



It isn't sex – it's rape

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Foreword

I am a professional and I have been practising in the UK for almost thirty years. I work with people who have been victimised, mostly women, but the booklet is relevant for all victims.

Acknowledgement: This booklet draws extensively from the ideas of Dr. Allan Wade who has developed the Response Based Approach.

Thank you to the many professionals and lay people who have supported the writing and producing of this booklet I am very grateful for all their input.

Note: Throughout this booklet the word victim has been used because it is the only word in the dictionary that we have to describe someone who had a crime committed against them. Rape is a crime, if you have been raped or sexually abused someone has committed a crime against you.

Women are the most frequent victims of rape but men also get raped and this booklet has been written for all victims of rape.

However, for the ease of reading I have used the feminine form for the victim and the masculine form for the perpetrator.

It isn't sex – it's rape

Introduction

Everyone knows how to talk about sex but not many of us know how to talk about rape. So sometimes we use words to describe rape which are more to do with sex than abuse.

Whatever words you use to describe rape or sexual abuse to the police will be the words used in court by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to make your case.

So if you don't have the words to fit the deed – they won't either.

This booklet is written to give you some ideas on how you can really tell it like it was. Language can be used to hide violence or to show violence.

If I say 'this person walked into me' or 'this person smashed into me' I am describing two very different things.

Whoever you are talking to, there are two important things to convey which are often not included in accounts of rape:

- 1) You never agreed to it
- 2) It wasn't sex – it was rape

I: "I never agreed to it"

One of the ways to show that you did not consent is by describing how you resisted rape.

What is resistance to violence and rape?

Many rape victims think they did not resist so it's important we understand what 'resistance' is:

Resistance is defined as **any effort** to prevent, stop, or limit violence, rape and so on.

Note: **ANY EFFORT**. It doesn't have to succeed to be called resistance. It doesn't have to be effective. It doesn't have to be spectacular and it doesn't even have to be visible to others.

When you scream and begin to fight, then stop because you realise he will hurt you even harder; that is resistance – you are trying to limit the harm to yourself.

When you stay as still as possible, avoid looking at him and don't say anything because he has given you a look that makes you terrified; that is resistance. You are trying to limit his attack by not fighting back physically.

When you force yourself to suck on his penis hoping to avoid vaginal rape; that is resistance. You are trying to limit harm to yourself.

When you flop or try to relax so the rape doesn't hurt so much; that is resistance.

When you go numb and try to think it isn't really happening; that is resistance.

When you pray to god that you will survive and try to find strength to endure it by praying; that is resistance.

When you beg, plead or cry hoping to appeal to his decency so he stops; that is resistance.

When you stay the night at the rapist's place because you don't even know where you are and are afraid of being out alone in the night, you are trying to prevent further attacks from unknown potential attackers; that is resistance.

When you do not want to tell anyone close to you about being raped because you know it will hurt them; that is resistance. You are trying to stop the violence and the pain from reaching others.

When you are nice to him after the rape hoping he doesn't attack you again and hoping that he lets you go; that is resistance.

When you tell him what he wants to hear and pretend you are ok so he lets you go; that is resistance.

When you close your eyes so you do not see his face and his violent stare; that is resistance

When you keep your eyes open and try to memorise every single bit of him so you can testify later; that is resistance.

You can see that resistance takes many forms, it can be physical, such as when you push your tummy out to prevent him from wrenching your jeans down. It can be stopping yourself doing certain things, such as when you stop shouting or crying because he has threatened you and you want to avoid more violence. It can be mental, such as when you try to remove yourself from the experience by using your mind to think of other things.

All the things we do and don't do, think, or tell ourselves, in order to withstand and survive the ordeal - all these - are forms of resistance. They are efforts to limit our suffering, to limit his violence.

And there is so much more that victims do to try to stop, limit or prevent, rape. These are only a few examples.

What prevents you from acknowledging your resistance?

