



MODULE 5:

UNDERSTANDING CONSENT
AND CHALLENGING
VICTIM-BLAMING

SW21-195/2026E-PDF
ISBN 978-0-660-98996-9



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada



This gender-based violence awareness module has been created in partnership with Women and Gender Equality Canada and YWCA Canada.



INTRODUCTION

In this module, we'll explore what consent really means and what it looks like in real life, as well as how to identify victim-blaming. With this knowledge, you'll be better able to challenge harmful attitudes, support others, and contribute to a community where everyone's boundaries and experiences are respected.

To end gender-based violence (GBV), it's important to know the different forms that it takes and the attitudes and behaviours that allow it to continue. Understanding consent and recognizing victim-blaming are essential for building safe, respectful relationships.

Consent means that everyone involved clearly, freely, and actively agrees to what is happening, without pressure, manipulation, or fear.

Victim-blaming occurs when responsibility is shifted away from the person who caused harm and placed on the person who experienced it.

➔ **Not sure what a term means?**

You can find a glossary of **highlighted terms** on page 28.

Before you begin, remember:

While talking about GBV can be important for healing and raising awareness, it's also essential to take care of yourself and be mindful of what might cause you distress or your personal triggers. Triggers are anything that might cause a person to recall a traumatic experience they've had. For example, graphic images of violence might be a trigger for some people. Less obvious things, including songs, odours, or even colours, can also be triggers, depending on someone's experience. If anything in this module triggers you, it's okay to take a step back and focus on your personal well-being. Seek out resources if needed, or try self-care strategies like exercise, meditation, or spending time with loved ones to help you feel more grounded and in control. If you or a friend needs help dealing with GBV, you can find **a list of resources across Canada, including hotlines, counselling services, and support groups for youth.**

SECTION 1

CONSENT



WHAT IS CONSENT?

SPOILER: IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT SAYING "YES"

Consent means that everyone involved actively, willingly, and continuously agrees to what is happening.

It cannot be assumed, implied, or guessed. It needs to be clear – and past experiences, relationships, or expectations do not count as consent.

It can change at any time. Someone can say or indicate “yes” in one moment and “no” in the next, and that choice must always be respected.

It only counts when everyone understands what they are agreeing to and feels free to say or indicate “yes” or “no”. A person who is unconscious, asleep, or unable to understand what is happening cannot give consent.

Consent applies to many situations, including sexual activity, physical closeness, sharing personal information, lending money, or sharing intimate images. In this module, we will talk mostly about sexual consent.

CONSENT HAS 5 INGREDIENTS:

1. FREELY GIVEN

2. REVERSIBLE

3. INFORMED

4. ENTHUSIASTIC

5. SPECIFIC

1. FREELY GIVEN

Consent must be given freely at every stage of a conversation or experience. People should feel safe, respected, and empowered when saying yes, no, or changing their mind at any point. Consent is not valid if someone is forced, shamed, threatened, or scared into agreeing to sexual activity or any other activity they are not comfortable with. When someone uses pressure, threats, repeated persuasion, or emotional manipulation, it is coercion, not consent. Consent is also not valid if someone feels they have to say “yes” because the other person has power over them – because they are older, more popular, in a position of authority, or have social or emotional influence.

Remember, only you can give consent for yourself. No one else can decide for you. For example, your partner can't say 'yes' on your behalf.

⇒ **Term Check In:** Coercion is when someone is pressured, manipulated, or forced to say “yes”. Coercion is not real consent, because even though there's a “yes,” it was not freely given or enthusiastic. What this could look like:

- **Guilt-tripping:** When one person causes another to feel guilty or bad for saying no to something. It can sound like: “After all I've done for you?” or being given the silent treatment, sighing loudly, rolling eyes, etc.
- **Threats:** When one person says something bad will happen if the other doesn't agree. It usually would start with “If you don't, I will...” This can include physical threats, or threatening to expose something to someone else, or threatening to post something online.
- **Persistent pressure:** When someone keeps pushing after a “no” or an indication of being uncomfortable. If someone continues to bring it up or begs, even in a joking way, until they get a “yes”, that's coercion, not consent.

