

Kidpower Safety Tips: Protecting Yourself from Sexual Assault

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Here are some tips for protecting yourself from sexual assault.

- 1. Stay aware, calm, and confident.** An attacker is less likely to pick you as a victim if you are acting confident and aware of your surroundings and if you are acting calm, not afraid or angry. Keep your hands free, your head up, and look around. Remember that using a phone or headphones can make you seem less aware and so can make problems bigger. Think about where and when you use them.
- 2. Plan ahead.** When you are places with lots of people or people you don't know and trust like at a party or in a bar, use the buddy system. If you have a friend you trust with you, you are safer. Make an agreement ahead of time with friends that you won't let each other leave with people you haven't planned to go with. Make a plan for how to reconnect if you get separated.
- 3. Avoid using the "Wishing Technique."** Wishing does not stop problems or change behavior. If a person's behavior makes you uncomfortable, trust your intuition and get space. If you think someone is following you, take charge of the situation by changing your plan and going to a safer place such a store. If you feel that a threatening person is getting too close and you don't have a safe place to go to, make it clear that you are not an easy target. Depending on the situation, you can yell, run, or get into Ready Position and order in a clear, firm, loud voice, "STOP FOLLOWING ME!" Practice saying, firmly and clearly, phrases like, "Stop. I'm not interested. Please leave. Go. Go. Go now." Practice so that you look and sound like you mean what you are saying and can stay centered and powerful, even if you need to repeat your boundary many times.
- 4. Practice different ways you can ask for help.** Knowing how to interrupt people clearly, respectfully, and assertively can help stop problems early. Many people end up in dangerous situations because they didn't want to inconvenience others or because they feel embarrassed. Others assume that people must notice the problem and are just choosing not to help. Practice assertive advocacy with phrases like, "This is an emergency. Please call 911. I see you are busy. This is an emergency. I'm being attacked. Call 911."
- 5. Keep track of your food and your drinks at parties and other gatherings. "Date rape" drugs are not drugs people choose to take themselves -- they are drugs put in their food or drink by other people.** The drugs can leave people unconscious, confused, helpless, or unable to resist or call for help. Attackers may bring a person a drink, like a soda, beer, or coffee, and put the drug in it. Or they put the drug in the drink or food while the targeted person is temporarily away from it (i.e. in the bathroom, talking to friends, etc.). Know where your food and drinks are coming from, keep them with you, or consider whether you truly know and trust the person you are leaving with your food and drink if you step away.
- 6. Stay in charge of yourself and your environment.** Keep in mind what YOU want rather than being distracted by what others want. Remember that alcohol and drug use often play a part in many sexual assaults. Use your awareness to notice when a person seems to be losing control and be ready to leave if

need be. Remember that you are more vulnerable to being attacked if your use of alcohol or drugs has caused your awareness or judgment to be lessened.

7. Learn physical self-defense skills. If you are unable to leave and a person is trying to hurt you, you have the right to hurt that person to protect yourself. Your first choice is to leave the confrontation if you can, by running away, yelling, or pulling away. One strong move stops most attacks. Possible strikes can be the base of the hand to the face along the jawline, the lower thigh to the groin, or a kick to the groin. Find a self-defense class that will allow you the opportunity to practice these skills in a way that helps you feel successful and more confident. Even a little bit of practice can build skill and confidence.