

Taking Sexual Assault Prevention Tips Out of the Perpetrator's Tool Belt

The slide features several decorative light purple circles. Two are solid circles on the left side. On the right side, there are two circles: one is a solid light purple circle, and the other is a light purple circle with a thin white outline, partially overlapping the text of the second speaker.

Pragya Sharma, M.A.
Director of Public Education

Monika Penner, M.Ed.
Child & Adolescent Therapist

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton

- Public Education
 - Provides specialized information sessions to schools, community organizations, etc.
- Counselling
 - Available to people of all genders (3+ years)
- 24-Hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line
 - Provides crisis intervention, information and referrals to people impacted by sexualized violence



Exercise

- **For those who identify as men:** What steps do you take, on a daily basis, to prevent yourselves from being sexually assaulted?
- **For those who identify as women:** What steps do you take, on a daily basis, to prevent yourselves from being sexually assaulted?

Exercise Debrief



- What are the reasons for the gender differences in personal safety tips?
 - Patriarchal power structures
 - Who is held responsible for sexual assault
 - Sexual assault myths
 - Rape culture: Sexualized violence is condoned through oppressive belief structures and sexual scripts which promote dominance and entitlement (Rozee and Koss, 2001)
- There is a correlation between personal safety tips and sexual assault myths

Intersections Between Tips and Myths

Tip	Myths
Watch your drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual assault is perpetrated by strangers (“stranger danger”)• People are partly responsible for being sexually assaulted while drunk
Clearly state your boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual assault is the result of a miscommunication• Sexual assault is caused by uncontrollable sexual arousal
Take self-defense courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is easy to fight off an offender if you know how• Stranger danger• The best way to respond to an attempted sexual assault is through physical resistance

Effectiveness of Personal Safety Tips

- Ineffective at preventing sexual assault
(Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Breitenbecher, 2001, as cited in Rozee and Koss, 2001; Breitenbecher & Gidycz, 1998, as cited in Rozee and Koss, 2001)
- One study of a sexual assault risk reduction program which included self-defense strategies found that women significantly increased protective behaviours immediately afterwards, but did not experience lower rates of sexual assault or feelings of self-efficacy in the six months following
(Gidycz, Rich, Orchowski, King & Miller, 2006)

Impact of Personal Safety Tips

- **Contributes to a culture of fear** (Rozee, 2008)
- **Restricts women's behaviour**
(Hall, 2004; Softas-Nall, Bardos & Fakinis, 1993, as cited in Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997; Stanko, 1993, as cited in Rozee and Koss, 2001)
- **Fear loop: The more a person restricts their behaviour, the more fearful they become, hence restricting their behaviour even more**
(Liska, Sanchirico & Reed, 1988, as cited in Ferraro, 1996)

Impact of Personal Safety Tips

- Fear causes a reduction in perception of freedom and power (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997)
- Fear also lessens the convenience and enjoyment of women's daily lives (Day, 1997)
- Contributes to self-blame and guilt
- Reduces likelihood of disclosure and accessing support

Impact of Personal Safety Tips

- Distorts realities of sexualized violence
 - Increases fear of stranger sexual assault, which is less common
 - Internet safety tips focus on personal information. Highest “risk factor” is actually knowledge and desire for healthy relationships, not availability of personal information (Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell & Ybarra, 2008)
 - Emphasis on physical resistance, although people are less likely to physically resist or “fight” if they know the offender

Impact of Personal Safety Tips

- **Contributes to victim-blaming, especially if the survivor did something considered “risky”**
(Berkowitz, 1992, as cited in Rozee and Koss, 2001)
 - In one study of 400 undergraduate women who were given a fictional sexual assault vignette, the survivor was frequently blamed or the assault was not considered “rape”, especially if she was drinking alcohol (Crawford, O'Dougherty & Birchmeier, 2008)
 - Similar to prevention tips, victim-blaming functions to help people feel they can prevent a sexual assault

Impact of Personal Safety Tips

- Perpetuates idea that stopping sexual assault is the responsibility of survivors (Berkowitz, 1992, as cited in Rozee and Koss, 2001; Lonsway, 1996)
- Reinforces the social hierarchies and oppressions which lead to sexual assault (i.e., patriarchy, racism, classism, cisgenderism, etc.)