2. REVERSIBLE

Consent is ongoing. Agreeing to something in one moment doesn't mean that you agree to all future encounters. People can change their minds at any time, and past experiences or being in a relationship are never automatic permission.

3. INFORMED

Consent only counts if you fully understand what's happening and choose to say yes without pressure from anyone else. Everyone involved must understand exactly what they're agreeing to.

It is also important to know that alcohol and drugs change things. If someone is drunk or high, they can't willingly and knowingly agree and therefore consent to sexual activity.

4. ENTHUSIASTIC

Everyone involved should be enthusiastic and engaged. A hesitant or pressured "yes" is not consent. Consent needs to be clear, active, and something everyone genuinely wants, not something someone agrees to because they feel expected, bullied/pushed, obligated, or unsure how to say "no".

This matters in all kinds of sexual or intimate situations, including sexting, touching, or other sexual activity. Enthusiastic consent means everyone is into what's happening and shows that through both their words and their actions. Checking in before and during intimacy helps make sure everyone is comfortable and on the same page.

5. SPECIFIC

When having conversations about consent, everyone taking part must agree on exactly what they are consenting to or not consenting to, including who is involved, when the activity takes place, and specific boundaries.

HERE'S THE THING:

Consent isn't one big conversation. It can be simple, everyday check-ins during moments of closeness, like noticing body language, asking quick questions, or pausing when something

doesn't feel right. "Is it ok if...?" might feel awkward at first, but it's how you can make sure the other person feels safe. This applies to all sexual or physically intimate encounters, whether they

happen once, casually, or over time. Everyone has the right to set or change their boundaries based on what feels right in the moment.

WHAT CONSENT LOOKS LIKE IN REAL LIFE



As mentioned, consent shows up through clear words and actions. That might mean someone enthusiastically saying “yes”, checking in, responding positively, and actively taking part. People usually look excited, engaged, and comfortable.

But here’s the important part:

You don’t need to hear the word “no” for consent to be missing. Silence, freezing up, nodding, or just going along with something doesn’t automatically mean yes.

If someone seems unsure, quiet, tense, distracted, or pulls away, that’s a sign to pause and check in.

Everyone involved should want to be there and participate.

Here’s what it looks like:

- ➔ Being awake, alert, and able to make choices
- ➔ Clearly wanting what’s happening
- ➔ Checking in before trying something new
- ➔ Showing comfort and interest through words and actions

It’s *not* consensual if someone...

- Says or shows “no” (even without using words)
- Changes their mind: A yes can always turn into no
- Agrees to one thing but not another
- Is asleep, unconscious, or not fully aware
- Is drunk, high, or impaired in another way
- Feels pressured, scared, threatened, or stuck
- Is under the age of 16 (unless close-in-age rules apply – more information on page 11)
- Is in a power position over someone (like a coach, teacher, or boss)

Your consent is *not* being respected if someone...

- Pressures you or makes you feel guilty to do things you’re not comfortable with
- Says you “owe” them something because you’re dating or because they did something for you
- Gets angry, upset, or resentful when you say “no” or don’t agree right away
- Ignores your words or body language when you show you’re uncomfortable or want to stop



IT'S ALWAYS OKAY TO PAUSE OR STOP



If you're not sure whether consent is truly there, it's okay to stop or wait. Choosing to pause protects everyone involved. If something is a good idea now, it'll still be a good idea later, especially after more time to talk, think, and check in.

Consent is about respect, communication, and making sure everyone feels safe. It is not about rushing or pressure.

Of course, conversations about consent or sex can open the door to more difficult topics. It's important to keep yourself and others safe. These conversations can bring up experiences where consent was not present, including disclosures of harm or violence. Some people may not want to have these conversations, and that's okay. Everyone moves at their own pace and has different comfort levels.

WHY IS CONSENT IMPORTANT?

Without consent, sexual activity is sexual violence. Sexual violence can happen in-person or online and can be:

- ➔ **Sexual assault:** sexual assault is any unwanted sexual act done by one person to another, including unwanted contact of a sexual nature, such as kissing, touching, oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex, etc.
- ➔ **Sexual harassment:** sexual harassment is any unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature from one person to another.

