**Case Study 1 – Michelle’s Story**

Michelle loved getting together with her friends every weekend to PAAARRRRTY! She wasn’t the most popular person at school, but she enjoyed hanging out having a good time. Even though she was just graduating from junior high, most of her friends, and especially the guys she liked, were already in high school. One or two of them had even left school and were working.

Unlike some of the people who attended the weekend parties, Michelle wasn’t much of a drinker. Not being of legal age didn’t stop her from trying booze or even getting drunk more than once, but usually she didn’t feel like drinking that much. She was more interested in socializing and partying. Occasionally people would comment that she would be more cool and funny if she drank a bit more. And someone gave her the nickname “DeeDee” because she always seemed to be the permanent Designated Driver, even though she only had her learner’s permit. Michelle started to get tired of all the same jokes, so she decided to make a change. The week after Grade 9 grad was the first official party of the summer. She decided it was time to let loose.

The party was at her friend Ellen’s family cottage about a 20 minute drive from the town. Her parents let Ellen and her friends use the cottage as long as they knew who was attending the party and they didn’t damage anything. People were even allowed to stay overnight if they got too drunk, just to be safe. All the usual people were there. There was music, video games, good food, lots of drinks, and a bonfire outside. It was perfect!

Michelle was having fun so she started to drink more than usual. By midnight, it was obvious that she was well on her way to getting drunk. The drinks kept flowing and Michelle kept pouring more for herself. An hour later, she was talking with Brad and he suggested that they go to one of the rooms upstairs to “talk”. Brad was part of the big group of friends and she thought he was a great guy. She liked him (and he was pretty hot too), so she decided to go. After all, Brad was her friend, so he would never do anything to hurt her. And her other friends were nearby, so she didn’t have any worries. At first they just talked and made out a bit, but once they sat down on the bed it wasn’t long before her clothes were off and the rest was just a blur. By the time her friends noticed that she was gone from the party she had already been sexually assaulted, not at the hands of a stranger, but by someone she knew.

**Response Questions**

When a sexual assault occurs, victims (survivors) sometimes blame themselves or the alcohol/drugs instead of the perpetrator. Michelle says, “I was drunk and I was into Brad, so it’s not his fault. I gave him mixed signals, so he didn’t know what I wanted.” It will be important for her friends to send her the message that it is not her fault.

1. Is this sexual assault? Why or why not?
2. Did Michelle do a risk analysis? Why did she make her choice? Was this the best choice?
3. What do you think Michelle is feeling right now? What are some things that Michelle will need to hear from her friends in order to help deal and cope with her feelings?
4. What do you think Michelle will do the next time she is invited to a party?

No matter what, sexual assault is never a victim’s (survivor’s) fault. And it’s no person’s responsibility to prevent themselves from being assaulted. The only person responsible for a sexual assault is the person who commits it. But there are ways that you can help yourself and your friends have a safe time at a party.

1. If you were in Michelle’s group of friends, what could you do to ensure everyone stays safe, but still has fun at the party?
2. What personal qualities could have helped Michelle make a better decision?
3. What behaviours or actions could have helped Michelle from getting into this situation?
4. What steps should be taken now regarding the abuser, Brad?