

**The Unofficial Guide
To Planning
Your
First Official
Take Back the Night March & Rally**

Community Version

Take Back the Night is a place free from sexual assault and abuse. We invite you to become part of the solution, part of the end to sexual violence. Here is a place to take a stand, a place to break the silence. Here we can Take Back the Night!

**Brought to you by the folks at
Take Back the Night**

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Hosting your first Take Back the Night

Hosting your first Take Back the Night can seem like a daunting task. It's a great idea and an important event to hold, but the red tape, the supplies, the people and the 'what ifs' tend to be very overwhelming. That's why we have designed this manual—to help those of you embarking on the journey of preparing your very first Take Back the Night—or as a helpful refresher for planning your 20th TBTN. In this manual you will find everything you ever needed to know about hosting a Take Back the Night March and Rally. Prepared by people who have been the first to plan and implement a Take Back the Night event, we have first-hand knowledge of how-to's and what-to-do-if's. Just sit back, relax and read on.

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So This is Your First Take Back the Night: Who to Talk to, Who to Meet With and Who to Ask for Help

When deciding to plan an event like Take Back the Night (TBTN), having permission and support of local police and government is crucial to the event's success. Who better to later recruit your audience than those who keep your community safe?

One of the first people you should contact is the Mayor or local politician. If you live in a large community, the Mayor or local politician is generally not going to be a close acquaintance of yours. But, if you have that luxury, by all means do so.

If that is not an option, or you have already spoken with the Mayor, it's off to the leaders of community and educational groups. They may suggest dates when facilities are available or when it won't be in conflict with another major event in the community. They may be able to offer financial assistance as well. Their support is a key factor in the success of your TBTN event.



Other great places to look for support are the local YMCA, YWCA, local Rape Crisis Center, or local colleges and schools.

When meeting with these people it is important for you to have a rough idea of what you would like to accomplish by hosting your TBTN. Often, these people will want something in writing to review. It's a good idea to have a draft proposal or outline of what you would like the TBTN event to look like, with the relevant details highlighted (when, where, who, purpose, length of event, open to whom, featured speakers, march route).

If you can, have a few interested community members already on-board with your ideas. Once you have received the go ahead, assure the police and local government that you will keep them posted as you plan the event. By keeping the police and government on-board, you keep open the option of asking them for financial assistance and in-person support.

After you receive the necessary clearance from the tower, it is time to nail down a few highly motivated and creative people to form a planning

committee, if you haven't already. These people will later serve as your rock, your sounding board and your audience should no one else show up (heavens forbid). These people will always be there!

When selecting your planning committee it is important that you take into account these key factors.



- #1 He or she might be your best friend but what is their work ethic like and will you really get work accomplished?
- #2 Are these select people open about their convictions and truly interested in getting the important message of TBTN out there?
- #3 How dependable and available is everyone? You need a committee that will be willing to work from 10pm to 1am and not skip out to do something non-TBTN related.

If you are short on ideas of who to recruit for your planning committee, talk to your friends and co-workers. Someone always knows someone else who would be great for the job. Ask around. Once you have narrowed it down, draft a Nomination Letter to send to each nominee notifying them of their nomination to this highly regarded position. Trust us, people will be flattered to pieces! This is a great honor and if they are deserving of the position, they will take it very seriously but enjoy the experience as well.

A sample letter would look something like this:

Dear Jane/John Smith,

You have been selected to sit on the planning committee for This Community's First Annual Take Back the Night March and Rally. The mission of this event is to raise awareness in our community about the issue of sexual violence and to let it be known that this violence, or violence of any kind, will not be tolerated in our community or anywhere else.

Take Back the Night first appeared in Europe in 1976 and has continued throughout the world as a sign of empowerment for women, men and children. This will be the first time our community has hosted a Take Back the Night and it would be our honor to have you as part of our planning committee.

The first meeting will be held _____ at ____ o'clock in _____. If you cannot attend but are interested in participating please contact your name here at your number here.

Thank you,



Strong support and sponsorship is another key to the success of any event. There are many ways in which people can support your event and there are many people who would love to sponsor it, they just need to find out about it.

