

Risk Reduction

With no intent to victim blame and recognizing that only abusers are responsible for their abuse, the following are some strategies to reduce one's risk of sexual assault or harassment. (taken from Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network, www.rainn.org)

1. **Be aware** of your surroundings. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way to get out of a bad situation.
2. Try to **avoid isolated areas**. It is more difficult to get help if no one is around. Don't allow yourself to be isolated with someone you don't know or trust.
3. **Walk with purpose**. If you don't know where you are going, act like you do.
4. **Trust your instincts**. If a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the best place to be. If you see something suspicious, contact the Department of Safety if on campus or law enforcement immediately
5. **Don't load yourself down** with packages or bags as this can make you appear more vulnerable.
6. **Keep your cell phone with you** and charged. Have cash money.
7. **Avoid putting music headphones in both ears** so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking alone.
8. **When you go to a social gathering, go with a group of friends**. Arrive together, check in with each other throughout the evening, and leave together. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way out of a bad situation.
9. **Don't leave your drink unattended** while talking, dancing, using the restroom, or making a phone call. If you've left your drink alone, just get a new one.
10. **Don't accept drinks from people you don't know or trust**. If you choose to accept a drink, go with the person to get it, watch it being poured, and carry it yourself. At parties, don't drink from the punch bowls or other large, common open containers.
11. **Watch out for your friends, and vice versa**. If a friend seems out of it, is way too intoxicated, or is acting out of character, get him or her to a safe place immediately.
12. **If you suspect you or a friend has been drugged, contact law enforcement immediately by calling 911**. Be explicit with doctors so they can give you the correct tests and treatment.
13. If you need to get out of an uncomfortable or scary situation here are some things that you can try:
 - a. **Be true to yourself**. Don't feel obligated to do anything you don't want to do. "I don't want to" is always a good enough reason. Do what feels right to you.
 - b. **Have a code word with your friends or family**. If you don't feel comfortable, call them and communicate your discomfort without the person you are with knowing. Your friends or family can then come and help you leave.
 - c. **Lie**. If you don't want to hurt the person's feelings it is better to lie and make up a reason to leave than to stay and be uncomfortable, scared, or worse. Some excuses you could use are: needing to take care of a friend or family member, not feeling well, having somewhere else that you need to be, etc.
 - d. **Try to think of an escape route**. How would you try to get out of the room? Where are the doors? Windows? Are there people around who might be able to help you? Is there an emergency phone nearby?
 - e. **If you and/or the other person have been drinking**, you can say that you would rather wait until you both have your full judgment before doing anything you may regret later.