

Psychological effects of rape

Business



Victims of traumatic experiences are much more likely to suffer from psychological issues throughout their lives. Whether it is a short term or long term effect, the victims will often carry these problems with them as much as they do the trauma they suffered.

The effects they may be experiencing after the trauma they endured will often depend on what they went through and the circumstances surrounding them. No matter how severe the trauma or the effects the victim may suffer, both can alter their lives permanently. In the novel *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson and modern sources, the authors explore how traumatic events can greatly affect the victims psychologically. Modern sources, such as the article "Speak: The Effect of Literary Instruction on Adolescents' Rape Myth Acceptance" by Victor Malo-Juvera, relate statistics to Melinda's experience in *Speak* to demonstrate the true amount of trauma she has endured. When the reader finally learns what Melinda has gone through, with her stating, "In my head, my voice is clear as a bell: 'NO I DON'T WANT TO!' But I can't spit it out," they immediately sympathize with her pain, as her behavior in the aftermath of that night becomes abundantly clear (Anderson 135).

Throughout the novel, Melinda is withdrawn from her parents and peers, rejecting attempts those around her make to reach out. Malo-Juvera's article connects these actions to statistics, stating, "Rape is a traumatic event and often entails both physical and psychological injuries; moreover, the devastating psychological effects may be exacerbated by a lack of help-seeking behavior" (Malo-Juvera 111). This demonstrates that the psychological effects of Melinda's rape have already started to become apparent and will likely get worse as time goes on. Furthermore, the article <https://assignbuster.com/psychological-effects-of-rape/>

reveals that the victim is much less likely to report the incident if they knew their rapist prior to the attack. Even though Melinda did not know Andy well prior to the night of the party, he was still a classmate of hers she knew she would be forced to face every day for the next year. Andy's popularity and social status at school likely made it additionally hard for Melinda to come forward after her rape, out of fear no one would believe her.

Experiencing this crippling terror on a daily basis, that only increased when she forced to pass him in the halls or interact with him, undoubtedly lead to additional psychological trauma for Melinda. Despite statistics proving keeping silent only increases the pain of the victim, rape is the least reported of all violent crimes, with teenagers being the least likely to report it.

Therefore one can conclude that not only did the events of the night of the party cause Melinda extreme suffering, but knowing her rapist prior to him attacking her and realizing the likelihood of people believing Andy over her due to social status, forces her into an extremely dark place that would increase the magnitude of her struggles later on. The extensive trauma Melinda has experienced prior to the start of the novel causes the psychological issues she must deal with later on. The novel and modern sources, including the article "Melinda's Closet: Trauma and the Queer Subtext of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*" by Don Latham, demonstrate how a temporary safe haven can be used to cope with the short term effects of rape. One sees this in the novel as Melinda finds that place in an abandoned janitor's closet, stating, "This closet is abandoned-it has no purpose, no name.

It is the perfect place for me” (Anderson 26). When Melinda begins to fill this space with objects such as blankets and potpourri, it is revealed that she is using this space as a place of comfort, where she can escape the increasing fear and uncertainty in her daily life. Melinda comes to view this place as her sanctuary, away from the judgment and hatred of her peers, as well as the inner turmoil she is forced to deal with every day. She believes that due to her former friends and idealistic views have abandoning her and leaving her without a sense of purpose, she has much in common with the uninhibited closet. As stated by Latham in regards to this symbol, “ In a very real sense, what has forced Melinda into the closet- both literally and figuratively-are the sexist attitudes surrounding rape and the victims of rape” (Latham 372-373). By using this place as her escape, Melinda allows herself to not only reflect on what has happened to her, but to deal with the new reality she is living.

This temporary safe haven can be seen as somewhere Melinda is able to bridge the gap between who she used to be and who she is now. As she begins to fill the closet with objects that show her interests and give her a sense of normalcy, the reader can conclude that she is slowly pulling herself out of the darkness. However, it is not until Melinda makes the decision to end her visits to the closet and rejoin her friends that readers can see the short term effects of her rape are beginning to dissolve. The use of a safe haven in the novel allows Melinda to begin the process of recovery after such a traumatic event. Although the novel *Speak* does not go into extensive detail on the long term effects Melinda’s rape may have had on her, modern sources, such as the article “‘ Like Falling Up into a Storybook’: Trauma and Intertextual Repetition in Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak*” by Barbara

Tannert-Smith, provide insight on the psychological struggles that may have awaited her. In her article, Tannert-Smith suggests that in the long term, “The traumatic event is shown to destroy the victim’s existing framework of reality, leading to a sense of shattered subjectivity and the gradual reorganizing of the self in relation to a new emergent reality,” specifically in regards to the traumatic event of rape (Tannert-Smith 398).

Despite the novel ending before readers could see Melinda experience these long term effects, it is clear that they are beginning to develop, despite being overshadowed by her current situation. Issues such as PTSD and depression are beginning to take root in her brain, ensuring that her battle will continue after the ending of the novel, and will likely be long and painful. Throughout the novel, Melinda expresses a deep self-loathing through her avoidance of mirrors and demeaning comments about herself. Additionally, she demonstrates how hopeless she truly feels by isolating herself from the rest of the world and even contemplates suicide at one point, indicating she will likely continue to struggle with depression as a result of her rape. The potential development of PTSD is also seen throughout the novel through Melinda’s desire to isolate herself from the world and her flashbacks to that night.

Melinda’s flashback appear to be a continuous cycle, linked to whenever she sees Andy or he somehow intrudes in her life, such as dating her former best friend. These flashbacks force her to relive the pain and trauma of that night and ensure she feels trapped in an inescapable trajectory, leading to her desire to isolate herself. Her self-imposed isolation is Melinda’s way of not only punishing herself, but preventing herself from suffering through more <https://assignbuster.com/psychological-effects-of-rape/>

flashbacks, which can be seen as further evidence of her PTSD. In addition to these psychological issues developing, Melinda is also dealing with the emergence of a new reality, as her world has been forever changed by the night of the party. When Melinda states, “ Assume the worst.

Plan for disaster,” after turning down an invitation to a party, one can infer that her ideological view of the world was shattered after her rape (Anderson 132). Melinda is unable to cope with this new reality that has been forced upon her, now seeing the worst in those around her, including herself. This reality can be interpreted as a way of Melinda punishing herself, still guilt-ridden about that night, as it becomes a reason for her to further hide away from the truth and refuse to speak. Furthermore, she uses it to drive her into fantasy worlds, clinging onto her childhood innocence and choosing to ignore what is happening to her, allowing her pain to get worse. Based on the novel’s ending and its relation to real life experiences of rape victims, one could conclude that Melinda would likely experience similar psychological effects later in life. The novel *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson and modern sources demonstrate the psychological issues that may develop in trauma victims.

In the immediate aftermath of the trauma, the effects tend to be more severe, but short lived. This makes the long term effects almost worse, as although they may not be as intense, they can remain with a trauma victim for most, if not all of their life, constantly reminding them of what they went through. The extreme effects of an event such as rape make it clear that it is necessary for society to work to prevent it from happening, especially to the extent it does.

<https://assignbuster.com/psychological-effects-of-rape/>