

Sexual assault victims offered support

■ **GROUP:** The counseling center holds a session each week for women to discuss sexual assault experiences

By Amy Palanuk
Higher Education Reporter

In the last two weeks, two separate reports of rape occurred on college campuses in Oregon. One of them was at the University of Oregon.

Whether reported or not, in cases of sexual assault, many students find the need for support and counseling on what to do if saying "no" becomes ineffective.

A new student group has been formed for this kind of support, creating a safe environment for women to talk about instances of sexual assault.

The sexual assault support group, co-sponsored by the University Counseling Center and Sexual Assault Support Services, meets in the counseling center every Friday at 3 p.m. for an hour and a half.

Students are welcome to either drop in and attend or to schedule an appointment to talk to a counselor about joining.

"We want to make it as accessible as possible," said Sarah McArthur, co-facilitator of the group.

Whatever the group talks about stays confidential, McArthur said.

HARD FACTS ON SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Of women who were raped, 73 percent did not identify the experience as rape.
- Eighty-four percent of college student rape survivors knew their assailant prior to the attack.
- Of rape victims, 42 percent tell no one about the assault.
- Seventy-five percent of men and at least 55 percent of women involved in acquaintance rapes had been drinking or taking drugs just before the act.

SOURCE: Koss, 1987

But in certain instances there are exceptions to confidentiality, such as when a lawsuit is filed.

"Then our options change," McArthur said. "If we couldn't give information, we can help [students] figure out where to get it. In any case, we're going to make sure they get what they need."

The group encourages women interested in talking about instances of sexual assault to drop in on Fridays for the session.

While the group provides support for students who have experienced sexual assault, many times students can be unsure what constitutes sexual assault.

Any unwanted sexual experience can be considered as sexual assault, McArthur said.

Different instances of sexual assault have different labels, but this definition stays consistent with most cases.

Date rape, acquaintance rape, gang rape and same-sex rape are all situations in which the victims

are forced into unwanted sexual intercourse with someone they may know or have just met.

According to Creating a Rape-free Environment, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions so sexual assault does not occur. Women are encouraged to be alert, be assertive and trust gut feelings when something does not feel right. Men are encouraged to communicate physical and emotional wants, to take responsibility for their actions and to be sensitive to a partner's wants and intentions.

While the group is limited to women only, McArthur encourages anyone who has been the victim of sexual assault to drop in to the counseling center and talk to a counselor. Friends of victims are also encouraged to attend the group.

"We just started," McArthur said. "We'd like to have seven to eight people, and right now we have several openings."



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Wild Journeying


Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., 110 Willamette Hall

Have you ever felt wilderness is more than just a playground? Alan Drengson will explore "Wild Journeying," a technique for traveling and approaching wilderness that actively encourages a deeper level of interaction with nature. Drengson promotes wilderness trips as having the unique potential to nourish the ecological self within each of us. The presentation will outline some approaches for realizing the spiritual connections to the wild. Drengson is an internationally renowned writer on Deep Ecology. He edits the foremost deep ecology journal, *The Trumpeter*, and last year coedited the first collection of essays on deep ecology in a book titled, *The Deep Ecology Movement*. Free to students and Co-op members; \$1 general admission.

Raft Trip Initiator's Clinic

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Saturday, 9:00 a.m., Outdoor Program Barn


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Application for Appointment Form available from the receptionist
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Deadline: 5:00 p.m. Friday, May 2, 1997.

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