Myth: Women who are assaulted often like it.

Women do not find pleasure in abuse. In fact, they feel guilty. When sexual boundaries are violated, they often feel as if the assault was their fault and that had they done something different it might not have happened. The self-blame victims go through can be very damaging and have long term effects on their life and relationships. Victims should be given support and reinforcement that they did nothing wrong and that it wasn’t their fault. Even if the victim was doing something risky, such as asking for a lift, she did not ask to be sexually assaulted.

Myth: Rape is not the victim’s fault.

Rape is not the victim’s fault. An offender may say a victim asked for it because of how they looked or acted. Unfortunately it is not only the offenders who believe this myth, but also much of the general public. Such statement as: "she was wearing much," "she was drinking," "she agreed to go out with him," and "well, everybody knows what kind of girl she is, " indicate that the blame is being placed on the victim and not the offender. Very often victims feel that if the assault was their fault and that had they done something different it might not have happened. The self-blame victims go through can be very damaging and have long term effects on their life and relationships. Victims should be given support and reinforcement that they did nothing wrong and that it wasn’t their fault. Even if the victim was doing something risky, such as asking for a lift, she did not ask to be sexually assaulted.

Myth: Rape is a matter of mutual consent.

Society has granted permission for men to see sex as their right in marriage. However, sex in marriage is a matter of mutual consent.
Violence and the threat of violence is a fear that is experienced by every woman – irrespective of age, skin colour, religion, economic or social status. It can happen anywhere, on the streets at the workplace, in the house. It is different from other kinds of violence because it is targeted at women because of the inequality of position between men and women in society. It can take many forms, such as domestic violence, rape or sexual harassment. Violence against women is not only physical violence. It can be economic, psychological or traditional.

**Some examples . . . .**
- On the streets, snatch thieves target women.
- At the workplace, sexual harassment is often targeted at women.
- At home women can be battered and abused by their partner.
- Incestuous rape occurs in the "Safety " of the home.
- Husbands can deny wives money to buy food.
- Girls can be circumcised as part of traditional customs.
- Husbands may threaten to stop paying children’s school fees in order to hurt their wives.

**What is Violence Against Women (VAW)?**

The problem of VAW lies in the inequality of status between men and women in society. Positions of power in politics, economics and religion are still dominated by men even though women make up more than half the population.

Our culture and most religions put women at an unequal position – their social status, quality of living and economic well-being are often dependent on or controlled by men.

Women’s subordinate positions make them more vulnerable to violence. VAW is an expression of the power of men over women.

**Who experiences violence?**

Sadly, all women can experience violence. It happens to women from six months old to 93 years old. It happens to mentally ill and the disabled women. VAW happens irrespective of age, race, colour, religion, social or economic status. It has become an unfortunate factor in our society that all women can be targets of violence.

**Who are the perpetrators?**

They can be strangers, or a family member like her own husband, or even her father, brother, or uncle. It can be someone she knows intimately, like her boyfriend, or someone she trusts, like a friend or colleague.

**Myth about VIOLENCE**

**What causes Violence against Women?**

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**Facts about Violence against Women. In the National study on Violence Against Women and Children carried out by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre in 1998, the following emerged:**

- 1 in 3 women were experiencing physical violence (beating, slapping or other physical punishment) at the hands of current or previous partners.
- 2 in 5 women are harassed or coerced when they refuse their partner sex.
- 3 in 10 women are forced by their male partner to have sex sometimes.
- 1 in 10 women earnings taken away from them.
- 1 in 10 women forced to leave the house in which they were living, either with or without children.
- 1 in 4 women intentionally humiliated or shamed in front of others.
- 1 in 4 women had been abused by a male partner’s refusing to provide money and foodstuffs.
- 27% of women have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
- For 2 in 10 women their first experience of sex was against their will.
- 4% of women had been threatened with demands for sex before being offered a job or having a favour done.
- 6% of women had been threatened by a school teacher or principal that schooling would suffer if they did not have sex.
- 2 in 4 male partner’s used abusive words as a form of abuse.
- 9 in 10 women are known to their abuser.

**Myth: Alcohol is the real culprit in violence against women and children.**

Alcohol and drugs can make abuse worse, but they do not cause abuse. Rather, it justifies the use of physical force by allowing the offender to abdicate responsibility for his behaviour. Some men become intoxicated in order to act out their violent wishes.

**Myth: Men who beat their wives are mentally ill.**

Violence against women is too widespread to be explained away by mental illness. Most men who assault their wives confine it to the privacy of their home. The abuse is often directed to particular parts of the body that will not visibly bruise or is covered; obvious restraint and forethought is necessary to accomplish this. Violent husbands are not likely to attack their bosses or any member of the public because they are frustrated. If the man was truly ill, he would lack the ability to be selective in his targets and controlled in his administration of abuse.

**Myth: Women who are assaulted as usually asking for it.**

No woman ever deserves to be beaten, regardless of the kind of person she is. Provocation is an excuse the offender uses to avoid responsibility for his own behaviour. Many people support his view by examining the victim’s behaviour or personality for clues as to the cause of the abuse. Excuse-making perpetuates the use of violence as an acceptable method of problem-solving and leads the offender to believe he is justified in using force to get his own way.