Excellent people and organizations to ask for support and sponsorship are:

- local police stations
- rape crisis centers
- homeless shelters
- domestic violence shelters and agencies
- churches
- youth organizations
- local colleges and schools

Local community services often times have grant money or community event money that they would be willing to contribute. They may wish to help you organize the event. A nice letter or well placed phone call can go a long way.

It is important to have an estimated budget drawn up along with your written proposal before you go in to meet with prospective funders. This way the people you are asking will have a clear idea of what you are asking for and why; you may find them more generous in spirit. But, if the money is not forthcoming, don't fret too much about the financial side of things...most TBTNs can be done on a shoestring budget.

While you are asking for sponsorship and support, don't forget to drop them an invitation. If they do some kind of work related to TBTN (i.e. the local community agencies who do anti-violence work), be sure to ask them if they would like to "table at the event". "Table at the event" means they will be able to set up a table at your TBTN with information about their organization or cause, spreading their message and educating your audience. When it comes to TBTNs, the more the merrier!

A side note: TBTN is an emotionally charged event. It is a wise idea to contact the local police and inform them that you are planning this event. That

way they will be aware of the event, and if necessary be able to plan for extra security, especially if your community has had problems with rowdy or riotous people in the past. They may even be able to assist you in securing a safe march path if you are planning a march and/or assist with crowd control.

The Planning Committee and What it Does

By now, you have spoken to local police and government officials, contacted potential planning committee members and heard back from those interested in participating. You've selected the committee and figured out your estimated budget. NOW it's time to get planning.

A planning committee by definition is a group of individuals gathered to plan and delegate tasks for a predetermined event or project, and that is exactly what you will do. Once the group has gathered and introductions are made, it is important to determine what the group's goal is and what the main objectives are. In this case, it is to plan a TBTN March and Rally. "March and Rally" is the typical sequence of events at a Take Back the Night observance, but you can also do just the march or just the rally, or both, or neither, and that is the job of the committee to decide.

A single individual should serve as the secretary of this committee to keep track of ideas suggested and the jobs assigned. A brainstorming session is always a good idea. After basic ideas have been suggested and written down, it is time for the delegation of tasks. Depending on how many committee members you have, one or two people should be assigned to each task. You will need someone to cover areas such as:

- advertising/media
- fundraising
- date and location
- music
- set-up
- programming

Each task is rather self-explanatory and each position will be redefined by each person taking on that position.

A Side Note: The secretary should also keep track of any of the paperwork; i.e. contracts, permits, correspondences to sponsors and press releases. That way if there are any questions the information will be in one place.

Now that tasks have been delegated, it is important to reconvene as a whole to decide on some larger issues, such as where and when this event will be

held. Some popular months to hold TBTNs are October, February, March and April. Depending on where you are located in the country, you can decide when to host your event accordingly. You may also want to check with other community members in your area to see if they are planning a TBTN event, and consider having them together, or if you decide to have them on different evenings, you can support each other's individual efforts!



Location

The location of your TBTN is key to its success. Highly visible and heavily trafficked areas of town, such as a town square, are good ideas due to their prime location and high traffic flow. If you pick a popular place to go, chances are you will attract people who didn't even know about the event but just happened to be there. You should check with local facilities to see if the location is available on the date you have in mind, or what alternative dates are available. You also want to check your community's master calendar to make sure your event doesn't conflict with any other large-scale event that may reduce your attendance (i.e. a lecture by a famous person, a concert, or large scale sporting event). If you are planning a TBTN March, you will need to check with local authorities about licenses, permits and regulations regarding where and when you can march. It is important to cover all your bases before the event; that way things will run smoothly during the event.

The time of day which your TBTN occurs is rather obvious, but post-dinner is the best time to schedule the event. In most communities, this means a 7PM-9PM timeframe. Depending on the time of year you choose, you also want to make sure it will actually be dark for some portion of the event... hence the name, "Take Back the Night".

