

## Why Would Someone Stay In Touch with an Abuser After Being Sexually Assaulted?

<http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-sexual-assault-sexual-harassment>

Survivors can respond to harassment and assault in many ways. There is no correct way to react [1] and many people find themselves reaching out to or staying in touch with an abuser. “Women who have been assaulted by people they know act in ways that are often counterintuitive,” says University of Ottawa law professor Elizabeth Sheehy.[2]

According to Dr. Patricia Janssen from the University of British Columbia School of Population and Public Health, some survivors might not recognize sexual harassment or assault “as part of a pattern of behaviour.”[3] Survivors might minimize an isolated event or deny that it happened because of a desire to feel loved by the abuser or to avoid the stigma of being a victim.[4]

“Some people may immediately break off ties, but others may seek to continue and possibly “normalize” the relationship, hoping that it will not happen again,” says criminal lawyer David Butt. “At first there is often a sense of confusion, a sense of denial ... it is not unusual for the relationship to continue.”[5]

“Many survivors struggle to break off contact with their abuser because the nature of abuse includes undermining their self-esteem and confidence. They may feel controlled by their abuser ... in some instances, those in an abusive relationship go through periods of calm, nurturing and love between the incidents of violence. An abuser may swear that it will never happen again,” says Keetha Mercer, Manager of Violence Prevention at the Canadian Women’s Foundation. [6]

Excerpted from *The Facts about Sexual Assault and Harassment* (Canadian Women’s Foundation)

[1] If accusers kept in touch with Ghomeshi, does it matter? CTV News, by Angela Mulholland, 2016, Available at: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/if-accusers-kept-in-touch-with-ghomeshi-does-it-matter-1.2772178>

[2] Jian Ghomeshi case shines spotlight on ‘post-incident contact,’ The Toronto Star, by Kevin Donovan, 2016, Available at: <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/04/24/jian-ghomeshi-case-shines-spotlight-on-post-incident-contact.html>

[3] Why would someone stay with their abuser? Global News, by Tania Kohut, 2016, Available at: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2501243/the-complicated-reasons-women-stay-with-their-abusers/>

[4] Ibid.

[5] Jian Ghomeshi case shines spotlight on ‘post-incident contact,’ The Toronto Star, by Kevin Donovan, 2016, Available at: <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/04/24/jian-ghomeshi-case-shines-spotlight-on-post-incident-contact.html>

[6] Why would an assault survivor reach out to her abuser? Chatelaine, by Sarah Boesveld, 2016, Available at: <http://www.chatelaine.com/news/why-would-an-assault-survivor-reach-out-to-her-abuser/>