

# VICTIM BLAMING

"when the victim of a crime, or any wrongful act, is held entirely or partially responsible for the act."

itsonusforcollins.org

## Why Words Matter

Words can have a great influence on how people think of an issue. Using words that blame the victim creates a community where survivors are not valued or believed. It also creates an environment where perpetrators aren't held accountable.  
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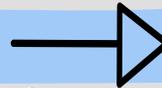
## Why is Violence Normalized?

Societies often accept violence as a normal part of life. This tendency can have harmful effects when someone is sexually assaulted. It can cause people to blame the survivor, instead of the perpetrator because violence is an accepted behavior.

## Change your Language

Use person first language. The person who is doing the action should be first in the sentence. This places the responsibility on the perpetrator, not the survivor.

"Riley was raped."



"Alex raped Riley."

Use the correct words. Some words imply that sexual activity was consensual, when it may not have been.

"They engaged in a sexual relationship with a drunk person."



"They sexually assaulted someone."

1 in 5

students report they have been sexually assaulted sometime in their life

75%

of sexual assault cases go unreported

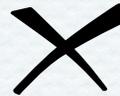
2019 Wisconsin YRBS

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## Supporting a Survivor

- Be clear that the perpetrator is the one responsible for the assault.
- Give the survivor time and space. It may be traumatizing to talk about what happened.
- Recognize the courage survivors have to talk about their assault.
- Thank them for trusting us with their experience.
- Believe them.

## Media's Role in Shaping Survivors



"Teen testifies they don't know if they consented to having sex."

"Lady Gaga describes the effect her alleged rape has on her today."

"Man jailed for getting 11 year old pregnant."



"Teen testifies they were intoxicated and unable to consent to having sex."

"Lady Gaga describes the effect surviving rape has on her today."

"Man jailed for raping an 11 year old."

## #WhyIDidn'tReport

"I believe I would have been mocked and ridiculed for being gay."

"Because it was gutting to admit-even to myself- that I was assaulted."

"I'm a man and it would make me seem weak."

"It would ruin my career before it even begun."

"I did [report], it didn't matter. I was dismissed, disparaged, and I still get blamed."

"I was embarrassed that I let it happen."

"Because I'm still afraid."

"Because I knew it was his word against mine."

"The person who raped me would be the person I report to."



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of HEALTH SERVICES