

Personal Security Checklist - Possible Violators & Rape

In attempting to warn women against the danger, many rape crisis centres proclaim "all men are potential rapists." What a horrible way to live. Who wants to go through life in fear of one half of the human race? Much less believe this about those we love and are intimate with.

The idea behind any learning should be **to improve the quality of life**, not degrade it. To this end, let's leave the wild paranoia of 'possible' rape scenarios and move onto the more solid footing of 'probable' and 'very likely' - and what you can do about it.

Someone rightly said, "Dishonest people are seldom dishonest in only one aspect of their lives." In the same vein, the predilections that can, and do, lead to rape are not isolated. They tend to permeate a person's character and be regularly displayed in many small ways and in other areas. These attitudes, behaviours and words are consistent among rapists and those who attack others. And IF you are willing to look, they are easy to spot.

The reason it is impossible to predict who will and won't sexually assault someone is because how these behaviours manifest is a matter of style and preference. One person might choose to be blatant and habitually physically attack others, while another might be more subtle but verbally attack others on a regular basis. The motives are the same, but the style is utterly different. And that is why it is hard to predict who will and won't use sexual assault.

What we can accurately predict is something bad will arise out of these character traits, the When, Where and How are impossible to predetermine.

If you see these behaviours in a person, take care. The more you see, the more care should be taken not to be alone him. Even if he doesn't rape, these behaviours indicate serious character flaws.

Danger signs

1) Insensitivity for others/emphasis on self - Does this person put his wants above the needs, feelings or well being of others? Is getting his way more important to him than other people's welfare? Often this can go beyond mere selfishness and border nearly on an "assumed divine right." Often these people will justify a particularly vicious action with a flip comment like, "Hey, that's how the game is played." Such a person has no understanding that he must co-exist with others. Because he simply exists he thinks the world "owes" him whatever he wants. A common tactic of such a person is to make you feel bad for not doing what he wants.

2) Belittling behaviour or attitudes towards others - Does this person habitually make nasty, belittling or degrading comments about others – especially under the guise of joking? Does this person think he is better than others? Does he look down on others? A nouveau riche aristocrat? Is he a racist? A person who thinks that race or

social position makes him superior can also assume gender does too. When you think you are superior, an assumed right to 'take' what you want often follows.

3) Negating behaviour or comments - Closely related to 1 and 2. Does he try to tell you what you are feeling or thinking? Or worse, tell you what you are not? Comments like "you don't really mean that" are serious indicators of someone trying to negate you. A person who negates others is trying to take away the other person's thoughts, feelings and needs and attempting to project his wants onto that person. The most obvious example of this is "Well even though she said 'no', she really meant 'yes'".

4) Hostile and/or threatening language - What words does a person use? Choice of words convey subconscious assumptions about a particular topic. For example a man who generically refers to women as "bitches" does not have good assumptions about females (or much respect). It is all too easy to dismiss this behaviour as just "blowing off steam." But if it is a constant behaviour, it goes far beyond that. Someone who habitually uses violent or threatening language should be carefully watched for possible escalation. It's on his mind already. It's a uncomfortably short step from 'thinking about' to 'doing'.

5) Bullying - This behaviour is especially dangerous. Does this person use overt or subtle threats to get his way? A bully uses the threat of violence more than actual violence. Most often bullies are not willing to risk conflict with someone who can hurt them (an alpha male), and will instead chose to intimidate someone he considers weaker and safer. Someone who is bullying over other matters can easily turn to bullying you regarding sex.

6) Excessive anger - How easy does this person anger? Is he a "Short Fuse"? Does he boil over at the slightest problem? This is an indication of chronic anger. A person who explodes over a minor issue is like a full pot boiling over on the stove. It's not that the issue is all that important, but that he has so much anger already, any more causes him to explode. Often people with chronic anger look for targets to vent their anger at. This could manifest as physical fights, abuse, or rape.

