Male Survivors of Sexual Assault

What is male sexual assault?
Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual contact. It can be committed by the use of threats or force or when someone takes advantage of circumstances that render a person incapable of giving consent, such as intoxication. Male sexual assault can include unwanted touching, fondling, or groping of a male's body including the penis, scrotum or buttocks, even through his clothes. Male rape is any kind of sexual assault that involves forced oral or anal sex, including any amount of penetration of the anus or mouth with a body part or any other object.

Many people don't take male sexual assault seriously. This is one of the reasons why male victims have a difficult time reporting what happened and why the rates of male sexual assault are thought to be significantly underreported. If a male survivor's friends think that male sexual assault is a joke, he will feel isolated and afraid to tell anyone. Sexual assault is a painful, traumatic experience for any victim.

Who can be a perpetrator of male sexual assault?
Both men and women can sexually assault men. However, most sexual assaults against men are committed by other men, who actually identify themselves as heterosexual. It's important not to jump to the conclusion that man-against-man sexual assault only happens between men who are gay. Sexual assault is not about sexual desire or sexual orientation; it's about violence, control, and humiliation.

What are some of the feelings a male survivor may experience?
Any survivor of sexual assault may experience the following feelings, but male survivors may experience these feelings in a different way:

- Guilt -- as though he is somehow at fault for not preventing the assault because our society promotes the misconception that men should be able to protect themselves at all times.
- Shame -- as though being assaulted makes him "dirty," "weak," or less of a "real man."
- Fear -- that he may be blamed, judged, laughed at, or not believed.
- Denial -- because it is upsetting, he may try not to think about it or talk about it; he may try to hide from his feelings behind alcohol, drugs, and other self-destructive habits.
- Anger -- about what happened; this anger may sometimes be misdirected and generalized to target people who remind the him of the perpetrator.
- Sadness -- feeling depressed, worthless, powerless; withdrawing from friends, family, and usual activities; some victims even consider suicide.

If a male victim became sexually aroused, had an erection, or ejaculated during the sexual assault, he may not believe that he was raped. These are involuntary physiological reactions. They do not mean that the victim wanted to be sexually assaulted, or that the survivor enjoyed
the traumatic experience. Just as with women, a sexual response does not mean there was consent.

The experience of sexual assault may affect gay and heterosexual men differently. Rape counselors have found that gay men have difficulties in their sexual and emotional relationships with other men and think that the assault occurred because they are gay. Heterosexual men often begin to question their sexual identity and are more disturbed by the sexual aspect of the assault than any violence involved.

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Website http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/sexual_assault/malesurvivors.htm