

Frequently Asked Questions

1. I was raped and feel like it's my fault. Am I to blame?

Many survivors of rape and other forms sexual violence feel — as you do — that they are to blame. Perhaps others told you that you “wanted it” or that you could have prevented the assault. Perhaps you had been friendly with the rapist or have accepted gifts from him, like cigarettes. Please remember that whatever happened before the assault, if you did not consent to sex, he raped you and he alone is to blame. Although feelings of guilt are very common after a sexual assault, you did nothing to cause the abuse, and it's not your fault. You are not responsible for the rapist's behaviour.

2. I was raped and I feel like I'm “going crazy.” How can I cope in here?

You are not alone. Many survivors of sexual abuse behind bars experience similar feelings. Rape is devastating and should not happen to anybody. You may feel overwhelmed, sad, afraid, anxious, hurt, shocked, confused, angry, guilty, shameful, or relieved. You may also have thoughts of wanting to die. These feelings are common reactions to sexual violence, particularly if you continue to be abused or can't get the help and care you need and deserve. Talking about your experiences can be very difficult: you may be afraid that you won't be believed, or ashamed about what happened to you. Right now, it's important that you get support and medical care. Ask someone you trust to help you with this. Is there an official, social worker, psychologist, or family member you can reach out to? Please try to reach out for help. Talking to someone you trust about what has happened is an important step in your healing.

3. I have been raped, where can I find help?

You have the right to get support and medical care as soon as possible. Please find someone you trust to help you — an official, unit manager, nurse, social worker, or psychologist.

Do you know the Independent Correctional Centre Visitor (ICCV) at your prison? Do you trust him or her? ICCVs are there to help you get health care and support if you do not have success reaching out to DCS members.

If you can get to a telephone, you could also call the Lifeline helpline on: 0800 150 150. This number is available every day for 24 hours and is free from any Telkom landline.

You will need urgent medical care and support so please find someone you trust and ask them to help you through the process.

4. I was aroused and even ejaculated when I was being raped. I am confused, how can this be?

It's normal for our bodies to react to certain physical stimulations. For example, if someone is tickling you and you start laughing, this does not make unwanted tickling okay. Rather, this is how your body responds. Becoming aroused during a sexual assault is NORMAL! It does not take away the fact that you were sexually abused and hurt.

5. Ever since I was raped inmates call me a woman; they say I am not a man anymore and everyone wants to have sex with me.

No one can take away your gender identity. Lots of people wrongly believe that men who have been raped have been turned into women. This is because society tells us that rape does not happen to men. This is not true. Like all rape survivors, you need to be supported in order to get through your traumatic experience. You should never be made to feel like you have lost your manhood, because you haven't.

6. How should I respond when someone tries to rape me?

There is no right or wrong way to respond to rape. Anything you do to live through the rape is right and people have different ways of responding: some people yield, and pretend to cooperate; some try to bargain; others may fight back physically. During the assault, your main task was survival and whatever you did to survive was the right thing to do.

7. One of the inmates was rubbing his private parts against me, did he rape me?

No, but he sexually assaulted you. Sexual assault, like rape, is illegal and is punishable under our laws. Rape is defined as unwanted penetration, whether it is oral, anal, or vaginal. Sexual assault refers to unwanted sexual contact, including fondling, rubbing, and any other form of touching.