



Sexual Assault Response Services

of Southern Maine

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But It Happened Such A Long Time Ago

Emotional First Aid Sheet

It must seem confusing to you, still having feelings and fears about a sexual assault that happened so long ago.

- You sometimes wonder if anything is wrong with you.
- Sometimes the face staring back from the mirror seems to have sorrow etched into it and you wonder why.
- Sometimes your smiles don't feel as happy as you would like.
- Sometimes your joy seems clouded.

I know. I was assaulted seventeen years ago. For years I did not admit to myself that the rape had affected me. Six years later, I told a friend. Seventeen years later, it is still hard to think about and hard to talk about. It still hurts. It still makes me angry. When I finally realized how much my life had been affected, I felt angry, depressed and wistful for those lost years.

I felt embarrassed. How could I still be affected by something that happened such a long time ago? After talking to people who understood, I realized that my feelings made sense. Sexual Assault is an event that can alter your life. It can change your view of yourself and others. That can be hard to accept, but you can. You survived the physical assault a long time ago. You can survive the emotional assault as well.

****Just Remember****

- Sexual Assault, no matter when it happens, can change your life.
- Maybe you are still afraid. Maybe you still blame yourself. Please remember - the sexual assault was not your fault.
- Be patient with yourself. The sexual assault hurt you physically and emotionally. It is normal to still feel upset.
- The fact that the sexual abuse still upsets you does not mean that you are going crazy. It means you haven't had an opportunity to understand how you feel and why you still feel that way.
- Allow yourself to experience the fear, the pain, the anguish, the astonishment...and all the emotions for which there are no words.
- The longer you try to avoid the feelings you are experiencing the longer it will take you to begin the healing and recovery process.
- Talking about your feelings may not take them away, but it may help you to understand them and feel better.
- Please call 1-800-313-9900 to begin this very important conversation. There are people who care and are ready to listen.

Help, Hope, and Healing