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The feeling of excitement grows as students prepare to return to campus and new students join the campus community. Every new semester comes with the opportunity to have new experiences and meet new friends. Along with these positive opportunities comes the potential for unpleasant experiences as well. The first step in preparing oneself for any situation that may come occur is to know the facts, follow the steps everyone can take to stay safe, and know the resources that are available if a bad situation presents itself. This is especially true right now considering the highest report of sexual assaults on campus occur in August and September, the same time students start the new school year.

Sexual Assault can take many forms; it includes sexual contact, sexual coercion, sexual harassment, stalking, attempted rape and rape. "College women are more at risk for rape and other forms of sexual assault than women the same age but not in college. Despite the popular scenario of someone jumping out of the bushes, 85% of rapes on college campuses are acquaintance rapes. The National Institute of Justice has also found that in 80-90% of cases, victim and assailant know each other; and the more intimate the relationship, the more likely it is for a rape to be completed. Rape is more common to occur at parties and in living quarters, and 90% of acquaintance rapes on campus involves alcohol.

Violence is not restricted to assault. Partner violence takes many forms; it can be physical, sexual, or emotional. Partner Violence is often displayed in a pattern described as the Cycle of violence consisting of three stages; The Honeymoon Phase, the Tension Building Phase, and the Battering Phase. The Honeymoon phase involves the excitement of a new relationship, gifts, and excitement. The Tension Building Phase involves criticism from the abusive partner, minimization of the problems by the victim and a feeling of unease which causes the victim to feel he/she needs to walk on eggshells. The battering phase involves violence which maybe severe enough to require medical attention. How a person found themselves in an abusive relationship or how long they have been in it is not what is important. What IS important is they get help immediately. Stalking is another form of victimization common to college women. The report estimates that 13% of college women are victims of a stalking incident at least once during their college years.

Remember, violence is about power and control, not about sex or sexuality. Below are actions you can take to reduce your risk.

- Be aware of your surrounding and avoid isolated areas
- Keep away from individuals who do not show you respect (ignores you, your boundaries, uses verbally abusive language).
- Never set a drink down or leave it with someone you don't know. If you feel a drink has an unfamiliar taste, or makes you feel more buzzed than usual stop drinking it immediately
- If you go out at night use the buddy system, begin and end the night/day with the same people you started with.

Important numbers to put in your phone:

Crisis Assistance Listening Line - 646-2255

NMSU Counseling Center - 646-2731

WAVE Program - 646-2813

La Pinon Rape Crisis Center 526-3427

La Casa (Domestic Violence) 526-9513

City Police (non-emergency) 526-0796

NMSU Police Department - 646-3311

Crimson Cab - 646-8294

Pete's Pickup - 646-1111

Campus Health Center - 646-1512

Office of Institutional Equity – 646-3635