First of all, resistance is very seldom talked about, it features so rarely in the media, or other accounts of rape that it's as if victims don't resist. So you won't be having it in your mind when you give your account of the rape you withstood. So many victims I speak to tell me "I didn't do anything", however using the questions below we always find that they resisted as much as possible, whenever possible.

Secondly, many of you probably will say "I should have fought harder". We tend to compare what we did to some sort of ideal version of resistance, and because our resistance was not 'ideal' in our view, or did not succeed in stopping the rape we discount it. This is so unfair and it deprives us of vital understanding and recognition.

It's as if we are saying "because I didn't stop it, it means I didn't resist. I should have been able to stop it. If I did not resist it means I wanted it, it means I am partly to blame." By denying the value of our efforts we end up blaming ourselves.

The fact is you did not want it – you resisted as much as possible given the circumstances, you did not stop it or prevent it because you could not. If you could have prevented it, if you could have stopped it - you would have.

Of course, we always wish we had done more, we wish we could have stopped it but the fact that we did not doesn't mean we didn't try hard enough. You did what you could, all that you could at the time and recognizing all your many acts of resistance is vital in helping you not to blame yourself, as long as you don't compare your actions to an idealised and all-powerful idea of perfect resistance.

Look at the definition again: **ANY EFFORT**. It doesn't have to be showy and spectacular to fit the definition of resistance. It doesn't have to succeed to be called an act of resistance.

In fact the more intense the violence the more we keep our resistance hidden because fighting openly could mean more violence. Then our resistance becomes very private, hidden away in the privacy of our minds. For example, like mentally trying to leave the room by thinking of something else, by trying to disappear inside ourself.

This kind of more private resistance is not often recognised or talked about and if you are planning to talk about your experience of rape, consider describing it as well.

Often when women come to tell me about abuse or rape they describe to me what the rapist did, but they haven't thought about what they themselves did. Thinking about what you did, what you felt, what went on in your mind; that is, how you responded and how you resisted, gives you the chance to acknowledge and to value your personal resourcefulness.

It also clarifies that you did not consent to the rape or the abuse.

If you do not talk about how you resisted rape – the police and the prosecution might not either. If you do not talk about how you resisted rape it could look like you didn't – it could look like it wasn't rape but that you consented.

So do think about how you responded at every step of the way, and in every way you could and you will see there were things that you thought, that you did, that you didn't do, which were aimed to prevent, limit or stop the rape or the abuse.

Ask yourself:

When did I first get frightened and feel unsafe?

What did I do then?

What did I think?

What did I feel?

What did I stop myself doing?

What did I think of doing but couldn't do?

What did I want to do but couldn't do?

Why couldn't I do what I wanted?

What was I trying to achieve?

What went on in my mind?

What did he do next?

How did he do it? Describe it as accurately as possible (see second section)

What did he say?

How did he say it?

How did I respond then?

What did I do?

What did I stop myself from doing?

What went on in my mind?

What did I feel then?

What did I do with my body? With my eyes? Where did I look?

What did I say? What couldn't I say?

How did I try to protect myself even in small ways?

How did I try to communicate I didn't want this? Even in small ways?

What else did I do, think, and didn't do?

What did he do next?

How did he do it? And so on

Ask yourself these questions from the start of feeling frightened and feeling unsafe, to getting away, to what you did after you were safe again.

Describing how you resisted also makes clearer what the attacker did to prevent you from fighting back, and by the same token better exposes his violence.

Attackers and rapists expect you to resist and they take steps to stop you resisting even before you begin. They will tell you not to scream or they'll beat you harder in order to shut you up and to make sure you don't alert others. They will put on loud music so no one can hear if you scream, they will threaten you with a weapon so it is clear they have the advantage and so that you don't fight back. All these actions are their tactics to stop you from resisting or from fighting back.

II: "It wasn't sex; it was rape"

Think about which words fit as best as possible what he did to you.

