



# Myths about sexual trauma



***Myths are common and can negatively impact survivors of sexual violence.***

***They can also negatively impact our behaviour and effectiveness to respond to survivors.***

Believing and supporting any myths or 'blame the victim' attitudes that exist in the community can:

- Blame the victim and excuse the perpetrator's behaviour
- Hide the reality
- Help keep sexual trauma hidden and taboo

***This is damaging for our people individually. It tears our families apart. It does not allow community the opportunity to grow or move forward.***

## **Some common myths include:**

**Myth:** Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers.

**Truth:** There are higher numbers of people reporting that they know the perpetrator.

**Myth:** Women who wear revealing clothes are asking to be sexually assaulted.

**Truth:** Clothing choice is an expression of style. No one asks to be sexually assaulted.

**Myth:** Men don't get sexually assaulted.

**Truth:** Sexual violence does not discriminate. Women and men can be sexually assaulted.

**We must challenge myths at every opportunity to stop the cycle of sexual trauma.**

# Challenges caused by myths

If we support someone based on the myths of sexual violence, know that the person may take their feelings out on you, and that you can start to have some strong thoughts and feelings of your own.

## Some thoughts and feelings include:

- How did this happen. I was supposed to keep them safe. It's all my fault.
- I failed them. I feel so sick inside. I want to hurt the person who did this.
- I want to help but I don't know what to say or do. I might make things worse.
- I don't know much about this stuff; I don't know what to believe anymore.

## Learning about sexual trauma can help

- Yarn with people who know about sexual trauma
- Read about sexual trauma
- Listen to relevant podcasts
- Watch relevant documentaries
- Learn about lateral violence
- Share what you learnt with others to begin the process of changing unhelpful beliefs and ideas

## Remember

*The abuser is the one responsible for hurting the person you care about. Try focusing on what works for responding effectively rather than what you might have done.*



## Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

**Metropolitan area:** A free 24-hr emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault, and counselling services for any form of unwanted sexual contact that has happened in the past for all genders ages 13 years and above.

**Regional area:** Advice and education and training can be provided to services across the state of Western Australia.

Call SARC on (08) 6458 1828 or Freecall 1800 199 888.

Email SARC Education and Training on [SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au)

### Yorgum Healing Services

Disability counselling, intensive family support and National Redress services

Call 1800 469 371

### 13 Yarn

The first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping, 24hrs/7 days a week

Call 139 276 (13YARN)

### WA Police

To report a sexual assault:

Go to your local **police station**.

Call **131 444**

Go online [Safe2Say.com.au](https://www.safe2say.com.au)

### Non emergencies

Police assistance and reporting

**Call 131 444**

Emergency

**Call 000**

Police, Fire, Ambulance