7) Brooding/ revenge - Does this person hang onto his anger long after the situation is over? Will he still be stewing over something while everyone else has moved onto other things? Will he become anti-social and glare at the source of his anger from across the room? Will he insist on taking revenge for real or imagined slights? Both indicate a petty and obsessive personality. A brooder fixates on something and then works himself into a frenzy over it. A person who seeks revenge "has to win" and is willing to take it to extremes. Refusing such a person's sexual advances can turn this tendency towards you.

8) Obsession – This is a close cousin to number seven. It is a major factor with acquaintance rapes. This is the person who won't leave you alone. He insists on 'hitting on you' long after you have told him no. He is always trying establish forced intimacy. Such obsessions easily turn into anger when his advances are rejected. One day he shows up in a fringe area, drunk and attacks.

9) Extreme mood swings - Beware someone who can go from wildly happy to deeply wounded at a moment's notice. This sort of personality can feel justified to

commit an unlimited amount of violence and damage, because you "hurt his feelings." This is a common pattern among those with chronic anger about life.

10) Physical tantrums - How does this person get angry? Especially when denied "getting his way". Beware of a person who regularly physically assaults his environment i.e. hitting walls, kicking things etc. It is only a short step from striking a car to attacking you.

11) Jock or Neanderthal mentality - This mentality promotes both acceptance and encouragement for the use of violence. It is especially common among participants of contact sports. What is most insidious about this mentality is the "jock" receives, not only positive reinforcement, but out-and-out applause for being aggressive and violent. This can easily lead to a failure to differentiate between the playing field and real life. Mike Tyson's comment is a prime example: "Nobody ever objected before."

12) A mean drunk - Nearly all rape and abuse cases involve intoxication (alcohol or other). Watch what surfaces when someone is intoxicated. It shows what is always lurking underneath. Do not put yourself into a situation where you would deal with such a person while he is intoxicated. Most importantly, don't allow your faculties to be diminished by alcohol or drugs in this person's presence.

13) Alcohol or drug abuse - To begin with drug and alcohol addiction can in be traced back to selfishness and a refusal to change one's world view. Alcohol and drugs are not the cause of bad behaviour, rather they are used as an excuse! Often the attacker intentionally became intoxicated to ignore the social restrictions and inhibitions regarding violence.

While there are others, these behaviours are serious indicators of a potential rapist. This short list should acquaint you with the basics. Not all men are rapists, but a person like this has a higher probability than others. You not only find these traits among rapists and abusers, but also professional criminals. Philosophically there is little difference between such, they are all selfish. Most often it is just a matter of degrees, style and choice of victims.

Leaving an abusive partner

Safety When Preparing to Leave

- Open a savings account and/or credit card in your own name to start to establish your independence.
- Get your own post office box. You can privately receive checks and letters.
- Keep an extra set of keys, important documents, and money in a hidden spot so you can leave immediately.
- Determine where you will go if you have to leave without notice.
- Keep the shelter or hotline phone number on hand.

Leaving your batterer is the most dangerous time. Review your plan often in order to stay safe.

Safety in Your Own Home

- Change the locks on the doors and secure the windows as soon as possible.
- Discuss safety with your children for when you are not with them.
- Inform your children's school, daycare, etc., about who has permission to pick up your children.
- Inform neighbours and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see him/her near your home.

Safety With an Order of Protection

- Keep your order of protection on you at all times.
- Call the police if your partner breaks the order of protection.
- Think of an alternate ways to stay safe if the police do not respond right away.
- Inform family, friends, neighbours, and your physician or health care provider that you have an order of protection in effect.

Safety on the Job

- Decide who at work you will inform of your situation.
- Devise a safety plan for when you leave work (i.e. someone escorting you to your car or taking different routes home)
- Arrange to have a trusted co-worker screen your calls.

Your Safety and Emotional Health

- If you return to a potentially abusive situation, discuss an alternative plan with someone you trust.
- If you must communicate with your partner, determine the safest way to do so.
- Fulfil your needs and do things that make you feel good about yourself.
- Determine who can give you the support you need.
- Try to attend support groups for victims of domestic violence to learn more about yourself and the relationship.