



**Kitchener-Waterloo
Sexual Assault Support Centre**

151 Frederick St, Suite 201,
Kitchener, Ontario, N2H 2M2

**24 Hour Crisis &
Support Line** (519) 741-8633

Business Line (519) 571-0121
Fax Line (519) 571-0522
TTY/TDD (519) 571-0864
Website www.kwsasc.org

Common Emotional Reactions to Sexual Assault

There is no single way a person will react after being sexually assaulted. The following are some of the possible reactions people may experience however each individual will react to crisis situations in ways that are related to their own identity, culture, and past experiences.

Shock and Disbelief

- ⇒ I can't believe this has happened to me.
- ⇒ I can't stop crying.
- ⇒ I want to cry but I cant
- ⇒ I feel so shaky and restless.
- ⇒ I feel so numb/cold
- ⇒ Why am I so calm?
- ⇒ This doesn't feel real
- ⇒ I feel like im outside myself watching this.

Confusion and Disorganization

- ⇒ I can't concentrate.
- ⇒ I can't make a decision about anything.
- ⇒ I can usually do this easily but not now
- ⇒ I don't know what I should do.
- ⇒ I don't know where to turn.

Fear

- ⇒ I'm afraid. He could have killed me.
- ⇒ What if I see him again?
- ⇒ What if I contracted a disease?
- ⇒ What if im never "normal" again?
- ⇒ What if other people find out?
- ⇒ What will my family think? My partner? My friends?

Depression

- ⇒ Ill never got over this. It's hopeless.
- ⇒ How can I go on?
- ⇒ I feel so tired all the time.
- ⇒ I don't want to see anyone.
- ⇒ I don't enjoy anything. Im bored
- ⇒ I deserve to be punished. Im bad
- ⇒ Im having so many nightmares. I cant sleep
- ⇒ Im eating all the time/ I don't feel like eating anything.



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Anxiety

- ⇒ I'm so jittery. Everything startles me.
- ⇒ My muscles are always twitching.
- ⇒ I can't relax.
- ⇒ I feel faint.
- ⇒ I have hot and cold flashes.
- ⇒ I feel nauseous (sick).
- ⇒ I have diarrhea all the time.
- ⇒ I feel like I have to be aware of everything around me

Shame and Loss of Self-Esteem

- ⇒ I feel dirty and soiled.
- ⇒ I feel used, useless, and worthless.
- ⇒ Everybody hates me.
- ⇒ I'm no good.
- ⇒ I can't do anything right.
- ⇒ I'm a terrible person.
- ⇒ I can never let anyone know.

Guilt

- ⇒ It's all my fault.
- ⇒ I should have known better.
- ⇒ I never should have been there.
- ⇒ I must have done something to cause it.
- ⇒ Maybe it was what I was wearing.

Anger

- ⇒ I hate him/her
- ⇒ I hate all men
- ⇒ I hate everyone.
- ⇒ I hate myself
- ⇒ Someone should have been there to stop it.
- ⇒ Where were the police?
- ⇒ Why doesn't everybody just leave me alone?
- ⇒ Common Reactions for Male Survivors

In addition to the above reactions, male survivors may also experience:

- ⇒ A higher incidence of physical injuries due to men experiencing a higher incident of sexual assault that is hate motivated or gang related.
- ⇒ Increased denial and feelings of isolation which is fostered by a society that does not believe that males are raped.



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- ⇒ A conflicting sense of sexual orientation in which he may be questioning his sexual identity. A straight man may wonder if the sexual assault means that he is “gay” and a gay may be distressed that he now feels unsafe with other men. Sexual assault does not change a person’s sexual orientation.
- ⇒ Increased anger directed toward the rapist, support people/ society who do not recognize or validate his experience, series providers who are not adequately equipped to meet his needs, himself for not being able to prevent the assault

Source: www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/sites/sadv/sa/reactions 2/3/03