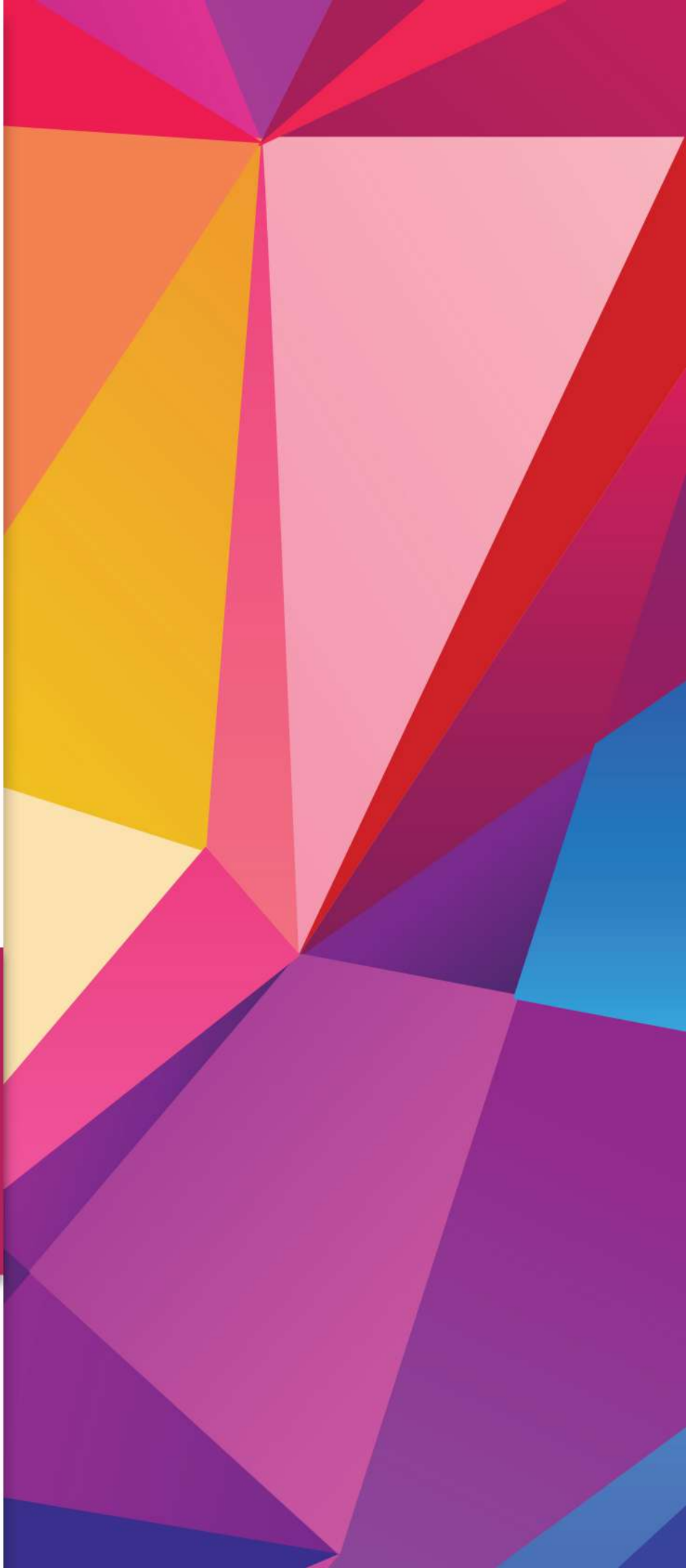


Youth Engagement:  
**Opening the Door  
to Difficult  
Conversations**

Toolkit

Module 7:  
**Sexual Violence**



## Opening the Door to Difficult Conversations Toolkit© Module 7: Sexual Violence

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# Opening the Door to Difficult Conversations Toolkit

## Module 7: Sexual Violence

Please note, community standards should be set (see Module 1) before beginning this module. This module will build on the knowledge gained from Module 3.

Think about how long these activities will take and whether you will have enough time in one session or need to spread the activities out over several sessions.

### Background

Sexual violence is a wide range of behaviours that lack consent of each of the parties involved. These behaviours can range from verbal harassment to physical assault (Kavanaugh, 2013). Sexual violence is often connected to abuse of power, systemic oppression and inequalities, and gender norms that perpetuate harmful attitudes and behaviours (Armstrong et al., 2018).

Rape culture refers to prevalent attitudes, behaviours, and norms that trivialize and normalize sexual violence through victim-blaming and objectification of survivors of violence (Baum et al., 2018; Nicholls, 2021). Media can further reinforce rape culture by normalizing aggressive behaviours in movies, television shows and song lyrics, disregarding consent, glorifying a stereotypical aggressive or dominant behavior as attractive or heroic (e.g., toxic masculinity), and insensitive reporting of survivors' stories. Rape culture can increase sexual violence (Baum et al., 2018).

On the other hand, consent culture refers to the emphasis on the importance of obtaining clear, enthusiastic, and ongoing consent in all interpersonal relationships. Promoting consent culture by upholding communication, respect, and empathy towards others can reduce instances of sexual violence (Graw Leary, 2016).

