Personal Empowerment Through Self-Awareness
Module 3: Risk Reduction for Everyone

3A: Personal Empowerment

In order to ensure your personal safety, it’s critical that you keep in mind a few things that will help reduce your risk of being victimized by personal violence:

Know where you are going and speak up if you are uncomfortable with the plans. Communicate with your date. *No means no.*

Know that drinking and drug use can impair your judgment. You might not be able to make the same decision you would make if you were sober or have the same ability to remove yourself from a bad situation.

If you drink, drink responsibly. Eat a full meal before going out. Have a glass of water between each drink. Stick to one type of alcoholic beverage. Know your limits and don’t go beyond them. Have a designated driver. And don’t let anyone else make the decision of how much you will drink.

Only drink something that you have poured yourself or that comes in a pre-sealed container. Premixed drinks can have more alcohol in them than you might want to drink. Also, drugs like Rohypnol and GHB are dissolved in drinks, causing the person who consumes the beverage to lose consciousness quickly. Don’t drink something that has been left unattended.

Don’t go anywhere with someone you don’t know well. If you do leave a party with a new friend, tell the friends you came with where you are going and when you are coming back.

It’s also critical to understand your responsibility when it comes to interactions with others. In order to ensure everyone’s safety, you need to keep in mind a few things that will help reduce your risk of committing personal violence:

Listen carefully. Take time to hear what the other person has to say. If you feel he or she is not being direct or is giving you a *mixed message*, ask for clarification.

Don’t fall for the cliché “if they say no, they really mean yes.” If your partner says “no” to sexual contact, believe them and stop.

Remember that sexual assault is a crime. It is never acceptable to force sexual activity, no matter what the circumstances.

Don’t make assumptions about a person’s behavior. Don’t assume that someone wants to have sex because of the way they are dressed, they drink (or drink too much), or agree to go to your room. Don’t assume that if someone has had sex with you before that they are willing to have sex with you again.
Also don’t assume that if your partner consents to kissing or other sexual activities, they are consenting to all sexual activities.

Be aware that having sex with someone who is mentally or physically incapable of giving consent is rape. If you have sex with someone who is drugged, intoxicated, passed out, or is otherwise incapable of saying no or knowing what is going on around them, you may be guilty of rape.

Be careful in group situations. Resist peer pressure from friends to participate in violent acts.

Get involved if you believe that someone is at risk. If you see someone in trouble or someone pressuring another person, don’t be afraid to intervene.

So before things get out of control, stop and think. Personal empowerment through self-awareness can reduce your risk of personal violence.

Postscript
Just in case you’re thinking this isn’t relevant to you, a recent study showed 1 in 3 female students and 1 in 5 male students on college campuses will hear about a sexual assault from a friend.

This makes it all of our responsibility. We all need to know how to support our friends, ourselves, and our community.

3B: Stand Up, Don’t Stand By

Narrator #1:
One of the ways that we can all make a difference is through learning how to intervene when we witness a situation that makes us uncomfortable or we know is wrong.

For example, you’re at a party and one of your friends gets drunk and starts to leave with someone. In this situation, what you need to think about is that neither person is in a position to give or accept consent, and both may regret their actions later. Now is the time to stand up, not stand by.

So what do you do? Ask questions. Look out for your friend. Use a separation strategy.

Various student voices:

“Are you okay? You seem pretty out of it.”

“Your car’s being towed.”

“Are you sure this is a good idea?”

“You’ve had a lot to drink. Let’s just go home.”

“Sorry man, this isn’t happening.”
“I need to talk to you about something.”

**Narrator #1:**
So do your part and be an ally in the fight to end personal violence. Stand up, don’t stand by.

**Postscript**
We can all make a difference by assisting if we observe an inappropriate situation covered by this topic. Even if you’re not comfortable intervening during an event you can always contact someone who is able to intervene. This could be a public safety, campus safety, or security officer or other staff, faculty, or administrators on your campus.

Another way that students and others are getting involved in these situations on and off of college campuses is through the National Green Dot movement.

**What's a green dot?**
It's a single choice in one moment in time to use your voice, actions, or choices to make one small corner of the world safer. It’s a shared vision that creates momentum through the power of common language and purpose. And is a social movement that harnesses the power of peer influence and individual bystander choices to create lasting culture change resulting in the ultimate reduction of power based personal violence.

**3C: Take Action**

**Leon Rodrigues:**

I’m Leon Rodrigues, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities’ Chief Diversity Officer. One of the most empowering things that you can do as a student or an employee at is to have an understanding of what to do should an unexpected situation arise.

If you’ve been sexually assaulted, don’t keep it a secret. Get help, talk to a friend, call 911, or contact the designated officer on your campus. Seek medical treatment and options. Our campuses can refer you to resources available in the community. Also, visit our resource page to see resources that are available in your community.

And remember, it is not your fault. You are not responsible for the actions of others, and it’s not your fault that someone decided to hurt you. First, get to a safe place away from the perpetrator and then decide who to call to get help.

If someone you know is sexually assaulted or raped and they confide in you, be a good listener. If the assault just happened, you are in a position to help them decide who to call first and where to go. Check out the resource link for specific information on who you can call and why it’s important.

Regardless of when an incident occurred, you can still report what happened.
Acts of sexual violence are threatening and disruptive to the entire campus community. Remember you are not alone. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities takes your safety seriously. Please take a minute to familiarize yourself with your campus resources.

Renée Hogoboom:

I’m Renée Hogoboom, Associate Director of Diversity and Equity. If you are a victim of sexual violence, one question you might have is about whether your report is confidential. We want you to know that your report will be kept as confidential as possible.

A report to some campus officials, such as a licensed health care provider, may be confidential. Your campus will have information on any confidential resources.

When you make a report, you may request that all information you report be kept confidential, or request that no investigation into a particular incident be conducted or disciplinary action be taken. The college will weigh that request against the college’s obligation to provide safe, nondiscriminatory environment for all students, staff, and faculty, including you.

If the college honors the request for confidentiality, you need to understand that the college’s ability to meaningfully investigate the incident and pursue disciplinary action against the perpetrator may be limited.

However, there are times when campus officials may be required to take additional steps to protect your safety or the safety of others, or to do a follow up investigation to determine whether other actions may be necessary. If this happens, you will be notified beforehand about how your report will be shared.

In addition, campus officials must include general information about reported incidents in campus security reports required by federal law.

Whether or not you decide to report an incident of sexual violence to the police, we strongly encourage you to make a report to the designated officer on your campus. Your campus takes these matters extremely seriously. And they will provide you with needed support and help connect you to resources available on campus or in the community to help you through this experience.

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