In Canada, a person must be at least 16 years old to be able to legally consent to sexual activity.

However, there are some exceptions to this law called the “**close in age**” rule, which means:

- ➔ If you are **12 or 13 years old**, you can consent to sexual activity with people who are **no more than two years older than you**. For it to be a consensual activity, there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency or any other exploitation happening. This means that if a person is older than you by more than two years any sexual activity is a criminal offence.
- ➔ If you are **14 or 15 years old**, you can consent to sexual activities with people who are **no more than five years older than you**. For it to be a consensual activity, there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency or any other exploitation happening. This means that if a person is more than five years older than you, any sexual activity is a criminal offence.



WHAT DOES A “RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST” MEAN?

Consent cannot be given in case of:

Dependency: A young person feels pressure to agree to things. This can happen, for example, because the other person gives them a place to stay and they have nowhere else to go.

Authority: A coach, teacher, or mentor makes a young person feel uncomfortable, but they are worried that if they speak up and say “no”, this could affect their opportunities. It could be an opportunity to be on a sports team or to get good grades.

Peer power: A 16-year-old has more social experiences and is popular at school, and a 13-year-old feels uncomfortable saying no to them because they don't want to be left out or seen as not being as cool as the other person.

If you would like more information about the age of consent, you can visit the Government of Canada's Department of Justice page about [Age of Consent to Sexual Activity](#). It's also important to know your rights. You can revisit the Introduction Module, [Understanding Your Rights](#), for more information.

6 THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT CONSENT

➔ Consent can look different in different situations. These reminders help you respect boundaries.

1. Always ask first and check in:

Before doing anything with someone else, make sure to ask if they want to do it. Talk openly and really listen to what they want and what makes them comfortable. Respect their boundaries and comfort level every time.

2. Be respectful:

It's important to respect personal boundaries and receive clear permission from the person. Choose your language carefully and do not use persuasive or aggressive blaming language, like "just trust me" or "don't be a tease".

3. Consent is ongoing:

Consent doesn't mean one "yes". It should be checked regularly. People can change their minds, and that's okay. If someone's comfort level changes, your actions and words should change too.

4. Listen and pay attention:

Consent isn't just about hearing "yes" or "no." It also means paying attention to what someone says, how they say it, their silence and their body language. If someone seems uncomfortable, pause and check in.

5. Respect a no:

If someone says "no" or asks you to stop, respect their decision. Everyone has the right to make choices about what happens to them and how they move forward. Respecting those boundaries is an important part of consent.

6. Handling rejection:

When faced with rejection, it's important to step back and respect the person's decision. Remember, it's not a rejection of you. It's the other person setting their boundaries. By respecting their decision, we make the other person feel safe and maintain a good relationship.

TALKING ABOUT CONSENT

Figuring out consent starts with talking openly. Chances to talk about consent come up all the time — in relationships, friendships, and online. Once you start having these conversations more regularly, it starts to feel more natural.

Not sure if you have consent? Here are some questions that you can ask:

"I would like to kiss you, is that okay?"

"Are you okay with this?"

"Can I keep doing this?"

ACTIVITY 1

PRACTISING CONSENT

Consent isn't just about saying "yes" – it's also about recognizing when consent isn't there and knowing how to respond.

Instructions: Read each scenario. Choose the response that best respects consent and boundaries. Then write one short sentence explaining why you chose it.

1. The party invite

You're at a party with someone you like. You're hanging out, talking, and they start getting more physical and suggest going somewhere private to hook up. You're not sure you're ready. They say, "C'mon, it's not a big deal. Everybody's messing around."

- A. "Maybe... I don't know."
- B. "Okay, I guess."
- C. "No, I'm not comfortable with that."

Which response best communicates clear boundaries?

Why?

2. Holding hands

You and someone you like are walking together after class. They reach for your hand without asking.

- A. You say, "Can we not? I'm not comfortable with that."
- B. You stay silent and let it happen.
- C. You feel pressured, so you let them hold your hand.

Which response best communicates clear boundaries?

Why?

