

# BREAKING

# THE HOLD

A BOOKLET  
ABOUT RAPE  
PREVENTION



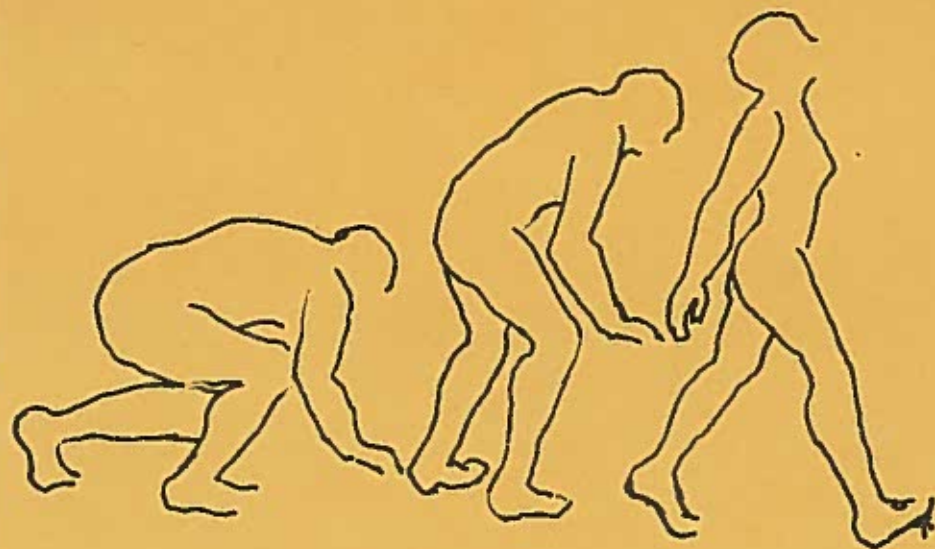
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VANCOUVER RAPE RELIEF

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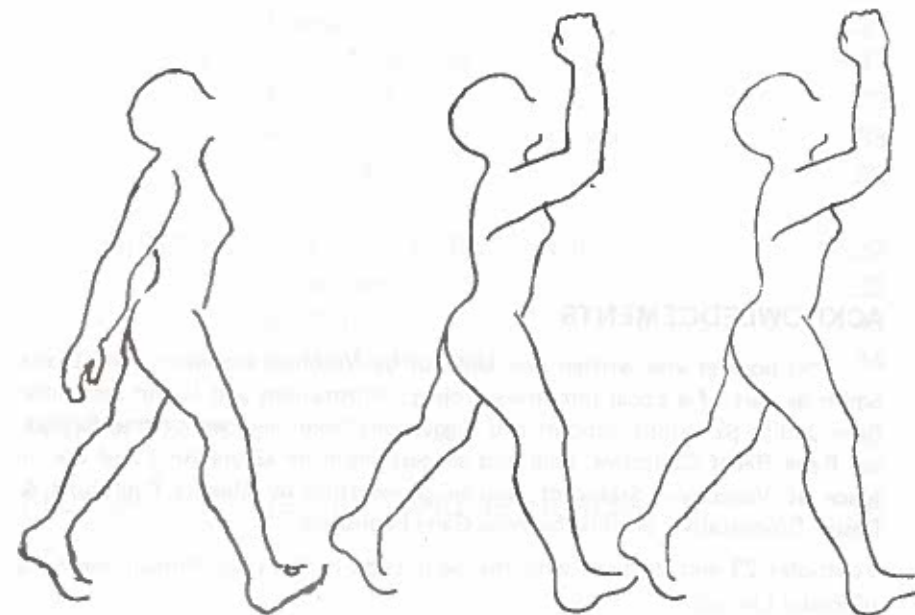
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# INTRODUCTION

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This booklet is divided into three sections.

