THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men are victims of rape (Black et al., 2011). But all of us are impacted by sexual violence. That's because sexual violence affects communities and society – in addition to survivors and their loved ones. Because of this, it's on all of us to help prevent it.

Sexual violence is a widespread problem

Sexual violence includes rape, incest, child sexual assault, ritual abuse, non-stranger rape, statutory rape, marital or partner rape, sexual exploitation, sexual contact, sexual harassment, exposure, and voyeurism. It is a crime typically motivated by the desire to control, humiliate, and/or harm – not by sexual desire.

Sexual violence violates a person's trust and feelings of safety. It happens to people of all ages, races, genders, sexual orientations, religions, professions, incomes, and ethnicities.

Impact on survivors

An assault may impact daily life whether it happened recently or many years ago. Each survivor reacts to sexual violence in their own unique way. There are long-term and short-term impacts of sexual violence on overall health and well-being. Common emotional reactions include guilt, shame, fear, numbness, shock, and feelings of isolation.

The psychological effects of sexual violence have been linked to long-term health risk behaviors. Reactions can range from PTSD and eating disorders to anxiety and depression. Physical impacts may include personal injuries, concerns about pregnancy, or risk of contracting an STI. Economic impacts of sexual violence include medical expenses and time off work.

Impact on loved ones

Sexual violence can affect parents, friends, partners, children, spouses, and/or coworkers of the survivor. As they try to make sense of what happened, loved ones may experience similar reactions and feelings to those of the survivor. Fear, guilt, self-blame, and anger are a few common reactions.

Impact on communities

Schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, campuses, and cultural or religious communities may feel fear, anger, or disbelief if a sexual assault happened in their community. Additionally, there are financial costs to communities. These costs include medical services, criminal justice expenses, crisis and mental health service fees, and the lost contributions of individuals affected by sexual violence.

Impact on society

The contributions and achievements that may never come as a result of sexual violence represent a cost to society that cannot be measured. Sexual violence endangers critical societal structures because it creates a climate of violence and fear.

According to the 1995 U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, sexual harassment alone cost the federal government an estimated $327 million in losses associated with job turnover,

sick leave, and individual and group productivity among federal employees (Erdeich, Slavet, & Amador, 1995).

Studies find sexual assault and the related trauma response can disrupt survivors' employment in several ways, including time off, diminished performance, job loss, and inability to work (Loya, 2014).

It is estimated that women in the U.S. lose about 8 million days of paid work and 5.6 million days of household chores because of violence perpetuated against them by an intimate partner (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003).

Help is available.

Local sexual assault centers can provide help. In crisis situations, contact 1-800-656-4673. For more information, visit www.nsvrc.org.

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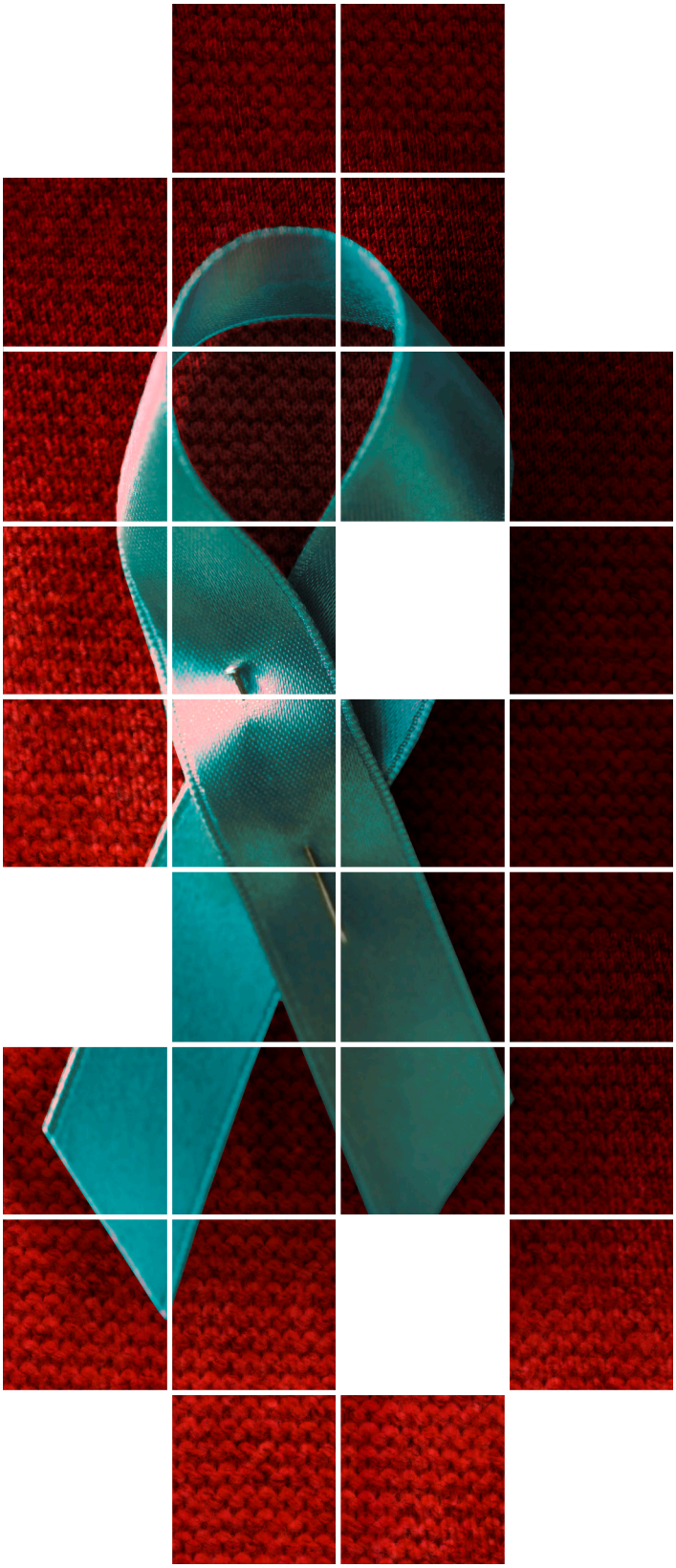

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