*A **trigger warning** is given ahead of the discussion or activity when some of the included material could potentially lead to intense physiological and psychological symptoms for people who have experienced trauma or have anxiety. Remember to use trigger warnings to ensure a supportive environment for all participants and remind them that they can stop participating at any time. By being forewarned, individuals have an opportunity to prepare themselves for any strong reactions they might have. Make sure you identify and communicate available resources and support for youth in your group who are experiencing distress.*

### Material

- Game show questions
- Resisting Rape Culture Handout

### Objectives

- Review the components of consent (refer to Module 3).

- Challenge harmful stereotypes and attitudes related to sexual violence.
- Foster an understanding of consent culture.
- Educate on the importance of being active bystanders.
- Promote a collective responsibility to preventing sexual violence.

### **Activity 1: Consent Champions**

This activity reinforces the understanding of consent from Module 3 and builds the foundation for addressing sexual violence in this module.

Divide participants into teams of four or five. Explain that the groups will compete in a game show-style activity to test their understanding of consent. Allow each team some time to discuss and agree on a team name.

Encourage them to create a name that reflects their commitment to consent. Write the team names on a flipchart/whiteboard to keep score for each team.

Using the “Game Show Questions”, conduct multiple rounds of questions where each team takes turns answering questions (Team 1, then Team 2, then Team 3, and repeat). Allow each group a specific amount of time to discuss and come up with their answer as a team. Make sure to mix the question type categories (multiple choice and true or false).

**Facilitator’s Tip:** The questions in this activity are meant to further challenge the participants’ understanding of consent and boundaries and to promote open discussions. Mistakes here are rich learning opportunities. It is important that you discuss answers to make sure everyone has a firm grasp of consent and boundaries. Provide the correct answers or allow other groups the chance to “steal” by providing the right answer and gaining the point for their team.

### **Activity 2: Introducing the Continuum of Sexual Violence**

Sit in a circle and discuss the importance of consent in all interpersonal relationships, and specifically in sexual interactions. Remind participants that consent is not only the absence of a “no” – it is an enthusiastically ongoing “yes”.

Explain that sexual violence is a continuum that refers to any unwanted behaviour that lacks explicit consent of each of the parties involved. This includes a wide range of actions or behaviours that fall on the continuum. These can be behaviours that are legally defined as violence or social attitudes that can perpetuate violence (e.g., objectification of women and girls, trivializing sexual assault).

Provide the definitions of the below terms:

Gender-based harassment: Mistreatment because of someone’s gender. *For example, using derogatory language based on someone’s gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation; sexist remarks; or*

*objectification of an individual or group based on their gender.* Women experience gender-based harassment more frequently than men.

Sexual harassment: Inappropriate sexual comments about someone's body or relationships, or unwelcomed sexual advances that can create an intimidating, demeaning, or hostile environment. *For example, making jokes about someone's body, non-consensually sending explicit texts or sexual images (sexting).*

Sexual coercion: The use of intimidation or manipulation to get someone to do something they are not comfortable doing. *For example, using threats to force someone to have sex, guiltning someone into having sex, taking advantage of someone's vulnerable state (emotional state or intoxication), using position of authority, using isolation and control.*

Sexual assault: Any non-consensual sexual activity between two or more people. It can range from unwanted sexual touching to forced sexual intercourse.

After providing these definitions, explain that sexual violence is not limited to overtly violent actions; it can encompass a wide range of behaviours and attitudes that contribute to the perpetuation of violence.

Inform the group that the discussion now will be an opportunity to delve deeper into the continuum of sexual violence.

In order to discuss the interrelatedness of all the different types of sexual violence, ask probing questions, such as the following:

- Based on these definitions, what do you think it means when we say that sexual violence exists on a continuum? Are the different types of sexual violence related?
- How can behaviours or attitudes, both individual and societal, contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence?
- How do social norms and sexual violence affect each other?
- Do gender norms influence the perpetuation of sexual violence?

**Facilitator's Tip:** Link to the previous discussions about social and gender norms. Social norms play a significant role in shaping behaviours and perceptions within our community. When society tolerates or normalizes certain attitudes and behaviours, this can create an environment where sexual violence is more likely to occur. These range from explicit actions like victim-blaming and objectification, to more subtle forms like derogatory jokes.

### **Activity 3: Consent Culture**

#### Part One: Introducing Rape Culture

Explain that victim blaming is based on the false belief that if someone experiences sexual violence, it is their fault. This is called "rape culture". Rape culture is demonstrated through people's beliefs and attitudes about sexual violence. It is expressed when people say things like "she was asking for it," "what was she wearing when she was assaulted?", "she should have known better than to drink when out in public". Ask participants

what they think the people who make these statements overlook. If needed, ask them to think about how these compare with the ideas of consent that you have discussed.

**Facilitator's Tip:** The people who make these statements overlook the importance of consent and that it can never be assumed based on a person's behaviours, actions, or clothing. They also overlook the responsibility of obtaining consent that is clear, enthusiastic, and ongoing for any sexual activity.