3. Sharing photos

Someone you're chatting with online asks you to send a nude and says they'll "keep it private." You're not comfortable, and you're worried it could be saved, shared, or leaked. They say, "If you really liked me, you would."

- A. "No, I'm not sending that."
- B. "I guess... but don't share it."
- C. "Ummm, maybe?"

Which response best communicates clear boundaries?

Why?

4. Changing your mind

You and someone you're into are getting closer and talking about having sex. You said "yes" earlier, but you also said it has to be with a condom. When the moment comes, they say: "It's fine, I don't have one. We don't need it."

- A. You go along with it because you said "yes" before.
- B. You say: "No, I'm not okay without protection."
- C. You stay quiet and hope it ends quickly.

Which response best communicates clear boundaries?

Why?

5. When the mood changes

You're kissing someone you like. They suddenly pull away slightly and stop kissing back.

- A. Keep going since they kissed you first.
- B. Pause and ask, "Are you still okay with this?"
- C. Assume they're just shy or nervous.

Which response best communicates clear boundaries?

Why?



SECTION 2

VICTIM-BLAMING



BLAME VS. SUPPORT

Gender-based violence (GBV) can be hard to notice or talk about because it's often normalised – treated like it's “not a big deal” or just how things are. When harm happens, what people need most is understanding and support.

Too often, the focus shifts in the wrong direction. People tend to think of violence as only physical, but GBV can also be emotional, sexual or economic. And when someone comes forward, instead of being supported, they may be blamed for what happened to them.

This may happen subtly, like questioning what they were wearing, how they act, where they came from or how they look. Victims and survivors may even be blamed for not reporting past instances of GBV. Media and online conversations can make this worse by focusing on the person who was harmed rather than the harm itself. Blaming someone for what happened to them silences survivors and protects the person who caused the harm.

WHAT IS VICTIM-BLAMING?

Though the term may be unfamiliar, victim-blaming is very common – and it's wrong.

Victim-blaming is when the victim or survivor of GBV is held responsible, in whole or in part, for the violence that they experienced. Blame can come from legal, medical and mental health professionals, from family members, friends and acquaintances, as well as the media.

Victim-blaming might sound like:

“What did they expect going out dressed like that?”

“Did they fight back?”

“They shouldn't have gone home with them.”

“Why did they drink so much?”

“Are you sure they said no?”

HOW VICTIM-BLAMING CAN LOOK:

In the news, victim-blaming can show up in different ways. It can look like minimizing what happened, questioning the victim or survivor's story, or using language that feels cold or insensitive. Sometimes the focus is put on the victim's behaviour or choices instead of on the person who caused the harm, which takes responsibility away from the perpetrator.

Victim-blaming in the media can also show up in whose stories get told. Violence against white, straight, cisgender women is often covered more, while the experiences of marginalized people can be ignored or silenced.

Remember: Gender-based violence is never the victim or survivor's fault.

WHY DO PEOPLE BLAME VICTIMS?

Even though support helps people heal and feel safer, blame is still common – and it happens for many reasons. Sometimes people blame the victim or survivor because it makes them feel safer, like if they follow certain rules or “do the right things,” harm won't happen to them. This way of thinking puts responsibility on the victim or survivor instead of on the person who caused the harm.

Another reason this happens is because of unfair expectations about how boys, girls, and gender diverse people should act. These ideas can give more power to some people while putting extra pressure and blame on others. Victim-blaming can also happen because it's hard to believe that people we know, like, or trust could hurt someone. Blaming the victim or survivor can feel easier than accepting that someone caused harm.

Consider this:

Think about a time when you shared something personal or vulnerable, and the first response was doubt, blame, or questioning. How did that feel?

Now imagine that reaction being the default response every time someone talks about being harmed.

WHO DOES VICTIM-BLAMING HAPPEN TO?

Your culture, which influences how you think and act, plays a role in deciding who has power over others and can keep this violence going. Some people are subjected to victim-blaming more than others including Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQI+, newcomers, and people with disabilities.

It's important to remember that marginalized communities aren't just at higher risk of GBV; they also face violence in different ways. They often face barriers to accessing supports and services, and the oppression they experience can also affect the quality of care they receive.

