately.

Note: *A person should immediately contact law enforcement if there is a suspicion that an individual has been drugged (i.e., call 911). When speaking with healthcare professionals, it is important to be explicit so that the correct tests can be ordered.*

Intuition is key to safety, and this requires the individual to be alert to his or her surroundings. An individual should develop a heightened sense of awareness when going out socially (or alone) and become aware of the people and objects that could serve as resources. Upon entering a facility, the person should always scan for escape routes (e.g., exit doors and windows), note any emergency phones in the area, and scan the surrounding for individuals who might be relied upon for assistance if an issue occurs. If a situation becomes frightening or uncomfortable, the individual should:

- Place the blame where it belongs—on the individual who is acting inappropriately.
- Never feel an obligation to do something. Not being totally comfortable with something is a good enough reason for it not to happen.

- Use a code word with friends and family so that discomfort with a situation can be discreetly communicated for assistance.
- Make an excuse to create a window for departure. Though it may be in a person's nature to be truthful and to care about hurting others' feelings, if something feels uncomfortable, the individual should make an excuse for leaving, not participating, or getting to a safe space.
- Delay any activities or changes in environment until sobriety resumes. This allows for all participants to have the benefit of their full faculties for better judgment.