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## REACTIONS & FEELINGS AFTER AN ASSAULT

If you have experienced the trauma of sexual violence, you may feel a variety of emotions such as anger, sadness, or fear. Many people who have experienced sexual violence feel this range of emotions. It can be helpful to talk to someone you trust who is knowledgeable in trauma. If you identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ), you might:

- Have fear of being forced to come out if you talk about the trauma
- Feel that you are betraying the LGBTQ community by accusing a partner or friend
- Feel that you have nowhere to turn for help and fear unhelpful responses from social services, law enforcement, legal systems and medical staff

## REFERENCES

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## LGBTQ-identified victims and survivors of sexual violence

Info for individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning

## WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence violates a person's trust, autonomy and safety. Sexual assault occurs when one person does not give consent.

Sexual violence is a crime and includes many different acts such as rape, incest, child sexual abuse, ritual abuse, date and acquaintance rape, statutory rape, marital or partner rape, sexual exploitation, sexual contact, sexual harassment, human trafficking, and flashing.

People who do these acts do so because they want to control, shame, and hurt another person. They believe they have the right to your body and/or the right to talk about your body in a sexual way without asking your permission.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE & THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

A sexual assault can happen to anyone regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion, geography, ability, appearance, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Studies show that most people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) knew the person who sexually assaulted them.



### **I identify as LGBTQ, and I experienced sexual violence as a child. Can that happen?**

Child sexual abuse is when a person exposes a child to sexual acts or behavior. It is never the child's fault - children rely on the people in their lives for support, safety, and respect. Child sexual abuse happens at an alarming rate. It is estimated that in a year, about one in 12 children are sexually abused (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005) and one in three girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused before the age of 17 (Briere & Elliott, 2003). Keep in mind that someone does not become LGBTQ because they were sexually abused as a child by someone who was the same sex or same gender.

### **What if I don't know the person? What if they did it because I identify as LGBTQ?**

Sexual violence can be used as a weapon against people who identify as or are thought to be LGBTQ. These hate-motivated crimes can include sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, or other forms of sexual violence. In a study on sexual assault and coercion among lesbians and gay men, slightly more than half of the group said they had experienced some form of sexual violence in their lives (Waldner-Haugrud & Gratch, 1997). It has also been noted

that women who identify as lesbian or bisexual experience higher rates of sexual violence, possibly due to their sexual orientation and their gender (Gentlewarrior & Fountain, 2009). Fifty percent of transgender individuals experience sexual abuse or assault at some point in their life (FORGE, n.d.). Hate-motivated acts of sexual violence can make it difficult to express how you feel about the incident. Know that you are not alone in this and there are resources available for support and information.

### **What about when the person who is assaulting me is my partner or significant other?**

Although partners are supposed to respect our bodies, sexual violence can and does happen in LGBTQ relationships. Tactics used by a sexually-abusive partner include:

- Using drugs or alcohol to force you into unwanted sexual activities
- Telling you to do sexual activities in order to "prove" that you're LGBTQ
- Commenting on, touching, groping or grabbing body parts in a sexual way when you do not want them to
- Hiding or saying they'll take away your hormone medications in order to have control over your body



• **For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression (FORGE).** To receive peer support for those on the female-to-male (FTM) gender spectrum and significant others, friends, family, and allies (SOFFAs), visit [www.forge-forward.org](http://www.forge-forward.org)

• **Mazzoni Center in Philadelphia,** 21 S. 12th Street, 8th floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107. To inquiry about LGBT-focused health services, visit [www.mazzonicenter.org](http://www.mazzonicenter.org) or call 215-563-0652

• **National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC).** To obtain information and resources on sexual violence and prevention, visit [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

• **The Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Pittsburgh (GLCC).** To receive resources and opportunities to promote visibility, understanding and equality within the community, email [center@glccpgh.org](mailto:center@glccpgh.org) or call 412-422-0114.

• **The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR).** To find information and local rape crisis center centers in Pennsylvania, visit [www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org) or call 1-888-772-PCAR

• **TransCentral PA.** To find information, resources, conferences, meetings and community-building initiatives, visit [www.transcentralpa.org](http://www.transcentralpa.org)