



Victim Blaming: A response to a comment submitted to our site.

The following is a comment posted on our site. We have redacted all identifying information and have chosen not to link it to the original post. Instead, we'd like to address the victim blaming within the response. Obviously, the responder was upset to discover that what they felt was good advice was understood as victim blaming by the original poster. This is not uncommon. But, let us be very clear here, being upset that your advice is victim blaming is not worse than experiencing victim blaming. If someone is in a position to tell you that they found your 'advice' hurtful and victim blaming, you need to listen to them. It doesn't matter that you didn't mean to cause harm. The consequences of your words were harmful. Apologise and then listen.

The statements written below are clearly by someone who has not LISTENED:

I'm and I'm sorry that she's taken the advice I gave her this way, though I appreciate she is upset, I've tried to give her advice to make sure it doesn't happen again. I don't think it is wise for ANYONE to go to a bar, get drunk and then let a stranger who is also drunk take them home alone. I've known men in that situation who have been given the date rape drug (probably so they could be robbed rather than raped).

First of all, the only risk factor to sexual assault and rape are being in the presence of a rapist. Nothing a woman does increases her risk. If a man chooses to rape a woman, he will rape a woman. Secondly, this 'advice' is only ever directed at women. The only time men are mentioned in this "advice" is when someone is trying to explain away their victim blaming. Thirdly, women are statistically far safer being walked home by a stranger than they are by an acquaintance. In fact, women are statistically much safer from rape and sexual violence and abuse intoxicated in a public space than they are in their own homes. The vast majority of sexual violence is perpetrated by someone known to the victim. This type of advice completely ignores the reality of male violence and blames women for the being the victim of a 'stranger rape'. One wonders what the advice would be for a woman walked home by a 'friend' who then raped them: misunderstanding?

I also think that if someone starts to do something you don't like, it is helpful to ask them to stop. Men AND women can misread body language, particularly when both have been drinking.

Rape and sexual violence are NOT about misreading body language. This is a rape myth and it is extremely destructive. Rapists know they are committing rape. They are not confused or unable to read "body language". They rape because they believe they are entitled to rape. Suggesting that it is "helpful" to tell men not to sexually assault you is victim blaming. It erases the perpetrator and negates their responsibility. Instead, it places the blame on the victim for not "communicating" clearly. It also ignores the normal human responses to fear and trauma. This is a response based in ignorance,

When told me that she'd been sexually assaulted 6 times by 6 different men in her first year at uni, I suggested that she did a self defence course to improve her self confidence. I



agreed with her own suggestion that she shouldn't let strangers she met in bars walk her home. And I told her that I thought going for counselling as she suggested was a strong thing to do and would probably be helpful.

Being a victim of repeated sexual violence is NOT because a woman lacks confidence. It is because we live in a rape culture where men believe they are entitled to access women's bodies whenever and wherever they want. A self defence course will not stop a man from believing he's entitled to rape. Again, this completely erases the perpetrator and makes the victim responsible for being a victim.

But, if, as I understand happened with, the man asks 'are you OK' when he is making advances and your response is 'yes', I can't see why he would think you wanted him to stop. My experience is that if someone asks you and you say 'yes' he will probably continue and will believe that is what you want to happen. If you want someone to stop, it is important to learn to say 'stop' or 'I'm ok, but I'd like you to stop' or 'no, I'd really rather you didn't do that'. Two way communication is important.

Again, this is simply victim blaming. If a man chooses to sexually assault you, saying stop or no won't prevent it. This type of 'advice' ignores the power dynamics involved in sexual violence. It also assumes the man would stop if a woman said no. We all know that the word 'no' won't stop a man from harming a woman.

That is advice, not blame for what has happened or judgement on who is right or wrong. I wasn't there! I'm not condoning the men, any more than I would a drug pusher. But, just as we say NO to drugs it should be possible to say NO to unwanted advances.

This entire comment is quite clearly blaming the victim and making excuses for men. If a woman tells you they were sexually assaulted, you believe them. You do not use statements like " (this isn't) judgment on who is right or wrong". If a woman has been sexually assaulted or raped, judgement on the perpetrator should be immediate. Questioning a woman about why she didn't do x,y, or z is victim blaming. In many situations saying no can put a woman in greater danger. However a woman responds to her sexual assault or rape as it was happening was the correct response for that woman at that exact moment. Suggesting she should have done something differently to prevent it is victim blaming.

The type of advice in the comment above is incredibly harmful. Whilst we don't want this response to be linked to the original poster, we do hope that the 'helpful' friend who wrote the comment reads this post. They have not only blamed a woman for being a victim of multiple sexual assaults, they have also completely erased the perpetrator.

This is victim blaming 101.