



# Sexual Misconduct

## Misplacing Blame = Misplacing Responsibility

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In cases of sexual assault, there is often a misperception that someone who has been assaulted is somehow at fault — for example, “it happened because they were drinking,” “they allowed it to happen,” etc. This type of mentality is often referred to as victim blaming. The reality is that society must shift their focus away from victim blaming, and instead recognize that people get sexually assaulted because **someone sexually assaults them**. Period. This was the concept behind the Misplacing Blame = Misplacing Responsibility poster. Use this guide to lead a discussion about the concept of victim blaming.

### Victim Blaming

Victim blaming is when people blame the person who was harmed rather than the person who did the harming. In essence, the victim is held responsible — in whole or in part — for the act committed against them. What victim-blaming actually does then is *misplace* blame. Because there is a person who was responsible for the harm that occurred, but victim-blaming erroneously places that blame on the wrong person.

- This can be hurtful because it creates an environment where people are afraid to report an assault.
- It can add to the trauma of a person already seriously harmed — those whose support that person needs most seem to be siding against them.
- You don't know who around you in any group might know someone who is a victim/survivor. It can be hurtful to those who know victims/survivors, and you can sound ignorant and lose respect.

**People also misplace blame/victim-blame when it comes to domestic violence and abuse in relationships. As educated men, we want to rise above that error. Why else is victim blaming problematic? What are some reasons why we as Sigma Nus need to be careful how we talk about these serious issues and avoid talking in victim-blaming ways?**

### Misplacing Blame = Misplacing Responsibility

The problem with misplacing blame in a sexual assault situation is that you are misplacing responsibility. In incorrectly identifying the victim as being at fault, you absolve the perpetrator from accepting responsibility for the act. Why is it important for us as Sigma Nus to be clear on the reality of personal responsibility to NOT violate or harm another person as we're talking with new members, and talking about these issues in and beyond our chapter?

#### **Examples of victim-blaming/misplacing blame for sexual misconduct:**

- They were drinking/drank (But the responsibility is to make sure the other person is into it, and clear enough in thinking (not incapacitated) at the time).
- They weren't careful enough (But the responsibility is to NOT violate another person, even if it would be easy to do so).
- They put themselves in that situation (But in that situation, the person who violated the other's most basic bodily rights is responsible for any violating actions).
- They wanted it to happen—they could have resisted more or done something different to get away. (Should anyone have to fight someone off? Should anyone have to keep resisting? The

responsibility is to make sure it's mutual and the other person is into it rather than it being on the person to *make* the other stop).

Remember, every person is responsible for their actions toward others. When people use blame, excuses, or rationalizations, they fail to realize the point. *The person who harms is responsible for the harm.*

## **Resources**

**AARON BOE, FOUNDER OF PREVENTION CULTURE**

[HTTP://PREVENTIONCULTURE.COM/](http://preventionculture.com/)

**NATIONAL SEXUAL VIOLENCE RESOURCE CENTER**

[HTTP://WWW.NSVRC.ORG/](http://www.nsvrc.org/)

**CAMPUS TITLE IX COMPLIANCE OFFICE/OFFICERS**

**SOCIAL STRENGTHS AND BYSTANDER STRENGTHS WORKSHOPS – ASK YOUR LEADERSHIP CONSULTANT**