No one ever taught us how to talk about rape and abuse, even many professionals don't have the words. Yet, because we are more familiar with language to describe sex, often we use sexual language to describe rape.

The problem with this is that it can make rape and abuse look erotic, even affectionate, and of course mutual as if you agreed to it, as if both people shared in it rather than one person doing it against the other.

So you get descriptions of rape that go like this:

"He put his penis into me and I didn't want it."

Is this really how it was?

Or

"He forced his penis into me and my vagina was tight and dry because I did not want him to force himself into me and he hurt me so much, I felt ripped open."

The second sentence not only describes his actions as forceful but also includes the physical signs that you were not giving your consent and tells how you experienced the rape. And...

"He kissed me and he fondled my breasts"

Or

“He pushed his mouth on my mouth and forced his tongue down my throat, then he pawed my breasts”.

There are other alternatives for the word ‘paw’ in the table below if this one is not accurate.

Or

“He pushed his mouth on my skin and made a sucking noise”.

‘Kissing’ is a word that always evokes something affectionate and kind. But for you, was it a kiss? To fondle is also an affectionate term. Did it feel affectionate to you?

It is possible that the defence in court will try to make you say that in common language this is ‘a kiss’ but if it did not feel affectionate to you then is it accurate to call it a ‘kiss’?

In her book *Lucky*, Alice Sebold describes in no uncertain terms a rape she personally withstood. She has the words to describe rape, and I have included them in the table of words down below. But even she uses the term ‘kiss’ although we are in no doubt that she did not experience it as affectionate or loving.

So think of your words...

- | | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| Did he ‘take you to the bed’? | or | Did he ‘drag you to the bed’? |
| Did you ‘end up on the ground’ | or | Did he ‘throw you down on the ground’? |
| Did he ‘have sex on you’ | or | Did he ‘rape you’? |
| Did he ‘open your legs’ | or | Did he ‘prise open your legs’? |
| Did he ‘make you have oral sex with him’ | or | Did he ‘force you to suck on his penis’?
Did he ‘ram his penis in your mouth’? |

I have drawn a table below so you can find and choose which words fit your experience the best. This will help you to tell it exactly as it was.

I hope that understanding your own resistance to rape and finding the right words to fit as closely as possible to what you went through will be helpful and strengthening.

Rape is NOT mutual, it is **NOT** something people do together, it is **NOT** a joint act - **IT IS** the act of one person against another.

Violent <i>to</i>	NOT	Violent <i>with</i>
Imposition	NOT	Participation
Coercion	NOT	Cooperation

Language to better describe and expose rape and violence

Neutral or affectionate language	Words to describe rape and violence
<p>Chatted up Courtied Seduced Ravished</p>	<p>Tricked Intimidated Subjugated Overpowered Overwhelmed Threatened with weapons Entrapped, entrapment Deceived Cornered Threatened Ensnared Duped Conned</p>
<p>Groomed</p> <p><i>Unfortunately a legal term it is also a word that describes acts of kindness and caring such as in grooming a horse, or grooming yourself.</i></p>	<p>Deliberately pretended good intentions with the plan to abuse, faked friendship, simulated generosity and good will, manipulated, tricked, betrayed trust, conned, deceived, breached trust, entrapped, lied, exploited, coerced, abused power. Falsehood, predatory entrapment, coercion</p>
<p>Sexual contact, unwanted intercourse,</p> <p><i>Intercourse means an exchange between people, also communication between people. Rape is not 'between people' it is not an 'exchange' it's an attack from one person against another</i></p> <p>Forced intercourse</p>	<p>Raped Violated Forced his penis, his hand, his tongue into my vagina, my mouth, my anus He attacked me with his penis, his tongue, his hand, his fingers Sexual assault Degraded</p> <p>Forced penetration</p>
<p>Put his penis, finger, hand, fist etc.</p>	<p>Forced, pushed, rammed, shoved, thrust, thrust hard and fast</p>
<p>Sodomy, buggery</p>	<p>Anal rape, raped my anus, raped my ass, rammed his penis in my anus</p>