The other large group decision to be made by the planning committee is the format of the TBTN. Do you want a rally? Do you want a march? Do you want both? Will you have speakers from rape crisis centers? Will you have a moment of silence? An open mic session or speak out? Do you want someone to act as an MC, and facilitate the event? There are a million and one ways to plan the format of your TBTN, each individual to the community. But this is something that is decided by the planning committee and the size of your budget. If you are in need of programming ideas, there are a plethora of them supplied at the end of this manual.



A Side Note: If you have the people power, it would be a good idea to appoint someone on your committee to be a TBTN Historian to document the event. This person should be someone who will be around to plan the next TBTN. The history would include everything from the early planning stages through the completion. A three ring binder and disks are excellent organizational tools to use. Keep a hard copy of all correspondences, invoices, receipts, thank you notes, programs and flyers. Pictures from the event are good to keep on hand so that if you want to create a poster for your next TBTN you have some past footage. Keeping a video of the event is a nice way to preserve the moment. **NOTE:** Many people are not comfortable being photographed or filmed at a TBTN event—it is important for event organizers to limit this if it is affecting the feel of the event. By doing this you will make it easier for the next group to plan their TBTN.

If You Build It, Will They Come: How to Get People to Attend

When it comes to planning events, for the first time or for the fiftieth time, nothing is more stressful and nerve-wracking than getting people to attend. No matter how great the cause or how amazing the program, if people don't know then they won't go. In the case of TBTN, people need to know the purpose of the event as well as why their presence is important. Many people think events like TBTN are "only" for survivors of sexual violence. Allies to survivors, supporters of the issue generally, and people who are curious and respectful should all be included.

Advertise! Advertise! Advertise!

One of the best and cheapest ways to advertise is by way of mouth. Talk-up your event!



Posters and flyers are another GREAT way of advertising. A simple computer printed flyer with a hand-drawn sketch with your event's information is sufficient. Ask the local library if you can use their photocopier and there you have it, flyers!

We at Take Back the Night have great FULL-COLOR posters available that can be pre-printed with all your information—just place an order on our website at www.takebackthenight.org. Our TBTN annual Design Contest Winners are honored on these Posters! You can help to honor the long history of others who have gone before us breaking the silence across the country! Another great flyer idea that requires a little more time and patience are small flyers to go in mailboxes. Who doesn't like getting mail? If this is a feasible way to advertise in your community, we suggest that you have a strong graphic, colored paper, or other eye-catching way of distinguishing your quarter-page flier from all other stuff in their mailboxes which they would consider to be 'junk mail'.

To be most effective with advertising, decide on a theme and stick to it. Consistency is another key element. If all your ads are on bright blue paper, people will begin to connect the bright blue color with your event! Traditionally,

deep purple has been the color most often associated with the anti-sexual violence movement. Turquoise is also often utilized, especially by national organizations like the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (www.nsvrc.org).



Just remember, no matter how you advertise, make sure all your information is on the advertisement! This means when, where, what, and why they should attend.

Don't forget your local media sources. Call around to local radio stations and t.v. stations and ask about having your event announced on air. Some stations will give you a 5 second air spot for free. It might be at 3AM but it's airtime.

By preparing a press release you will be able to mail, fax and email your information to these stations in a second's notice.

A sample press release would look something like this:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT:

Your Name

Someone Else's Name

Planning Committee

Phone Number

Email Address

"Take Back the Night March and Rally"

Town, State, Month, Year—To address issues of sexual violence, community members have organized their first annual Take Back the Night Rally and March to be held _____ at _____ on _____. This event will include an inter-faith vigil, march and close with an empowering and unifying rally.

****Use your own creativity here to include
more details or brief history of TBTN****

Remember, the key to a good press release is keeping it brief but informative. Sending a press release is easy, too. You can look up the email addresses of local TV and radio stations and e-mail them the press release. Many times, that will be all you need to do to have your event included in their next issue or segment.