You may have heard the term “**perfect victim**.” It's the idea that people are more likely to believe or support someone who's experienced violence if they act or live in a certain way. For example, some people expect a “perfect victim” to have no connection to the person who hurt them, to react in a specific way, or to live a certain kind of lifestyle.

When someone doesn't fit these unfair expectations, because of their background, personality, choices, or past, they may be blamed or not believed at all.

You can see this in the media, where some stories receive a lot of attention, sympathy, and public support, while others are ignored or questioned. This way of thinking is harmful and wrong. Anyone can experience violence, and everyone deserves to be believed and supported, no matter who they are or what their story looks like.

Believing them isn't about giving up fairness. It's about starting with support instead of suspicion and creating the conditions for healing first.

Victim-blaming causes real harm. Many people don't speak up about sexual violence because they fear being blamed or judged. In Canada, only 6% of all sexual assault incidents are reported to police. Victim-blaming also makes it harder for people to get the support and help they need.

Experiencing violence can affect many parts of a person's life, sometimes right away, and sometimes later. It can impact mental health, sleep, school, relationships, and how someone feels day to day.

Victim-blaming doesn't just hurt victims and survivors - it has a negative impact on all of us. When people blame victims or survivors instead of holding those who cause harm responsible, it makes others afraid to speak up or ask for help if something happens to them. It can also send the message that violence is normal or okay, making it more likely to keep happening. Everyone is affected because people don't feel safe, and those causing harm don't learn to change their behaviour. In the end, victim-blaming helps keep unfair systems going and makes society less safe for everyone.

CHALLENGING VICTIM-BLAMING

We are exposed to media and messages from society every day, and many of these include **victim-blaming** and ideas that excuse or minimize harm. Victim-blaming can come up in everyday comments, jokes, and questions, sometimes without people realizing it. Challenging it helps shift responsibility to where it belongs and helps people who have been harmed feel supported and believed. These messages can shape how we think, often without us realizing it. It's important to pause and reflect on what we're seeing and hearing, and how it might influence us.

4 WAYS TO CHALLENGE YOUR OWN BIASES

1. Check your sources:

Think about where the information is coming from. Who shared it? And why? Ask yourself, "Is this a reliable source, or just something I saw or heard online?"

2. Notice how media affects you:

Pay attention to what you watch, read, or scroll through, and how it makes you feel about yourself and others.

3. Watch for assumptions and stereotypes:

Notice when you're making quick judgments about people or groups without really knowing them.

4. Think about the impact:

Ask yourself "Could this belief or comment hurt someone, even if I didn't mean it to?"

Once you start thinking more carefully about the media and messages around you, it gets easier to spot victim-blaming. We know people don't always speak up when victim-blaming happens because it can feel uncomfortable and risky. **But change starts with you.** When you begin to recognize and challenge these ideas in yourself, you're better able to challenge them with friends, family, in school, online, and in your community.

NEVER BLAME A VICTIM OR SURVIVOR FOR GBV

When you hear or see something that feels like blame or shame, you can ask yourself:

- Is the blame being shifted onto the victim in any way?
- Is the statement blaming someone for the violence they have experienced?
- Is the victim's behaviour before, during or after the experience being used to justify what happened?
- Does it sound like "If they didn't want X, they should have Y"?

Once you recognize victim-blaming, you can challenge it. Focus on challenging the blame itself, rather than the details. Harm is never up for debate.

7 WAYS TO RESPOND WHEN YOU HEAR VICTIM-BLAMING

1. Speak up (if and when it feels safe):

If you hear someone blaming the victim, it's okay to say something.

You could say: "It sounds like you're blaming the person who got hurt. That doesn't feel fair."

2. Don't go along with harmful comments:

You don't have to agree, laugh, or be silent to keep the peace.

You could say: "People should be able to go out and have fun without being assaulted."

3. Put responsibility where it belongs:

Violence happens because someone chose to cause harm, not because of what the victim or survivor did, wore, said, or didn't do.

You could say: "At the end of the day, someone chose to hurt someone else, and that's where the focus should be."

4. Respect the victim or survivor's experience:

Avoid questioning or picking apart someone's story. The person who experienced it knows what happened best.

