



## Victim Blaming on BBC One's "The One Show"

I currently live in the USA, a military wife stationed overseas but I often stream British television over the internet; it's a comfort, it keeps me company while I potter around the house. Today I was eating lunch and catching up with the evening news on BBC One, and when that finished I left it on for "The One Show" - it had Will Young on, I like him, I can't help it.

The opening of the show was a young lady who's name I'm sorry to say I didn't catch, who was walking home late at night, was the victim of an attack on the street, and who managed to talk herself out of it. I just sat there in awe of how calm she had been. Her friends had got a taxi but she'd had no cash left so decided to walk. She noticed a man walking far behind her, wasn't too concerned, but he quickly caught her up, put an arm around her neck and dragged her behind a wall. She didn't scream, she didn't kick or punch; instead she engaged him in conversation and got him to see her as a person. He released her, offered her a cigarette; CCTV footage shows her holding his hand on the street as she convinces him she'll go on a date with him but has to get home now. It worked, and she was able to show the police his used cigarette end so they could get DNA evidence. It turned out he was a suspect in a murder in similar circumstances.

This young lady's bravery astounded me; would I have been that smart in her situation? Then came the kick in the teeth. They had an expert in (I believe) sexual crimes. He commended her bravery, but then went on to give a list of things a woman can do to prevent getting attacked. I just looked on the BBC's website and they have this list on there, along with a link to victim support, but in a way I'm sick of being told how to live.

When I was growing up in the 1980s I was taught subliminally to act in certain ways to avoid attack, and the "advice" hasn't changed: stay in groups; pre-book a licensed taxi; be aware of your surroundings; don't take short cuts. I am sick of it because it doesn't stop attacks from happening. While I appreciate that some young women - and men - may not have been taught how to try to stay safe, we will always be at risk as long as rape culture and victim blaming go unchallenged. What the BBC did was to put the onus once again on me as a woman when the easiest way to reduce the risk of attack is to stop men from attacking. Make them think; would you do that if she was sober/dressed differently/with friends? If the answer is no then you know your choice of behaviour is unacceptable.

Half the battle is psychological, but if a guy can go from selecting a victim on the street to thinking she wants to go out with him, that is something that I cannot control and no amount of wearing flat shoes or wearing a second, longer skirt over your clubbing outfit is going to stop men from thinking about attack until they are forced to accept they have full responsibility for whether or not they attack me. Where was the message that it's not acceptable to follow a woman home, or that just because a woman is out late it doesn't mean you can attack her.

Are we really to believe that some men have a Pavlovian response to seeing a lone woman? Unaccompanied female - must attack! I really expected more balance from the BBC, but then again I've always been a slightly naive optimist.