

Sexual Assault And Rape at Burning Man

How To Help Yourself Or A Friend

**A Public Service Announcement brought to you by the
Bureau of Erotic Discourse (B.E.D.)**

It is shocking to realize that rape and sexual assault happens in our treasured Black Rock City, just as it does in any city in America. B.E.D. is actively working to increase awareness and prevention of sexual assault crimes at Burning Man. But what if this happens to you, or your friend -- What do you do? Where do you go for help? How do you come to terms with what has happened?

First of all, realize that you are not alone. There are thousands of loving, caring people surrounding you at Burning Man. Find a safe environment, find a friend, tell someone that you need help. Don't be ashamed, don't blame yourself. Whatever kind of situation you may find yourself in, or whatever kind of state you may be in, your health and safety are the only concern and there are folks who are here to help you.

The people of Burning Man have assembled teams of knowledgeable and compassionate people who are on call 24 hours a day to help in cases of sexual assault or rape. The BRC Emergency Services Department (ESD) is able to help you without judgment. Any BRC Ranger can get them to you to them right away.

We want you to be aware that, while the ESD crisis team is focused on nonjudgmental intervention support for you, they are bound by law to report the incident to law enforcement officials, just as any hospital or emergency responder would be. But you do not have to make a report yourself if that is your choice. You do not have to file charges or testify. Only you can decide if you want to press charges, you do not have to be afraid of this. Whether or not you decide to make an official report, remember that the once BRC officials know about the incident, you increase the chances of tracking down the person who did this to you. Fast reporting can make a huge difference!

However, if for whatever reason you aren't able to seek assistance on the playa, it's OK – it's never too late to call for help! You can find the Emergency Services Department at 911@burningman.com. Also, you can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline for free, confidential counseling, 24 hours a day: 1-800-656-HOPE.

What should you do if you are sexually assaulted?

- Find a safe environment - anywhere away from the attacker. Find a friend. If you are alone, run to camp or stop someone walking by. Ask someone to stay with you for moral support.
- Get medical attention.
- Don't blame yourself, it wasn't your fault. Remember that loving, understanding people are waiting to help you.
- Recognize that healing from rape takes time. Give yourself the time you need.
- Know that it's never too late to call. You may not realize you need help until later.
- Seek counseling. No matter how strong you are as a person, you need some assistance to deal with this traumatic experience. You can call one of the numbers listed in this brochure. Or call the Rape Crisis Center near you where you can find a counselor.
- Consider the possibility of reporting the rape to law enforcement. A counselor can help you with your decision.

How can you help a friend who has been sexually assaulted?

- Listen. Be there. Don't be judgmental.
- Encourage your friend to seek counseling. Don't pressure your friend one way or the other about reporting to the police. Your most important job is emotional support, even if you believe you would do something differently.
- Encourage him or her to make the call, but realize that only your friend can make the decision to get help and respect them for whatever decision they make.
- Be patient. It will take your friend some time to deal with the crime.

When it happens, rape changes everything.

The most important thing to remember is to get help. I never reported it when I was raped. I wonder now, why didn't I tell anyone? Why didn't I get help? I'm usually strong and really good in a crisis situation, but when I was the victim, I just fell apart and did everything exactly opposite of what would be the healthy thing to do. If someone would have just known to say, "I think we should find a Ranger -- they can help us find out what to do next." But none of us knew what to do at the time. Rape is a mind fuck... later on it does things to you that you can't even put your finger on. Like, "why did I bite that lady's head off today?" Or "why can't I seem to get up in the mornings?" Those things are less obvious than other things that crop up like, "why do I see his face every time I'm making love to my boyfriend and we end up in the missionary position?" Or "why do I suddenly think that the world is an ugly dangerous place, when, out of all the crazy things I've done in my life, I only got hurt that one time?" Or "Why is everyone yelling at me? What's wrong with me?" Finally I did get counseling. The rape ripped out a whole part of me, but today I am determined that I will take my life-- that joyful wonder and trust-- back from the criminal who stole it all away. ~ A.W. (a rape survivor)

B.E.D. recommends the following resources:

BRC EMERGENCY SERVICES: The Emergency Services department (ESD) personnel can be spotted on the playa wearing their distinctive uniforms of bright yellow shirts with EMERGENCY SERVICES written boldly on the back. They are dedicated to helping in times of crisis.

Black Rock City's ESD is there when you need them even on and off the playa. ESD provides medical evaluation and treatment, Crisis Intervention and Mental Health services, including sexual assault and rape. The Mental Health Branch (MHB) consists of ten highly trained and dedicated psychiatric and mental health professionals. The MHB performs crisis intervention for sexual assault and domestic violence victims, and provides victim advocacy to local agencies, such as law enforcement and local hospitals. All MHB team members carry pagers and are on call 24/7 during the event in case of a critical incident. You can find ESD personnel at the Ranger Stations on the playa and at 911@burningman.com after the event.

911RAPE.COM is an informational service provided by the Rape Treatment Center at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center. 911rape provides support for victims and a safe, anonymous way to learn how to get help after a sexual assault, information and resources to educate the public about rape and sexual assault and special sections for college students and teens. www.911rape.com

RAINN: The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network is the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline and carries out programs to prevent sexual assault, help victims and ensure that rapists are brought to justice. www.rainn.org