

It's common to feel responsibility for the sexual violence you experienced. You may feel guilty or to blame.

**You are not to blame. It is not your fault.**

Try to recognise when your thoughts become self-blaming. Common examples are:

“I should have...”

“I should not have...”

“If I had/had not \_\_\_\_\_ then it would not have happened.”

“I deserved it.”

“I was asking for it.”

“I led him on.”

Once you recognise these thought patterns you can start to challenge and replace them.

Use the following steps to challenge negative thoughts and adopt positive ones. Repeat the exercise whenever you feel your thoughts becoming too negative. This resource is a guide and some of these exercises may work better for you than others. Amend these exercises to suit you and repeat steps that you find helpful.

1. Write down any thought(s) you have that you think may be self-blaming. Sometimes writing the thought down can give us some perspective and help us to identify the flaws of this way of thinking.

**My Thoughts:**

2. Choose one of your negative thoughts and use the table below to write down the benefits and negatives of this thought. How does this thought make you feel? How does it influence your behaviour?

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Negatives</b>

3. What is the evidence for and against this thought or belief? Compare the evidence for this thought with the evidence against.

<b>Evidence For</b>	<b>Evidence Against</b>

4. Use the previous tables to challenge your negative thought, arguing that it is not true. Instead argue the opposite, for example, if your negative thought was “I am worthless” argue “I am worthwhile”.

**My negative thought:**

**This is not true because...**

**The Opposite thought is:**

**It is true because...**

6. Think of a good friend. If you told them your story what would they say to you?

**My friend would say...**

7. Imagine a friend had negative self-blaming thoughts, what would you say to them?

**I would tell my friend...**

8. Write a list of alternative thoughts to your Self-Blaming thought(s). Repeat these alternative thoughts to yourself when you recognise that your thoughts have become self-blaming. These alternative, positive thoughts may be a mantra or affirmations, such as "I am not to blame. I am worthwhile."

**Alternative Positive Thoughts:**

You do not have to follow all of these exercises, just use the ones that work for you. Remember that you can also talk to us or find details of your local Rape Crisis Centre at [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk) or call the national helpline (run by our member Centre Rape Crisis South London) on **0808 802 9999** between 12 noon - 2.30pm and 7 - 9.30pm every day of the year for confidential support and/or information about your nearest services.