Impact of Personal Safety Tips

- Individualizes sexual violence by removing the context of rape culture
- Fails to examine sexual violence within the context of abusive relationship dynamics (ex: emotional abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse...)
- Contributes to myth that sexual violence always permanently “damages” those who experience it

Take Back the Night Poem

When you tell me that I shouldn't drink too much alcohol because that increases my risk of being sexually assaulted, I hear that I was responsible for being raped because I was drunk.

When you tell me to walk with a friend or lock my doors, I hear that I should fear strangers jumping out from the bushes or breaking into my house and not my friend and lover who raped me.

When you tell me to take self-defense classes, or to yell and fight back if I am being attacked, I hear that my natural defense reaction to freeze was wrong.

When you tell me to get to know people before I invite them into my home or go out with them, I hear that I should have known that the person I befriended for several years he was a rapist.



When you tell me to walk confidently, I hear that my body posture made my offender want to sexually assault me.

When you tell me to carry pepper spray, I hear that I am responsible for being sexually assaulted because I didn't.

When you tell me that I should report the assault to the police, I hear that if I don't because I am afraid, or don't want to talk about it, I shouldn't feel this way, and that my need to exert some sort of control after having my power taken away, is wrong.

When you offer me “tips” for my own safety, I hear that it was my behaviour in question, and not my offender's.

And when you tell me that there are things I could do differently, in order to prevent being sexually assaulted, I hear that I am responsible for what someone else does.

Tips and Marginalized Groups

- In what ways do tips impact marginalized groups?
 - Racialized groups
 - People with cognitive disabilities
 - Sex workers
 - Youth
 - People with addictions



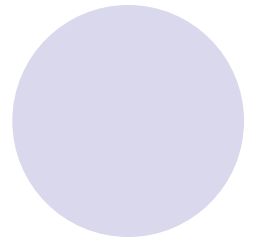
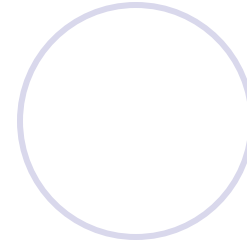
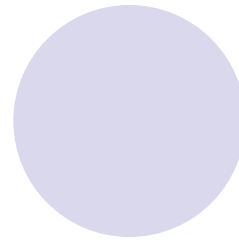
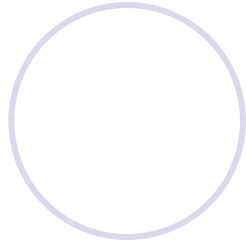
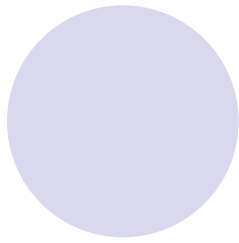
Prevention without Tips

- What would prevention look like without personal safety tips?
 - Holding perpetrators accountable
 - Stressing survivors are unequivocally blameless (without the “but...”)
 - Information about consent, coercion and power
 - Exploration of gender roles
 - Analysis of rape culture
 - Debunking myths

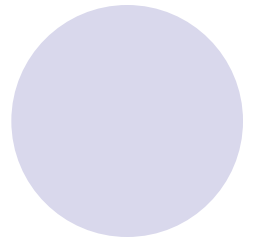
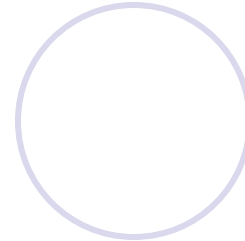
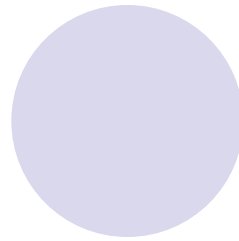
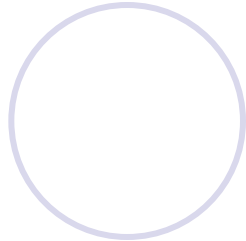
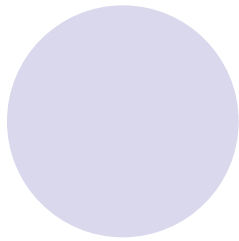


