

Lesbians and Sexual Assault

Lesbians are in most ways no different from other sexual assault survivors, but they have their own special needs and issues.

The lesbian survivor may experience typical symptoms of sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse just as any other sexual assault survivor might experience:

- PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Anger
- Depression
- Sleeplessness
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Sleeping disorders
- Uncontrollable crying
- Eating disorders
- Increased drug or alcohol use

The rapist can be anyone – a family member, a friend, a date, a partner, a co-worker, a neighbor, or a stranger. If the woman is raped specifically because she is a lesbian, this is not only rape, but a hate crime as well.

It is important for counselors, loved ones, and family members to be supportive and realize that just as all women are not alike, not all lesbians are alike, that lesbians of color have issues which are different from white lesbians, and that each person is an individual in her own right and should be respected for those qualities.

STATEWIDE SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS
RESPONSE HOTLINE
1-800-977-5776

Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault

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501-246-3276
1-866-63-ACASA (22272)
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ACASA
Arkansas Coalition
Against Sexual Assault

Is She Angry or Depressed?



Anger and Depression are two of the common feelings which women exhibit as a result of sexual assault or child sexual abuse. It is not “crazy” or unusual to be angry or sad about an event which was perceived to be traumatic and life threatening.

- Anger is a natural reaction to the violation of sexual assault. For the lesbian, part of her anger or depression may also stem from the very real cultural oppression of lesbians.
- A same-sex partner may be able to identify with the victim’s feelings more than a heterosexual partner would and may experience similar post-traumatic symptoms. The victim’s sense of sadness and anger may increase if she feels deprived of her partner’s emotional support just when she needs it the most.

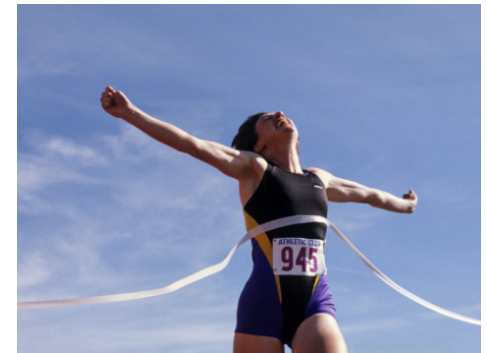
- When the perpetrator is a lover, she may feel doubly victimized by someone who was supposed to be even more understanding of her.
- Lesbians have to face not only a sexist culture, but a homophobic one as well. In some cases, even the burden of racism.

Fears About Disclosure

Many victims of sexual assault are fearful about reporting or disclosing that assault. For the lesbian survivor, there may be additional fears as well:

- She may fear that those around her will be judgmental towards her orientation as well as the sexual assault itself.
- If she has not “come out,” she may be fearful of exposure to family or hostile culture.
- She may fear the loss of her support system.
- She may be afraid that her sexual orientation will be perceived to be the crux of the problem rather than the assault itself.
- The lesbian community is small. She might be afraid that everyone will find out about her assault.

- She may be afraid that those in the criminal justice system, who may not be as sympathetic to a victim who is also a lesbian, will discriminate against her.
- In addition to special concerns related to how others may perceive her sexual orientation, the lesbian survivor will likely have all the common fears that any survivor might have.



You were never created
to live Depressed, Guilty,
Condemned, Ashamed or
Unworthy.

You were created to be
VICTORIOUS!