The first section attempts to set the scene. We give a brief herstorical overview of sexual assault, focusing on our sex-role conditioning as a partial explanation of this violence against women and an account of how some women are attempting to stop this abuse.

The second section deals with what we, as individuals, can do to prevent harm to ourselves and our children. We stress the need to change the attitudes, both our own and other people's, that makes us rely on others instead of ourselves for protection, thus forfeiting our own ability to maintain, or regain control in potentially harmful situations. Also included is a short description of what to expect should we be the victim of a sexual assault.

The third section emphasizes organized group action as the only really effective way to eliminate sexual assault. Realizing the potential of strength-in-numbers is the first step in effecting change.

\* \* \* \* \*

Though focusing on sexual assault, what became strikingly clear to us as we researched and read was that it is only ONE of the many forms of violence directed against women. Also that this violence is just one of the very clear signs of oppression of women in this society, in other societies, and pervasive throughout our herstory. We refer to some of those sources which helped make this conclusion very, very obvious to us at the end of the booklet. Other than that we referred to daily reality to authenticate what we read and learned, whether it was from our own lives as women or from the daily confrontation at Rape Relief with reports of rapists, child-molesters, peeping Toms, flashers, wife batterers... etc. Attaching labels hindered, but did not stop our realization that it was not mere chance that generally these offenders are male and their victims female but instead we saw it as an inevitable consequence of the male-defined and dominated world in which we live. The more aware we became of the outrages done to women and the extent to which change is necessary, the clearer we saw that putting stronger locks on our doors (especially if the rapist is our husband), doubling the number of police officers, or sentencing more rapists to jail would not stop violence against women. (Neither would being nice and hoping 'they' would stop hurting us. 'They' don't.) Measures such as these do not challenge the causes of violence and only insignificantly confront those who express it.

The root causes of the violence that is directed toward women are deep and complex. It involves an economic and social system which victimizes many, particularly women. What we are emphasizing here is that, whatever the causes of violence are, women are scapegoated as the justifiable target for its expression. We want to end this 'gender' class bias that cuts across traditional class divisions, that allows women to be the recipients of male aggression.

\* \* \* \* \*

This booklet was initiated by Vancouver Rape Relief as part of a Local Initiatives Project on rape prevention. While past and present members of Rape Relief, along with others in the community, work to stop rape and help rape victims it is hoped the need for such organizations will be obsolete in the future. Written by women to this end, this booklet is primarily for women and girls being the group who are predominantly sexually assaulted and being those who would most directly gain from its elimination. It is also for men who want to actively understand and/or work to change this problem. While men and boys are also assaulted, mostly by other males but sometimes by women, they are the exceptions. Here we focus on the common everyday varieties of sexual assault and violence by men against women, the threat of which combined with many other forms of oppression such as lack of day care and economic opportunities, holds all of us down. Working together to eliminate rape is one way to begin to break this hold.

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## VOCABULARY OF RAPE

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<b>ASSAULT</b>	to attempt or to do violence to another
<b>ASSERT</b>	state positively — insist on (a right ...)
<b>ASSERTIVE</b>	confident — certain — positive
<b>AGGRESSION</b>	an unprovoked attack
<b>COERCE</b>	to compel by force — through psychological or physical means
<b>DOMINATE</b>	control or rule by strength or power
<b>FEAR</b>	feeling that danger is near — dread
<b>HERSTORY</b>	a recording and analysis of human affairs from a female perspective
<b>HISTORY</b>	a recording and explanation of human affairs from a male perspective
<b>MACHISMO</b>	glorification of strength, virility, manliness
<b>MYTH</b>	any invented story or belief used to explain phenomena
<b>OPPRESSION</b>	being limited or prevented by others from obtaining basic needs and/or equal rights and opportunities and/or fulfilling human potential
<b>PASSIVE</b>	to be acted on — not resisting — inactive — quiescent
<b>PATRIARCHY</b>	a social organization in which men control and define the ideology, the social, political and economic institutions