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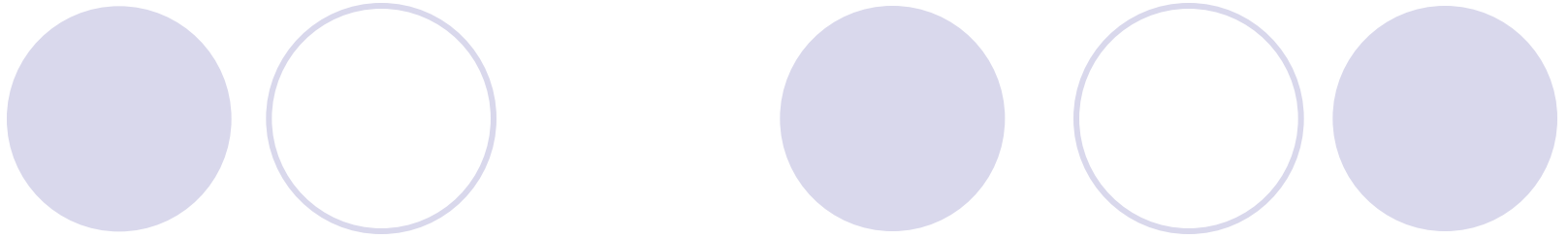
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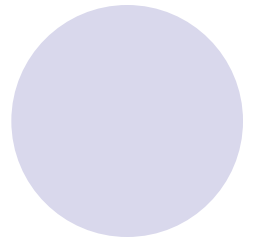
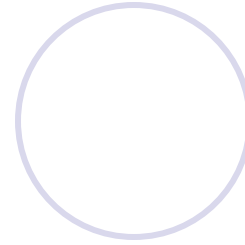
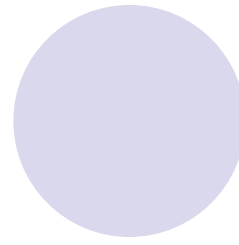
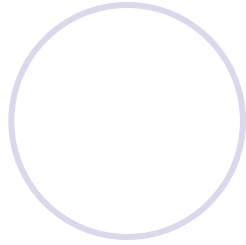
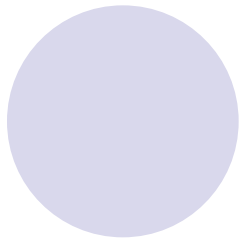
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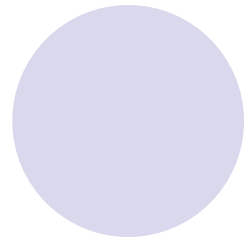
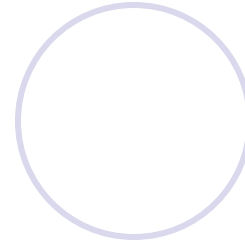
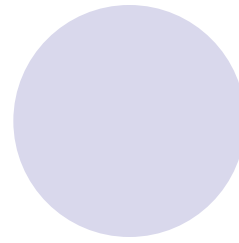
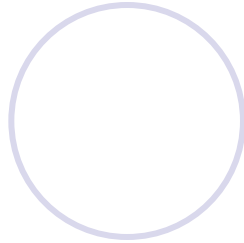
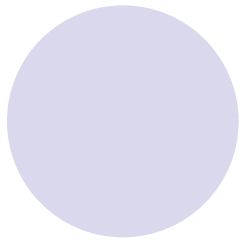
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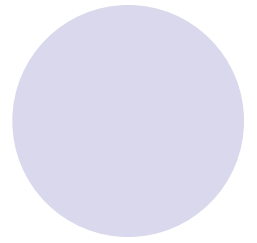
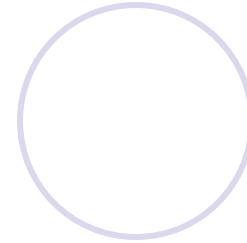
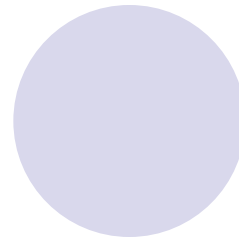
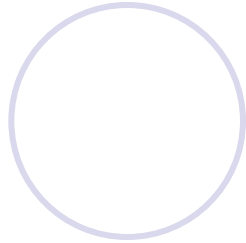
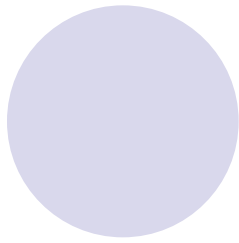


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