



# THE SURVIVOR'S REPORT

## Surviving the Summer Months

While some college students find solace by returning home when final exams are complete, others dread the anticipation of what the summer months will hold. This can also apply for student survivors of sexual assault.

If a survivor has not disclosed her/his assault to family members, s/he may feel anxious when around family members. Sometimes, family members can sense there is something creating anxiety in the survivor, yet they are unsure how to approach the person or ask what may be wrong. Furthermore, some family members may even shy away from asking the survivor in fear of receiving an answer that they are not prepared to hear.

Although the thoughts, anxieties, and fears are endless, there are some

exercises that sexual assault survivors can practice in order to enjoy their summer. First, seeking local mental health support services can help alleviate stress by having an objective

*"...others dread the anticipation of what the summer months will hold."*

person listen to the story and current resulting issues. Mental health support agencies can be found by searching online for nearby counseling centers, or looking in the local directory.

Survivors may also consider confiding in someone in their hometown to talk to when the situation seems unbearable. This prevents the feelings from bottling up inside the survivor.

Finding time for oneself is vital. This is time where the only person of concern is the self. Creating time can be difficult, but it does not have to be an extensive

amount, just a few minutes each day. Activities to do during this time are limitless and include anything that brings pleasure, happiness, and/or relaxation. For relaxation tips, see the column to the right. Other activities can include reading, painting, sitting outside, eating a favorite snack or meal, being with enjoyable people, volunteering, etc.

Finally, planning events and activities to look forward to can help. This brings hope to the survivor. Having count-downs and check lists can create other tasks to complete, making the person feel busy and accomplished.

Even though the summer can bring feelings of worry and despair, it is important to find people and activities that assist in making it enjoyable and relaxing.

-Vanessa Olson



## Relaxation Tips for Summer Break

### Deep Breathing:

Breathe in deeply, lowering the diaphragm. Then exhale through the nose.

### Alternate Breathing:

Cover one nostril with a finger and deeply inhale. To exhale, remove finger and cover the alternate nostril. Do this routine for 1-2 minutes.

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

Begin with muscle groups in the head and shoulder area by tightening the muscles, counting to 10, and then releasing. Continue this with each muscle group (arms, legs, abdomen, feet), and finally with all groups simultaneously.

### Meditation or Imagery:

Locate a quiet place free of distractions. Find a comfortable position and imagine thoughts and as clouds. Consider each and imagine lightly pushing them away. Often, concentration on breathing assists with the removal of distractions.

### Yoga or Stretching:

Stretch different muscle groups to release tension.

## Sexual Assault Response Program News

✓CSDC and other members of the JMU Sexual Assault Prevention Task Force continue to collaborate and discuss the development of a document that clearly outlines the Title IX procedures. The document contains contact information for each

organization and aims to be useful for all JMU students, faculty and staff. The task force hopes to have the document online with appropriate hyperlinks to lead to more comprehensive information.



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[www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/Services/SAS.html](http://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/Services/SAS.html)



## Mythical Tales

**Myth:** Women are always the victims of violence in relationships and the subjects of sexual assault. Men cannot be sexually assaulted because they are too strong and can make the perpetrator stop.

**Reality:** Anyone can be sexually assaulted, by anyone. There is no typical profile of a victim or a perpetrator. Survivors or assailants of sexual assault can cross all lines of ethnicity, sexuality, genders and religion. There are low reporting numbers of men who have been sexually assaulted or abused in their relationship for several reasons. If a male survivor was under the impression that rape, sexual assault, and abuse only happened to women, he may feel isolated and alone. Due to societal standards in western cultures, which are unfair and wrong, male survivors may feel a decrease in or lack of masculinity. If a sexual assault was perpetrated by another man, the survivor may struggle with confusion relating to sexual orientation. Men may avoid disclosing their assault or abuse, seeking services, or choosing legal prosecution because of assumptions that may be made about them. Such assumptions include, but are not limited to the following: weakness, femininity, powerless, promiscuity, etc. Male survivors may also assume that there are no resources available for men who have suffered from sexual assault. Fortunately, there are numerous resources in the JMU and Harrisonburg area for survivors of sexual assault.

Stanford University. (2012). Myths and facts concerning sexual assault. Retrieved from <http://www.stanford.edu/group/svab/myths.shtml>.

## You Ask, She Answers

I am a junior at JMU. Although I am looking forward to the summer months and spending time with my friends, I am getting a bad feeling about one of the newest members of our group. This person always makes crude jokes regarding the female body and rape, while also pretending to grab some part of my body. In two weeks we are all supposed to go on a camping trip to the lake in the mountains. I have been looking forward to this trip for months, but now I am hesitant to go because this new person is attending as well. Whenever he is around, my stomach turns in knots; there is something about him I just don't trust. I am feeling isolated with no one to talk to— all my friends laugh and say that he is just having a good time. Do you have any suggestions?

-Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

I can see where your conflict lies. On one hand you wish to spend the summer months carefree with your friends, but on the other hand there is this new person who is making you feel uncomfortable and unsafe. In situations like this, where you are feeling unsure of your company, it is always best to trust your instincts. Your intuition may be correct.

In regards to your camping trip, you have several options. First, you can decide to not attend if this person is going to be in attendance. If you decide that the camping trip is too important for you to miss, you can talk with someone in the group that you are closest with and discuss the possibilities of staying close together, sharing a tent, or becoming "buddies" for the weekend. If you are feeling

bold, you can also confront this person regarding his inappropriate comments and gestures.

In the event that you feel you have been violated, you can seek emergency services by calling the local police. If you feel you need additional support in the matter, I encourage you to seek consultation or other services from your campus counseling center. At James Madison University, the Counseling & Student Development Center is available to all students free of charge.

Kindly,  
Answer Annie

Please be advised that this article is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call JMU Counseling & Student Development Center at (540) 568-6552.