Caressed, touched, rubbed, fondled	Groped, grabbed, squeezed, palpated, tugged, pawed, scraped, mauled, manipulated the buttocks etc. pulled, yanked, wrenched, dragged his hand on my skin, handled roughly, forced physical contact, grabbed my genitals Molested
Kissed, French kiss	Forced his tongue in my mouth, rammed his tongue in my mouth Pushed his mouth on my skin and made a sucking noise Raped my mouth with his tongue, oral rape, forced oral contact
	<i>From Lucky by Alice Sebold</i> Grabbed, pinned me to the wall, ground, grip bite, push, yanked it hard, rip myself free, lunged forward, throw him off balance, making him stagger, he pounded my skull, squeezed my neck, dragged me, he tugged, he plied my breasts, squeezed them, manipulating them right down to my ribs, twisting, he pulled my underpants roughly, he threw me over the corner, he twisted the nipples, he shoved his hand into my mouth, his hand locked in my mouth, he kicked me, he shoved my head forward, he rammed it in, ripped open by violence
Oral sex	Forced his mouth on my genitals Raped my vagina with his mouth, tongue Forced me to suck on his penis Rammed, shoved his penis in my mouth
Masturbation of the victim	Raped me with his fingers, his hand, fingers, or fist etc.
A fight <i>To fight means to give mutual blows. Same for disagreement, dispute, argument, row, all of which describe an exchange.</i>	Assault, attack, aggression <i>These words describe something one person does against another</i>

	<p><i>Words to describe violence:</i></p> <p>Beat, hit, banged, bashed, belted, clobbered, punched, flogged, struck, pelted, thrashed, whipped, thwacked, slapped, kicked, knocked, yanked, jerked, tugged, wrenched, punched hard, pushed hard, smacked, pinched, throttled, battered, smashed, whacked, head-butted</p>
<p>Violent relationship, abusive relationship</p> <p><i>If both people are not violent but only one of them is then violent relationship is the wrong term to use</i></p> <p><i>If I say 'John and Sarah have a loving relationship' you imagine both are loving not only one of them. Same for 'violent relationship', it implies both people are violent to each other</i></p>	<p>Violent man or violent woman, violent husband, or violent wife, violent partner</p> <p>Violent or abusive brother, sister, father, mother, neighbour, boss etc.</p> <p><i>Name the abuser</i></p>
<p>Asked, requested</p>	<p>Commanded, demanded, ordered, directed, imposed his will</p>
<p>Liaison</p>	<p>Trap, falsehood, deception</p>
<p>An incident</p>	<p>A rape, an assault, an attack, a punch etc. even better: he/she punched, attacked me etc.</p> <p><i>Describe who did what to whom</i></p>
<p>What happened, the incident, what took place, a rape that happened</p> <p>When the incident took place</p> <p><i>Rape, violence, assault is not something that 'happens' or 'takes place' it is something someone does against another. So avoid terms like 'the incident' or 'an attack took place' specify who did what to whom</i></p>	<p>What he did (describe) to whom <i>'it' didn't happen - someone did it</i></p> <p>When he attacked/raped me</p>
<p>Sexual experience</p>	<p>Sexual assault, rape etc.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Term describing violence as mutual As two people being violent to each other</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Terms describing violence as unilateral As one person being violent towards another</p>
Abusive relationship	Abusive partner Man/ or woman who beats his/her partner
Violent with	Violent against, violent to, violent towards
A violent episode that John and Sarah had	John assaulted Sarah
The dynamics of abuse	The violent behaviour of the wife, husband, partner etc. against the other
Dysfunctional family	A family victim of one of its member's violence
Abusive/violent/incestuous family	Abusive/violent/incestuous father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, grandmother etc.
<i>Any others you can think of...</i>	<i>Alternatives...</i>