The opposite of rape culture is consent culture. When we understand the importance of consent in creating healthy interactions, we can begin to challenge harmful narratives and attitudes that contribute to victim-blaming.

### Part Two: Resisting Rape Culture

*This activity and handout were created and published by Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights as part of the Beyond the Basics resource for educators on sexuality and sexual health (2017). For more information, or to purchase the resource, visit <https://www.actioncanadashr.org/resources/beyond-basics>*

*The handout for this activity can be accessed on <https://secure.actioncanadashr.org/en/node/125>*

Divide students into small groups and distribute a copy of the *Resisting Rape Culture* handout to each group.

Explain that each of these actions resists rape culture and works towards a culture of consent. Ask each group to pick one statement that they think is easy to do and one that is challenging. Assure students that choosing one action that is challenging does not mean that they are perpetrators or bad people. It indicates that we all live and are socialized within rape culture. To unlearn the assumptions, norms, and stereotypes within rape culture, we need to identify what is challenging to unlearn and then take steps to intentionally and actively unlearn.

Within their groups, instruct students to discuss how they made their choice and then present their choices (and the reason for their choices) to the entire class.

Ask students to individually reflect (privately) on situations in their own lives where they can choose between perpetuating rape culture or challenging it.

### **Activity 4: Active Allies Against Violence**

This activity will navigate the important role that bystanders play in preventing sexual violence and promoting safe environments.

Screen the following video from the Ontario-based award-winning sexual violence campaign "Who Will You Help?" and encourage participants to pay close attention to the scenarios presented.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opPb2E3bkoo>

**Facilitator's Tip:** While this campaign focuses on violence perpetuated by men against women, explain to the group that sexual violence can be perpetuated by anyone and against anyone regardless of their gender.

After screening the video, facilitate a discussion about the role of bystanders in these scenarios. Use the following discussion questions if needed:

- What does silence communicate to perpetrators of violence? How might they interpret it?
- How can silence contribute to the normalization of harmful behaviours and rape culture?
- Are there specific barriers in certain environments that make it harder for bystanders to stand up?
- How can the existence of rape culture in society discourage bystanders from taking action?
- What can empower bystanders to overcome these challenges and take action against violence?

Remind participants that taking small steps to support others and promote safety can create significant positive change. Reinforce the importance of standing up against harmful behaviours and being proactive bystanders in various situations. Equally emphasize the importance of personal safety and seeking support from trusted adults, authority figures, or emergency services as needed in unsafe situations.

**Check Out:** Encourage participants to reflect on a key takeaway or insight they gained. Invite them to share one action they will incorporate into their daily interactions to promote a safe environment for themselves and others.

## Activity 1: Game Show Questions

### Multiple Choice Questions

Which of the following is an example of giving consent?

- a- Remaining silent
- b- Nodding your head when someone asks a question
- c- **Clearly saying yes to an activity**
- d- Saying “okay... I guess”

How can you ensure consent during a romantic date?

- a- Because your date likes you, they will want to do what makes you happy.
- b- **Listen to the other person and ask if they are comfortable with each activity**
- c- They agreed to the date, and sex is what you do on a date, so they agreed to that too.
- d- If they agree to come somewhere private with you, that is giving consent to being intimate.
- e- Assume they will like everything you plan

What should you do if someone says no to something you had agreed to do together?

- a- Tell them they are not being fair because they already agreed
- b- Try asking again, they might change their mind
- c- **Respect their decision and ask what they prefer to do**
- d- Tell them it is okay but let them know you are upset because they previously agreed to doing this together

What are examples of enthusiastic consent? Choose all options that fit.

- a- Agreeing after being asked multiple times
- b- **When someone eagerly and fully agrees to do something**
- c- They did not say no
- d- Consenting after a few drinks at a party

What can you do to ensure clear and continuous consent while being intimate with a partner?

- a- Focus on your own pleasure, if it feels good for you it feels good for them
- b- Assume things are going well if they don't say anything
- c- **Keep checking in with your partner to make sure they are comfortable**
- d- Ask for consent before beginning – as long as they agree at first, everything is okay

Which of the following is NOT an essential aspect of consent?

- a- Communicating boundaries and desires
- b- **Letting your partner know that when they say no it makes you uncomfortable, sad, or frustrated.**
- c- Demonstrating enthusiasm
- d- Ability to understand and make an informed decision

Which of the following scenarios demonstrate clear consent?



- a- A person says yes while looking away
- b- A person says maybe
- c- **A person says yes with a smile and nod**
- d- A person says I guess so

### True or False Questions

Statement	True or False?
A 12-year-old can consent to having sex with a 16-year-old.	False
Consent is the absence of disagreement.	False
Consent can be withdrawn at any time.	True
Consent can be given if someone is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.	False
Consent is a voluntary, ongoing agreement that can be given or withdrawn at any time.	True
Everyone’s boundaries are the same.	False
If someone is in a long-term relationship, they automatically give consent to any sexual activity.	False
If you have sex with someone once, they consent to having sex with you every time.	False
Asking for consent is not needed for long-term couples.	False
A 17-year-old hockey player can consent to having sex with their coach.	False
In situations of power imbalance, consent may not be freely given due to fear or coercion.	True