



# **Sexual Assault Response Services**

## *of Southern Maine*

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## **RECOVERING FROM RAPE: HEALING YOUR SEXUALITY**

There are many reactions that may follow a rape. In regard to your sexuality, you may experience these:

- Dressing differently than you did before the rape.
- Changes in your social habits, such as spending more time alone or with other people.
- Changes in your attitudes toward men.
- Frequent angry exchanges between you and your partner that did not exist before the rape.
- Fear of you partner.
- Remembering other situations when you felt afraid, powerless.
- Changes in your sexual responses, such as lack of orgasm, lack of desire, painful intercourse, etc.
- Inability to continue a sexual experience due to anxiety or memories of the rape.

Here are some suggestions on how you might begin to heal your sexuality:

### **Dating and New Relationships**

It is common to feel hesitant about resuming dating and socializing following a rape. These thoughts may help...

- Take control of planning the time you spend with someone: think about what you need to feel safe, such as double dates, daytime dates, public events, etc.
- Make decisions that help you feel secure: if you feel scared or nervous about any aspect of the date, this activity is something you should not do now.
- Offer alternatives as your way of showing interest, such as suggesting going out for coffee rather than a beer.
- Explain only if you want to: in a new or casual relationship you may choose to say nothing about the rape or simply say that you have had something upsetting happen and you are not ready to talk about it.

### **How to Talk to Your Sexual Partner**

It is important that you feel control over the amount and kind of sexual contact that you have. Talk to your partner about your feelings and understand that your comfort level may change from day to day.

*If you do not want physical contact*, suggest other ways to be together and show caring (cooking meals, taking walks, going to the movies).

*If you do not want sexual contact but do want other forms of physical contact*, tell your partner what would be comfortable (massages, hugs, kisses, holding hands, sitting close, etc.)

***Help, Hope, and Healing***