One other strong form of advertising is by offering “freebies”. Everyone loves getting things for free. They won’t be free for you and your planning committee, but they could do wonders for your turnout. For example, we at Take Back the Night raise money for our organization through t-shirts for Take Back the Night events---they are bright, colorful, 100% cotton, comfy, long or short sleeved, and can be easily customized for your event. We can print your community name or organization on them with the date of your event! If you don’t have much of a budget, you may want to ask a potential financial supporter, like a local pizza parlor or small business for a contribution, in exchange for putting their information or logo on the shirt—we can do that for you too! If you need to, you can ask several establishments. You never know until you ask.

Other good freebies are bumper stickers, key chains, posters and magnets are all rather inexpensive and guaranteed to get results. Just give us a call if you would like to have any of these items sent your way. We can give you a quote, and occasionally we have donations that will help us send you free items as well!

Another great way to guarantee attendance at your event is to offer free food! Like I said before, people love freebies and really love free food!

You've Planned It, People are Coming...Now What?

You are now a week away from your big event. Time to organize your game plan. What will happen first? Will people sit or stand? Will you have food and drink? Who is speaking? Do you have a Master of Ceremony? How about a soundtrack?

Sounds like a lot, yes? Well, it is but it will all come together rather quickly once you sit down with your committee to organize and finalize. Out of your planning committee, pick one or two people to act as your Master(s) of Ceremony. This person should be comfortable speaking in front of an audience and have a pleasant speaking voice. Once you decide on the order of events, print them up as either simple booklets (printed pages, folded in half and stapled in the center) for your attendees or as single page copies just for the planning committee and speakers. During your event, your Master of Ceremony will read from this to announce speakers or the next portion of the night.

When it comes to having speakers at your TBTN it's important to know your financial limitations and what issues you want the speakers touch on. If you have a nice size budget, by all means, you should consider hiring a professional speaker to present at your TBTN. You might want someone to talk about date rape, childhood sexual abuse, healthy relationships or same-sex sexual assault. You might want just one or you might want them all. If you have money left over from your advertising campaign, and money remaining from your budget, hire a great speaker; the more powerful the speaker, the more powerful the message. We at Take Back the Night can send you a list of speakers that we know have given moving speeches at our schools and other communities across the country. Just email us!

If money seems to be decreasing as you read, decide among your committee who would like to speak and about what. Pick topics you are comfortable addressing in front of a crowd. This is not for the shy and timid.

Duration

A good TBTN will be 2-3 hours in length. The length of time you have set aside for your TBTN will determine how many speakers you should have and how long they should speak for. If you have one speaker, you may want them to speak

for 45 minutes to 1 hour. (But no more than that, you don't want your audience to fall asleep on you). If you have two speakers, you may want to allocate them 30 minutes to 45 minutes, depending on what else you have planned.

Remember you want leave room for your audience members to have a chance to share their experiences and testimonies. Leave yourself a good half hour to hour (depending on the size of your audience and length of your TBTN) for a speak-out. This is a crucial part of the healing process. You don't want to take away from that by over-packing your speakers.

Here are two sample TBTN Schedules for you. Please use them only as a guide. Every TBTN will be different and should reflect your creativity and your community.

| FIRST ANNUAL TAKE BACK THE NIGHT RALLY IN YOUR COMMUNITY (for a 2 ½ hour program) | |
|--|---|
| 7:00pm | Opening Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony |
| 7:15pm | Keynote Address.....Speaker 1 |
| 8:00pm | Vigil/Candlelight Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony |
| 8:30pm | Speakout.....Audience Members |
| 9:30pm | Closing Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony |

| FIRST ANNUAL TAKE BACK THE NIGHT MARCH IN YOUR COMMUNITY (for a 2 ½ hour program) | | |
|--|---|--------------------|
| 7:00pm | Opening Ceremony..... | Master of Ceremony |
| 7:10pm | Start the March | |
| 7:20pm | First Stop - Keynote Speaker..... | Speaker 1 |
| 7:45pm | Start Marching again | |
| 7:55pm | Second Stop - Announce Facts and Stats..... | Master of Ceremony |
| 8:10pm | Start Marching again | |
| 8:20pm | Final Stop - Vigil..... | Master of Ceremony |
| 8:30pm S | Speakout..... | Audience Members |
| 9:30pm | Closing Ceremony..... | Master of Ceremony |

Depending on where you are holding your TBTN will determine whether people sit or stand. If you are having a vigil inside, people can sit on chairs or the floor (the floor will be easiest). If you are rallying outside, they will want to stand. Remember, you can have a vigil inside and rally and march outside. This doesn't all have to take place in one venue. Variety is the spice of life!

