

Sexual Assault Services

Possible Effects of Sexual Assault on Adult Survivors

Sexual assault may affect victims/survivors in many aspects of their lives. This is only a partial list. Survivors may react in an infinite variety of ways.

Possible physical effects in addition to physical trauma:

- sleeplessness
- headaches
- stomach aches
- eating disorders
- rashes
- pregnancy
- speech difficulties & stuttering
- genital trauma/infection
- other physical trauma

Possible psychological/emotional effects:

- lower self esteem, even self-hatred
- conflict in or withdrawal from relationships
 - o difficulty with trust
 - o difficulty with intimacy
- feelings
 - o shame
 - o depression
 - o anger
 - o distrust
 - o blaming self
 - o anxiety
 - o fear
 - o confusion
 - o loss/grief
- sexual effects
 - o acting out sexually
 - o promiscuity
 - o sexual inhibition/avoidance
- rigid thinking
- difficulty parenting
 - o over-protection
 - o under-protection (especially if in denial)
- counter-productive coping (see handout on positive coping)
 - o substance abuse
 - o self injury
 - o dangerous risk taking
 - o compulsivity
 - o isolation
 - o over-working at school, home, employment
- dissociation
- need to be in control
- nightmares
- feeling different from others