

## **Risk Reduction Tips**

### **Potential Victims**

Risk reduction tips can often take a victim-blaming tone, even unintentionally. With no intention to blame victims, and with recognition that only those who commit sexual violence are responsible for those actions, these suggestions may nevertheless help you reduce your risk of experiencing a non-consensual sexual act.

- Trust your intuition. If you feel a person or a situation is unsafe, act on those feelings and leave the situation or person. You are probably right.
- When you attend parties, bring your own drinks and don't accept drinks from someone you don't know well and trust.
- Avoid drinking pre-made punches; they often contain high amounts of alcohol.
- Use the buddy system when going out. Make sure someone in your group is sober and keeping track of others.
- Take affirmative responsibility for your alcohol intake/drug use and acknowledge that alcohol/drugs lower your sexual inhibitions and may make you vulnerable to someone who views a drunk or high person as a sexual opportunity.
- Take care of your friends or colleagues and ask that they take care of you. A good friend will step in when they see potentially risky situations.

### **Potential Aggressor**

If you find yourself in the position of being the initiator of sexual behavior, you owe sexual respect to your potential partner. These suggestions may help you reduce your risk for being accused of sexual misconduct:

- Clearly communicate your intentions to your sexual partner and give them a chance to clearly relate their intentions to you.
- Understand and respect personal boundaries.
- DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS about consent; about someone's sexual availability; about whether they are attracted to you; about how far you can go; or about whether they are physically and/or mentally able to consent. If there are any questions or ambiguity, then you DO NOT have consent.
- Mixed messages from your partner are a clear indication that you should stop, defuse any sexual tension and communicate better. You may be misreading them. You must respect the timeline for sexual behaviors with which they have affirmatively consented.
- Don't take advantage of someone's incapacity caused by drugs or alcohol, even if they willingly consumed such substances.

- Realize that your potential partner could be intimidated by you, or fearful. You may have a power advantage simply because of your gender or size. Don't abuse that power.
- Understand that consent to one form of sexual behavior does not automatically imply consent to other forms of sexual behavior.
- Silence and passivity cannot be interpreted as an indication of consent. Read your potential partner carefully, paying attention to verbal and non-verbal communication and body language.