

The following information was taken from the book

Reclaiming Pleasure, by Holly Richmond:

Richmond, H. (2021). *Reclaiming pleasure: A sex-positive guide for moving past sexual trauma and living a passionate life*. New Harbinger Publications. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

P 36-37:

YOU ARE NOT YOUR TRAUMA

Being able to name what happened to you will help create stability within you. You will begin to feel a separation between yourself and your experience. You are not your trauma. Many people have never considered themselves survivors because they didn't think their trauma was "bad" enough. This first chapter is an offering of awareness: I want you to know that what happened to you was categorically wrong and sufficiently bad. And you survived. As a reminder, sexual transgressions of any nature do not need to be violent; they only need to be nonconsensual. If you did not say yes, consent was not given. I cannot tell you how many times I have spoken these words: "I don't care if you were sitting on a street corner naked. Most people would have brought you a coat. The only reason you were raped is because a rapist walked by." This line of thinking is true for other types of sexual trauma as well. You were abused because of an abuser; you were assaulted because of a perpetrator; you were harassed because of a sexual predator. **Here and now is your first step toward placing blame solidly where it belongs—on someone other than yourself.**

P 30-36:

CLARIFYING TERMS

Consent is the act of communicating agreement to participate in sexual activity at the time the sexual activity is occurring. This can be communicated through words or actions—including body language—and must be given freely. If the agreement is in any way forced through pressure, manipulation, or coercion, it is considered nonconsensual because permission was not given voluntarily.

Rape is the term used for sexual intercourse, penetration, or oral sex, with or without force, without consent. The most recent legal definition of rape is, "Unlawful sexual activity that

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includes penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the survivor.” Rape is a form of sexual assault, but not all sexual assault is rape.

Rape can happen to people of all ages, genders, sexual orientations, ethnicities, geographical locations, cultures, economic circumstances, and degrees of physical or psychological impairment. There are different subsets of rape, which include sodomy, date rape, gang rape, marital or spousal rape, acquaintance rape, and stranger rape. Acquaintance rape and date rape, in which the survivor knows the perpetrator to some degree, are the most common. Because most survivors know their perpetrator, rape is significantly underreported. Rape can be committed over a long period of time with little to no physical injury. Consent and penetration are the only two determining factors of rape, not violence or force. In the United States, one in every six women and one in every seventy-one men will experience rape in their lifetime. Ninety percent of rape survivors are women and 10 percent are male.

Rape culture is a sociological concept for a setting in which sexual violence is both prevalent and normalized due to pervasive attitudes about sex and gender. Common attributes of rape culture thinking include slut shaming, survivor blaming, sexual objectification, trivializing, and denying all types of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Sexual abuse, also referred to as **molestation**, is the perpetration of any type of sexual behavior toward a person who is unable to give consent because of age (a minor), physical inability, or developmental disability. Types of sexual abuse include touch, penetration, indecent exposure, coercion, sexual exploitation (sex trafficking), exposure to pornography, or forced participation in pornography.

Sexual abuse by a family member is considered incest. Globally, 18 to 19 percent of women and 8 percent of men report being sexually abused and 93 percent of sexual abuse survivors know their perpetrators...

Sexual abuse can be difficult, if not impossible, for survivors to recognize when it first begins because it often doesn't feel wrong. Most sexual abuse, especially when perpetrated by a family member or family friend, starts with extra attention, additional caretaking, gifts, and special outings. It often isn't until survivors are older and have more social and cognitive awareness (unless pain was being inflicted) that they understand what happened was wrong and illegal. Sexual abuse does not have to be forceful; it only needs to be nonconsensual. Minors or people with disabilities can never consent when there is an age or power disparity.

Sexual assault includes a wide range of unwanted acts that are sexual in nature and occur without consent, up to but not including penetration of or with the genitals. They can either be completed or attempted against the survivor's will or when consent cannot be given due to a physical or mental condition, including the influence of alcohol or drugs. Sexual assault may involve actual or threatened physical force, use of weapons, coercion, or intimidation. It can include attempted rape, unwanted touching or fondling, close proximity and unwanted exposure to a person masturbating, forced oral sex, or penetration of the perpetrator's body.

