



**RAISKAUS-
KRIISIKESKUS
TUKINAINEN**

**WHEN YOUR
SEXUAL AUTONOMY
HAS BEEN VIOLATED**

IF YOU HAVE BEEN RECENTLY RAPED OR EXPERIENCED SOME OTHER TYPE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

- **Do not wash yourself or change your clothes**
- **Visit a doctor even if there are no visible injuries**
- **Contact the Rape Crisis Centre Tukinainen's free helplines outside office ours**
 - you can make an anonymous call
 - any information concerning your call to the helpline is confidential
 - you make the decision of whether to report the offence after receiving information about it
- **Contact the police**
- **Do not hesitate to talk about what happened with someone close to you, do not be left alone with the experience**



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SEXUAL OFFENCES ARE KNOWN BY MANY NAMES

A sexual offence is a violation of a person's sexual autonomy.

Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code defines the names and characteristics of all sexual offences.

Using or threatening with physical violence is not the only characteristic of rape.

Rape can also occur without violence and it does not necessarily cause physical injuries to the victim. The characteristics of rape can just as well include exploiting another person's unconsciousness, illness, disability, state of fear or other state of helplessness. These situations often make victims unable to defend themselves or to formulate or express their will.

In some cases, we talk about sexual abuse when the perpetrator has abused his or her position, for example, by persuading or dominating the victim, abusing the victim's immaturity or dependency on the perpetrator.

Sexual violence or abuse is not sex; instead, it is a violation of sexual autonomy.



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SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence causes a traumatic crisis, which involves considerable psychological and physical stress. It affects the victim's perception of the self, others and the world in multiple ways. It may also harm the victim's sense of security and ability to trust.

If you experience states of fear and other mental consequences, it is important that you address them with the authorities, such as a doctor.



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A VIOLATION OF SEXUAL AUTONOMY TYPICALLY CAUSES SYMPTOMS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

- **Flashbacks**, which involve reliving the experience of violence in full or partly in a realistic and intrusive way. Nightmares are also common.
- **Avoidance symptoms**, which involve the person who has experienced violence avoiding thinking about or remembering the incident and experiencing related emotions. It is common to feel numb. You may feel that the experience did not happen to you and is unreal.
- **Symptoms related to alertness occur as bodily experiences and mood swings.** Your body and mind are in a constant state of alertness and caution, ready to anticipate and react to danger. It is also typical to keep flinching, have sleep disturbances and difficulty concentrating.

These symptoms are a consequence of an incident that exceeds what is tolerable, not a sign of the victim's weakness or failure.



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IT IS COMMON TO FEEL

SHAME

Sexual violence is a deliberate act with the intention to shame, humiliate and dominate the victim. Shame may prevent the victim from telling others about the experience and seeking help. **However, the only one who should feel ashamed is the offender, not the person who was subjected to violence.**

GUILT

Many people who have experienced sexual violence feel guilt and bear a sense of responsibility for what has happened. **However, the responsibility for sexual violence lies always with the perpetrator, not the victim.**

FEAR AND INSECURITY

A violation of sexual autonomy often results in a sense of profound helplessness or even fear of death. After the incident, the feelings of fear can make it more difficult to function in everyday life.

Things that remind you of the experience can suddenly stir up feelings of fear and panic. It can also be difficult to trust yourself and other people.



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SELF-LOATHING

An experience of violence can stir up self-loathing. You may find it difficult to look into a mirror. Your body may feel dirty and you may feel a need to wash yourself repeatedly. However, with the help of crisis support and by processing the incident, you can rediscover a positive relationship with yourself.

HATE

You may find it difficult to feel hate immediately after the experience. Later on, feelings of hate towards yourself, your loved ones and the offender may emerge. This hate may appear as irritation, anger or rage. Feeling angry is understandable and justified when someone has treated you unjustly.

GRIEF

Grief is a result of the changes and losses caused by the experiences of sexually offensive violence. You may feel sad after a delay, but grief is a necessary part of processing what has happened and recovering from it.



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FOR A LOVED ONE

No one chooses to become a victim of sexual violence or abuse. The violation of bodily integrity affects the lives of those affected by it in multiple ways.

It is important that loved ones support the person who has experienced sexual violence so that the person can process what has happened in peace and start recovering from the experience.

Loved ones can show their support by being present, listening to and believing the victim, assisting in practical matters and encouraging the victim to seek help.

While no one can make the incident go away, loved ones can help the victim of a sexual offence survive the experience.

Loved ones may also need support. You do not have to cope alone.



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DO NOT HESITATE TO SEEK HELP

It is often difficult to talk about a violation of sexual autonomy, and you may feel overwhelmed about seeking help.

You may wish that you could just forget about the difficult incident and push it out of your mind. Indeed, avoiding the issue may make the person feel better temporarily, but daring to explain what has happened will help them recover.

You can start processing the experience by having the courage to talk to someone close to you. A person who has experienced sexual violence also has the right to professional help, and this is often an essential part of recovery.

You do not have to be left alone with the feelings and thoughts stirred by sexual violence. It is important to remember that you can recover from the experience of sexual violence.



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LEGAL SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

You do not have to cope with the legal process alone. Free legal assistance and support is available. The victim is entitled to a fair trial and appropriate, respectful treatment.

There are many options that improve the legal status of a victim of a sexual offence. They all aim at ensuring your legal protection.

Victims of sexual offences always have an opportunity to receive legal advice related to their case free of charge even before reporting the offence, at any stage of the legal process or even if they choose not to report the incident.

The victim has the right to receive a free attorney for the pre-trial investigation of the offence.



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USE YOUR RIGHTS. THEY ARE THERE TO HELP YOU

You can request an attorney to accompany you in the police interview of the injured party (= victim).

The injured party also has the right to an attorney free of charge when the prosecutor has made a choice to prosecute the offence, the injured party has requested a penalty for the perpetrator in the criminal investigation and has a claim for damages.

The attorney will help you pursue your claims for damages.

The victim of a sexual offence has the right to a support person who can provide practical support during the legal process in addition to the attorney.

Special arrangements have also been created in the court room to ensure that the victim does not have to face the perpetrator.



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CONTACT INFORMATION

**RAPE CRISIS CENTRE TUKINAINEN
HELSINKI, JYVÄSKYLÄ AND ROVANIEMI
WWW.TUKINAINEN.FI**



FREE CRISIS HELPLINE

+358 (0)800 97899

MON-THU AT 9-15

SAT-SUN AT 15-21



FREE LEGAL ADVICE

+358 (0)800 97895

MON-THU AT 13-16



WWW.NETTITUKINAINEN.FI

ONLINE CRISIS ASSISTANCE, GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING



WWW.SENJANETTI.FI

INFORMATION ABOUT THE LEGAL ISSUES
OF VICTIMS OF A SEXUAL OFFENCE