You could say: "What they were doing before, during or after doesn't change the fact that they were assaulted."

5. Watch for stereotypes:

Victim-blaming is often tied to stereotypes about race, gender, sexuality, disability, or who people think is "believable".

You could say: "That sounds like a stereotype, not a fact."

6. Be critical of media and online posts:

Headlines, posts or comments sometimes focus on the victim or survivor instead of the harm. You don't have to share or support that type of content.

You could say: "Why is this focusing on what they did instead of what happened to them?"

7. Shift the Focus:

Move the conversation away from questioning the victim or survivor to questioning the person who caused the harm.

You could say: "Why did they choose to hurt someone?"

IDENTIFYING VICTIM-BLAMING

Challenging harmful messages

Victim-blaming shows up in everyday conversations, in the media, and online. It makes a victim or survivor feel responsible for the harm that was done to them. This activity helps you recognize harmful statements by asking you to practice coming up with respectful ways to challenge these statements.

Example

Harmful message: “Why didn’t they fight back?”

Supportive alternative (example): “Sometimes people freeze or are scared. It’s never their fault.”

1. **“They shouldn’t have been drinking.”**

Supportive alternative:

4. **“You’re overreacting. It wasn’t that serious.”**

Supportive alternative:

2. **“If they hadn’t been flirting, maybe this wouldn’t have happened.”**

Supportive alternative:

5. **“They must have sent mixed signals.”**

Supportive alternative:

3. **“Why were they even hanging out with them?”**

Supportive alternative:

REFLECTION

How did it feel to speak up?

Why is it important to challenge victim-blaming, even if you're not directly involved?

How can you encourage others to do the same?

HOW YOU CAN HELP AND SHOW UP FOR SOMEONE

Support with HEART

To make it easier to remember how to support someone who shares that they've experienced GBV, YWCA Canada created a simple tool called the HEART method, giving clear steps for responding in a caring, respectful way that believes and supports the person without judgment.

Honour – Those who have experienced GBV must be the ones to decide what works best for their healing process. Start with support by simply listening to and accepting them.

Avoid asking questions about the incident, especially questions that start with “why did you...” or “why didn't you...” You don't need to know details to offer support; let them tell you what they want to.

You could say:

“Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me.”

“I'm here for you.”

“How you are feeling is valid.”

“What happened was not your fault.”

Empower – Ensure that the person who was harmed is empowered to decide what happens next and support what they decide. Your role is to ensure that the person has all the information they need to make the best decisions for themselves. Reinforcing their power and autonomy is important. Let them make their own choices.

Act – Support the person to take the steps they choose. Supporting someone also means knowing where to find help if they want it. You don't need to have all the answers; just knowing what supports exist can make a big difference.

You can ask:

“How can I help you right now?”

“Is there someone else you trust who you could reach out to for help?”

“Do you want me to offer a solution, or to just sit with you?”

Everyone who has experienced violence needs a safe and supportive place to go where they are believed and not silenced or shamed. Supporting someone, even if you don't have all the answers to questions, is essential. It starts with showing up and listening.

Refer and reach out –

Help connect them with the resources available, depending on what they want and need. You can find resources and support services in your community and share them with the person while helping them take the next steps, if they choose to. This could include local programs, youth services, counsellors, or free legal help, not just emergency services. Tools like [Resources Around Me](#) can help you find support options near you.

Let the person know they're not alone, and that help is available, but always respect their choices.

Trauma-informed care –

Do your best to avoid causing stress, respect their healing process, and offer different options for support. Be patient and supportive. Continue to check in and support in the ways they want you to.



Looking to learn more about GBV or get help for yourself or a friend?

Visit [Women and Gender Equality Canada](#) for resources.

Adapted from: [We-consent, Supporting Others \(PDF\)](#)

ACTIVITY 3

PUTTING LEARNING TO ACTION

Learning about consent, victim-blaming, and allyship is important, but real change comes from putting it into practice. This activity helps you think about how to act as a supportive ally in situations you might encounter with friends, online, at school, or in your community.

You don't have to fix everything. Supporting someone starts with listening and respecting their choices.