Sexual assault can also include acts of online aggression where the perpetrator exposes themselves. Sexual assault is often used as a comprehensive term to describe any nonconsensual sexual behavior perpetrated against an adult. Sexual assault is the largest and broadest category of reported sex crimes, occurring globally with presence in all social, economic, ethnic, racial, religious, and age groups. Sexual assault happens to men, women, and nonbinary individuals, though the prevalence of perpetration against women is highest, at least in incidents that are reported. A 2013 study by the National Crime Victimization Survey found 89.3 percent of survivors of sexual assault are women, while 10.7 percent are men. The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) reports that every 73 seconds, a person in the United States is sexually assaulted. Global estimates published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in

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2017 indicated that one in three (35 percent) of women worldwide have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.

Sexual assault can be difficult to recognize because the perpetrator is almost always an acquaintance of the survivor. In fact, eight out of ten sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the survivor; 33 percent of perpetrators are former or current partners or spouses. This makes the emotional transgression particularly hard for survivors to discern, and legal confrontation that much more arduous. A survivor may believe that because they had consensual sex at a certain time(s) with their perpetrator, they will not be believed about a specific transgression. Sharing and promoting the fact that most sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone the survivor knows may help diminish the shame and offer increased opportunities for support.

Sexual harassment is behavior characterized by coercion, unwanted attention, inappropriate sexual remarks, or physical advances in professional or social situations. There is almost always a power disparity, through which the perpetrator feels empowered and the survivor feels disempowered. A 2018 survey by the nonprofit organization Stop Street Harassment, analyzed by the Center for Gender Equality and Health, found 81 percent of women and 43 percent of men had experienced some form of sexual harassment during their lifetime. Offensive physical touch often does not happen in cases of harassment, but words and gestures are used to humiliate and create fear. This fear can stem from a perceived likelihood of bodily harm, a jeopardized career, lost earning potential, disclosure of personal information, or name-calling (catcalling or slut-shaming).

It is often subtle and manipulative on the part of the perpetrator—they may even use humor or flirtation—which makes the exchange confusing for the survivor.

Gender harassment is a subset of sexual harassment, and more specifically describes harassment that occurs because of someone's gender identity.

Sexual offender refers to someone who perpetrated a nonconsensual sexual act and has been convicted of a criminal sexual offense.

Sexual perpetrator refers to a person who obtains or tries to obtain sexual contact with another person, regardless of whether they are a minor or an adult, without consent.

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Sexual pleasure is the physical and/or psychological satisfaction and enjoyment derived from solitary or shared erotic experiences, including thoughts, dreams, and autoeroticism.

Sexual predator is typically used pejoratively to describe a person who has committed or continually tries to commit multiple sexual offenses, whether they were convicted of those crimes or not.

Sexual trauma is a broad term that refers to one or multiple sexual violations of any kind that invoke significant distress. It is a term used clinically (though generally not legally or empirically) because it allows for a wider gradation of scope and ambiguity in labeling the experience. It also offers survivors, clinicians, and supporters terminology for collectively understanding without stigmatizing, which can happen when details and descriptions are provided in a more exacting way. Using the term “sexual trauma” is an appropriate and accurate way to describe any unwanted sexual experience in a clinical or social setting.

Sexual violence is a broad term that encompasses forcing or manipulating another person into unwanted sexual activity. Sexual violence can happen to anyone at any age and comprises sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, and sexual harassment. The majority of sexual violence is perpetrated against women, but sexual violence against men is a significant problem, and one that has been largely neglected in research. Global estimates range from 3 to 13 percent, with a large portion of perpetration occurring in prison systems. Sexual violence also incorporates online aggression, including stalking, nonconsensual sharing of photos or videos, sexualized bullying, revenge porn, and gender violence. Like sexual trauma, sexual violence is a comprehensive term that can be used to talk about the offense without being explicit or detailed. Often survivors use the term “sexual violence” rather than “sexual trauma” if their experience felt specifically forceful, whether physically or emotionally.

Survivor is used to describe someone who has experienced any type of sexual trauma. More specifically, it is most often applied to someone who has gone through the recovery process, or when addressing the short- or long-term effects of sexual trauma. It is seen as identifying and unifying language in the sexual violence prevention community.

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Victim is typically used when referring to someone who has recently experienced sexual violence or who did not survive a sexually violent attack. It is also used when discussing legal aspects within the criminal justice system. Many practitioners and anti-sexual violence advocates do not use the term “victim” because they believe it has pathologizing consequences.

P. 37: You were not in control of what happened during your trauma, but you are in control of what happens in your healing... Replacing presumption with information and judgment with compassion allows you to experience the full range of emotions, from heartbroken to courageously determined... to take the next steps in healing.

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