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Rape

Surviving Rape & Empowering People to Get On With Their Lives



When Mode set out to explore the issue of rape, the first thing we did was speak to the Northamptonshire Rape and Incest Crisis Centre. What we found out what unbelievable – the fact that another local magazine had refused to publicise their extremely vital service for the shocking reason that it might offend their readers.

Well dear readers welcome to the real world. Rape and sexual abuse are probably one of the most terrible things that can ever happen to a person. To be subjected to rape or abuse can not only destroy lives, it can also leave a devastating impact on everyone involved including families, friends and children. The fact that someone might be offended reading about this issue is probably the very last concern, and so we urge you to read on.

Old Fashioned Image

Many people think of rape as something that happens 'outside', by a stranger, in the dark of night in an unlit alley. Unfortunately as Mode discovered, you are far more likely to be raped in familiar surroundings and devastatingly, by someone you already know.

The statistics speak for themselves and they make shocking reading:

- 1 in 4 women have experienced rape or attempted rape
- 1 in 7 women have been coerced into sex, rising to 1 in 3 among divorced and separated women
- The most common perpetrators of rape are husbands and partners
- 97% of callers to Rape Crisis Lines knew their assailant prior to the assault
- The majority of perpetrators are known to the victim
- During 2001 it is estimated that there was 190,000 incidents of serious sexual assault and 47,000 female victims of rape/attempted rape.

And this is not only confined to women. More and more often, men are seeking help for rape and sexual abuse and it's not clear yet if this is because there are more incidents or if men feel more able to report it.

So what are the government & police doing about it?

With regards to the law, new charges brought about in 2004 have made significant changes which make it easier to secure a conviction however, this only works if a person goes through with a trial. Regrettably however, rape is still one of the most unreported crimes, with research showing that women are less likely to report rape than they are to report domestic violence.

One of the main reasons for this is fear of being disbelieved by the police. So immediately, there is a large figure of sexual violence that never gets reported.

"Rape is an attack on the integrity of the woman's body and on her own autonomy. She may feel powerless to report, particularly if threat of further violence was made. Due to the intimate nature of the crime, she may feel reluctant to submit herself to the invasiveness of a forensic examination and/or questioning from the police."

The unfortunate truth is, rape happens and will continue to happen. But the message we want to get across is that it doesn't have to end here – there is light at the end of it – from a lighthouse in fact.

With this in mind, we spoke to the Northamptonshire Rape & Incest Crisis Centre, also known as The Lighthouse Centre, to explore the issues surrounding this sensitive subject and find out how they help people to move on from the past and go on to live happy lives.

I Will Survive

Preferring to be called a survivor rather than a victim is where it all starts at the Lighthouse Centre;

"At the time of an incident and immediately after, a person is a victim of a crime; however after that initial period they become a survivor and we can help people through this process."

Through a series of face to face counselling sessions at their discrete offices, survivors can go to The Lighthouse Centre where they will work with fully trained and highly skilled volunteers. Once there, with a lot of understanding, hard work and determination people can, and do move on with their lives.

Ghosts from the past

But what about people who are still struggling to come to terms with something that happened to them many years ago? In today's media obsessed culture, you can barely move without seeing images about rape and abuse, the Austrian case being the latest in a long line. This can often trigger deeply buried memories that have never been disclosed or discussed with friends or family and can leave people feeling lost, distressed and thinking that they have nowhere to turn.

The Lighthouse Centre is experienced in dealing with this type of trauma and stresses that their services are not time constrained;

"Whether it happened yesterday or 50 years ago, the feelings can still be the same and we can help in either of these circumstances."

Whilst they are not constrained in this way the reality is, The Lighthouse Centre is a charity and relies solely on donations to be able to offer their service. This seems unfair when other towns who offer the same service are funded by their local Primary Care Trusts.

This is made even worse when you consider that the very same people who refuse to fund the service refer hundreds of people there every year!

This valuable service which provides a life line to thousands of people is in desperate need of further funding and it's up to us to lobby our local MP's in order to keep this issue at the top of the political agenda. You can do this by contacting them directly, or you can email Mode on michelle@mode-magazine.co.uk and we will be happy to forward on your views.



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If you need help...

The Lighthouse Centre is open to everyone, regardless of age or gender and they have worked extremely hard to make their service accessible to all..

"We have recently launched a new website where people can get help and support and speak to other survivors in an online forum. We have also made the website available in many different languages as we want everyone in the community to be able to access our service."

If you have been a victim of rape or sexual abuse, or wish to make a donation, please contact The Lighthouse Centre on 01604 250 721 or visit their website at www.nricc.com