If you are offering free food and refreshments to encourage attendance, contact a manager at a local coffee shop like Starbucks, which donates to community service events, and see if they will donate coffee and left over pastries to the TBTN event. If not, ask your committee members to pick up some cookies on their way to the TBTN. Free food does not need to equal gourmet food!

What better way to create the right ambiance than having your very own TBTN soundtrack.* It is virtually free and will make a world of difference if composed of the right artists and songs. Below you will find a list of artists which can act as a reference list when compiling your soundtrack.

Excellent TBTN Artists

Ani DiFranco

Tracy Chapman

Suzanne Vega

Jewel

Bare Naked Ladies

Sarah MacLachlan

Tori Amos

Shawn Colvin

Dar Williams

Catie Curtis

Indigo Girls

Disappear Fear

Joni Mitchell

ps. If you have suggestions for our list, please email them to
info@takebackthenight.org.

If you are planning on having sound/music, you need to coordinate with whoever is doing sound for your event. If you need a CD-player or tape-player, make arrangements in advance for a sound system. Check with your local police to find out if amplification is permitted on campus, especially outside, and whether you will need a permit to do this. There's nothing worse than putting together an awesome soundtrack for your event and no one has the opportunity to hear it.

Along the same lines, make sure you have adequate amplification for your MC(s), speakers and audience members who want to speak out. A podium with a microphone is a good idea if you are in one location. If you are marching, your leader should carry a bullhorn or they will not be adequately heard by people in the back. The larger the crowd, the more amplification you will need. It is key that your MC(s) and speaker(s) be heard over the crowd. Otherwise they may have a hard time controlling the situation. In this department it is better to over plan than under plan; be prepared. It is absolutely essential to have a rain plan, whether it is an indoor location or a different date than can be quickly and easily broadcast throughout your community if there is a torrential downpour in the forecast. Even the most committed volunteer will think twice about showing up for a march in the rain!



Talk to someone in the maintenance and facilities department to see if they have the ability to set up a sound system for you. If not them, see if one of your friends DJ's or knows someone who does and will let you borrow their equipment. There's always one person in the community with the right equipment.

The Plethora of Ideas Section

Here is the section I promised you in the beginning of this manual. In this section you will find more suggestions and ideas for what to do, who to invite and ways to organize your event.

Inviting people from the outside always helps liven things up and it doesn't have to cost you a penny. Check out your local rape crisis center to see what services they provide. They can be an excellent, inexpensive resource for your event. "The Silent Witnesses" (www.silentwitnesses.net) provide wooden silhouettes of victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults and their personal stories. "The Clothesline Project" (<http://www.now.org/issues/violence/clothes.html>) is a display of t-shirts written on and colored by survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse. Each t-shirt carries a powerful, emotionally charged message. Many local rape crisis centers have their own Clothesline Project which they may be willing to loan to you for your event.

A speak-out, where audience members are encouraged to speak out on any topic related to ending sexual violence is an excellent way of creating a unifying experience. Allocate a specific section of your event for this speak-out, typically at the end of the event. People can talk, read poems, sing, cry, yell or request a moment of silence. Each person's time deserves utmost respect. You can also use this time to light candles in remembrance of victims and survivors. It may be beneficial to have a few counselors available during and after this time. Candles may require a permit; check with your local Police about any restrictions on open flames.

