



IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

SEXUAL VIOLENCE: all unwanted sexual acts – whether harassment, abuse, or assault - committed against another person, without that person’s freely given consent, is sexual violence and a could be prosecuted as a crime.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: unwanted sexual attention. It can be visual, physical, or verbal. Examples include: sending explicit photos, or making sexual jokes.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: nonconsensual sexual penetration or contact. Examples include: rape, attempted rape, molestation, or penetration with an item or body part.

SEXUAL ABUSE: nonconsensual sexual activity where someone in a position of power or authority takes advantage of a person’s trust. Examples include: assault of a person with a disability, of the elderly, of deaf individuals, sexual harassment by clergy, professor, employer.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: any sexual activity between a minor (under 17)* and an adult. Examples include: rape, attempted rape, touching, exposure to explicit photos or body parts.
*See rainn.org for state specific definitions of minor.

CONSENT: the explicit expression to engage in a specific sexual activity. Consent is not just about agreeing to a particular sexual activity but also includes boundaries that are set within sexual activity (i.e using contraception).

VICTIM BLAMING: when the victim of a crime or any wrongful act is held entirely or partially responsible for the harm that occurred.

RAPE CULTURE: Refers to the ways in which society blames victims of sexual assault and normalizes male aggression and sexual violence. It is a complex set of beliefs that portrays violence as sexy and sexuality as violent.

GASLIGHTING: a type of psychological abuse in which the abuser denies the victim’s reality, causing them to question themselves, their memories, or their perceptions.

GROOMING: a tactic that involves 1) gaining the victim’s trust through extreme gestures of love and gifts 2) overcoming the victim’s defenses by slowly desensitizing their natural reaction to abusive behaviors. The most commonly recognized context is when pedophiles use it on children and their parents, but the technique is also used in other contexts, such as adult relationships or sex work. Grooming works by mixing positive behaviors with elements of abuse. At the beginning, all behaviors are positive. Slowly, abusive elements are added in amounts that may be uncomfortable to the survivor, but do not push alarm to a high level. Over time, the inappropriate comes to feel normal.

STEALTHING: the act of deliberately removing a condom during sex without a partner's knowledge or consent.

PHYSICAL ABUSE: The intentional use of force or threats of force on another person in an attempt to control behavior and/or intimidate. Examples include: hitting, slapping, punching, strangulation, shoving, throwing, pulling hair.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE: Often falls into one or more of these categories:

- Degrading: A person receives messages about not being good enough
- Ignoring: A person is given mixed messages - welcomed in some situations and ignored in others.
- Isolating: Individuals are cut off from normal social interactions and/or family and friends. They become emotionally dependent on their abusers.
- Terrorizing: Fear is created using insults and by verbal and nonverbal threats. This intimidates a person and destroys his/her independence and self-esteem.
- Corrupting: An individual is encouraged to participate in illegal, destructive behavior.
- Exploiting: A person is making use of a partner to meet inappropriate needs, or for economic or social gain.
- Controlling: One partner tries to dominate and control the other partner's behavior. This is often motivated by jealousy.
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FINANCIAL ABUSE: The use of financial assets to control the victim. Examples include: denying access to money, preventing the victim from viewing or having access to bank accounts, stealing money from the victim or their family and friends.

DIGITAL ABUSE: The use of technology and/or social media to control the victim. Examples include: tells the victim who they can or can't be friends with on Facebook, uses email, social media, and tweets to harass, threaten, or insult them, looks through their phone frequently.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE: Using religion to manipulate, control, and bully through the guise of religion, religious principles, or claims to spirituality. This includes using religion for personal gain, such as sexual or financial.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8>
- <https://www.rainn.org/news/how-does-your-state-define-consent>
- <http://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/abuse-defined/>
- <http://www.wavaw.ca/what-is-rape-culture/>
- <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/gaslighting>
- <https://www.abuseandrelationships.org/Content/Behaviors/grooming.html>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/22/stealthing-sex-trend-sexual-assault-crime>