

## Dear Sibongile

I'm sorry to hear your story. What your uncle did was very wrong. It is not your fault – he committed a crime and he must be stopped from doing this again.

Don't be afraid – you must tell someone immediately. You cannot keep this a secret. *Umntwana ongakhaliyo ufela embelekweni* (keeping silent can destroy your life). Tell your parents, another relative or someone you trust. You need someone to advise and support you who will also help you go to the police and get other help.

Report the rape as soon as possible, preferably without washing or changing clothes in case the police want to take evidence. Also, ask a health worker for protection from pregnancy (the 'morning after' pill). Some clinics also have post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) drugs which prevent HIV if taken within three days after the rape.

Rape is never the victim's fault but there are ways for women to try to avoid it. Never walk alone (if you do, look confident and walk fast). Never, at any age, drink too much alcohol or smoke *mbanje*. If you like a boy, tell him firmly how far you want to go before you start romancing. If you are attacked, scream, kick, bite, hit or knee him between the legs – and try to get away.

Sibongile, I do hope you find the help you need.

**Auntie Stella**

## ACTION POINTS

- Why is there so much rape and violence against girls and women in our societies? Have a discussion. For each answer you give, ask the question 'But why?' to try and find a deeper cause.

### Rape and abuse in your community

Look at these statements. How well do they describe your community? For each one, write TRUE, FALSE or NOT SURE.

- 1 In our community, girls and women can walk around safely anywhere, at any time, without being afraid.
- 2 Rape and abuse are not kept secret. If a young person reports rape or abuse, adults take action to stop it from happening again. No-one ever blames the young person.
- 3 If a young person has been raped, clinics have the right medical and counselling services and the police do their best to find and punish the culprit.
- 4 Boys believe and respect girls when they say 'no' to sex. They don't think they have a right to sex; they know they can control their desires.

**Results:** Very few, if any, of you will be able to answer TRUE to all of the above questions. What would need to happen in your community to make it a safe place, free from rape, violence and abuse?

- Find out more about the 'morning after' pill and PEP drugs. Ask your clinic if they are available there. If not, where can you find them?