Instructions: Read each scenario carefully. Write down how you would respond as an ally. For each scenario, use the HEART model to guide your response. Write down what you would say or do for each step:

You can do this individually or in pairs or small groups.



H ⇒ **HONOUR**

How can you show that you respect what they've shared?



E ⇒ **EMPOWER**

How can you support their right to make their own choices?



A ⇒ **ACT**

What supportive action could you take with them or for them?



R ⇒ **REFER & REACH OUT**

What supports or trusted people could you connect them to (if they want)?



T ⇒ **TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE**

How can you respond in a way that is patient, respectful, and doesn't make things harder for them?

Your response:

Scenario 1 – Birthday party

You are at a friend's birthday party. One of your friends tells you later that someone at the party touched them in a way that made them uncomfortable. Another friend overhears and says, "Well, you were probably giving mixed signals," and laughs. Your friend looks down, embarrassed, and seems unsure if they want to talk more.

HONOUR:

EMPOWER:

ACT:

REFER & REACH OUT:

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE:

Scenario 2 – Romantic relationship boundary

Two of your friends are dating. At a group hangout, one tries to pull the other into their lap for a kiss, but the other pulls back and looks uncomfortable. Another friend jokes, "Such a tease." You notice that your friend looks uneasy and unsure how to respond.

HONOUR:

EMPOWER:

ACT:

REFER & REACH OUT:

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE:

Scenario 3 – Online victim-blaming

A classmate posts online that someone grabbed their butt at a school event. Comments start appearing: "You liked it." "I would have too." The next day at school, you see this person sitting by themselves, scrolling through their phone and looking really upset.

HONOUR:

EMPOWER:

ACT:

REFER & REACH OUT:

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE:

REFLECTION

**How did it feel using the *HEART* steps?
Which step felt easiest? Which was hardest?**

Which scenario felt most challenging to respond to, and why?

**Is there anything else you would want to offer someone
in these situations?**

YOUR GBV GLOSSARY



Not sure about a word or phrase found in this module? Gain a better understanding of GBV by learning the terms below.

VICTIM-BLAMING



Victim-blaming is when someone suggests that a person is responsible for the harm done to them instead of the person who caused it.

COERCION



Coercion is when someone pressures, manipulates, or wears another person down to get a “yes.” If someone feels pushed, scared, or obligated to agree, that is not real consent.

COERCIVE CONTROL



Coercive control is a pattern of controlling behaviour that makes someone feel trapped, scared, or unable to make their own choices. This can continue even after a relationship ends.

MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES



People who are excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. Examples of marginalized communities include, but are by no means limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural groups, age, gender identity or gender expression, sexuality, or socioeconomic or financial status.

WHERE CAN I FIND SUPPORT?

If you are experiencing GBV, you are not alone. Support is available, whether you just want someone to talk to or need help getting out of an unsafe situation.

24/7 SUPPORT SERVICES

[Kids Help Phone](#): Confidential chat, text and phone mental health support services for kids, teens and young adults.

1-800-668-6868

[Hope for Wellness Help Line](#): Counselling and crisis intervention offering immediate help to Indigenous peoples across Canada.

1-855-242-3310

[Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#): Chat and text support to connect human trafficking victims and survivors with support services.

1-833-900-1010

[Trans Lifeline](#): Confidential peer support and resources for trans and gender-diverse people, not connected to the police.

1-877-330-6366

[RiseUp \(by Kids Help Phone\)](#): Confidential support and resources specifically geared toward African, Caribbean, and Black youth and their well-being.

Texting RISE to 686868

[Suicide Crisis Helpline \(988.ca\)](#): A 24/7 safe space to talk to a trained responder that will listen without judgement, provide support and understanding, and share helpful resources.

Call or text: 988 (toll-free, 24/7, multilingual)

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

[Coercive control as a form of family violence](#)

[Consent 101: Respect, Boundaries, & Building Trust](#)

[Consent: What it is and why it's important](#)

[What is consent?](#)

[Sexual Consent of Teenagers](#)

[Let's Play A Game To Practice Consent](#)

[Age of Consent to Sexual Activity \(Department of Justice Canada\)](#)

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These modules were developed using information from our partners and the following sources:

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