During your march, chants and cheers provide entertainment and spirit. A list of cheers can be found at the end of this manual, along with a checklist of tasks for committee members. At least one day before your event, mark off and write down a designated route for the march. It is imperative to inform the Police and facilities of where you plan to march, especially if you are concerned about security issues. Committee members should split into three groups; one to lead, one to travel in the body of the crowd and one to tail. On your march, select specific places to stop and address the crowd. Use that time to read out-loud statistics, poems or general information. Information to use for your march can be located on the following websites:

www.nsvrc.org

www.aauw.org/laf/library/assault.cfm

www.takebackthenews.net/

www.malesurvivor.org/

www.edc.org/hec/pubs/factsheets/fact_sheet1.html#references

www.nvaw.org

The last portion of your event should be used to thank your participants and supporters. Encourage them to join next year's planning committee, but, more importantly, not to wait until next year to address the issue again. Challenge them to address the issue of sexual violence every day, in their actions, speech and thoughts. It is also a good practice to send written thank you notes to all of the people who contributed their time, financial assistance, and or made a contribution to your TBTN.

List of Songs & Chants

"We're Marching for Women"

Sung to the tune of "We're Marching to Zion"

We're Marching for Women
Beautiful, beautiful women
We're marching forward to victory
We march to take back the night

"Women Unite"

Women unite, Take back the night
Women unite, Take back the night

"We are Singing for Our Lives"

We are a gentle, angry people
And we are singing, singing for our lives
We are a gentle angry people
And we are singing, singing for our lives

We are women and men together

We are _____ students together (your school's name in the blank)

"Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round"

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round

Turn me round, turn me round

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round

Gonna keep on walking, keep on talking

Gonna build a brand new world

Ain't gonna let nobody steal my joy

Steal my joy, steal my joy (continue)

Chants!

Women/United/Will never be defeated

2-4-6-8 No more date rape

Women Unite/Take back the night

Yes mean yes/No means no/Whatever we wear/Wherever we go

Out of the halls/into the streets/we won't be raped/we won't be beat

Hey hey/ho ho/date rape has got to go

Join together/free our lives/we will not be victimized

We have the power/we have the right/the streets are ours/take back the night

We are women/we are strong/violence against us has lived too long

Take back the night/the time is near/we will not be controlled by fear

Sexist/rapists/anti-gay/don't you take our night away

Survivors unite/take back the night

Wish I may/wish I might/free our lives/take back the night

Claim our bodies/claim our rights/take a stand/take back the night

Strong women/proud women/together tonight/no more fright/together we fight

Old/young/black/white/all women/take back the night

Gay/straight/black/white/people together/take back the night

We are women/We are men/together we fight/to take back the night

Final Checklist

Coordination of Tasks

- ❖ Designate project coordinators
- ❖ Develop list of potential supporters
- ❖ Schedule multiple planning sessions
- ❖ Develop "countdown" calendar
- ❖ Design logo and color scheme
- ❖ Produce final event's list or booklet

Correspondence

- ❖ Write nomination letters
- ❖ Meet with local police and government officials
- ❖ Contact potential speakers and programmers
- ❖ Invite your audience
- ❖ Send press release
- ❖ Contact local resources
- ❖ Thank you notes

Logistics

- ❖ Plan route of march and site for rally
- ❖ Obtain permission and/or permits
- ❖ Arrange for security, if needed
- ❖ Arrange for counselors or rape crisis staff to be available
- ❖ Arrange for music, food and freebies

- ❖ Set up chairs and table, if needed
- ❖ Secure microphone and podium
- ❖ Secure candles
- ❖ Arrange for some people to stay after and act as clean up crew

Advertising

- ❖ Develop and distribute flyers and mailers
- ❖ Send emails
- ❖ T-shirts, bumper stickers, key chains, posters and magnets
- ❖ Prepare banners
- ❖ Media contacts

Congratulations!

You are now on your way to your first TBTN

While it may seem like you have just taken on the most daunting and impossible task, you must realize that for every challenge and new road you build, you are creating an event that your community will cherish for years to come. The task of preparing the first TBTN will bring you headaches, stomachaches, heartaches and more rewards than you can even imagine. This will be truly one of the most rewarding experiences ever. While the road may be bumpy and winding, the destination will be well worth the trip!

*We are not suggesting that you create a cd or tape to sell at your TBTN. Rather just put together a song list for background music. If you plan to sell such an item, we suggest you get permission from the artist and the record company before doing so. If you don't, you may be in violation of copyright laws and we don't want that.