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**Sexual Assault
and Harassment
Webinar**

Agenda

- Defining Sexual Violence
- Sexual Violence in Culture
- Intersectionality
- Defining Consent
- Defining Trauma
- Trauma Symptoms
- Trauma-Informed Approach
- Practical Support
- Summary Takeaway
- Questions

What is Sexual Violence?

- Any sexual act, or attempt to obtain a sexual act without informed consent,
- Any unwanted sexual comments or advances,
- Attempts to traffic
- Use of coercion to obtain sex by any person regardless of their relationship.

Sexual Violence in Our Culture

Rape culture attempts to normalize assault, violence and rape.

- Guarding and encouraging stereotypes
- Victim blaming
- Minimizing violence and assaults
- Individualizing sexual violence

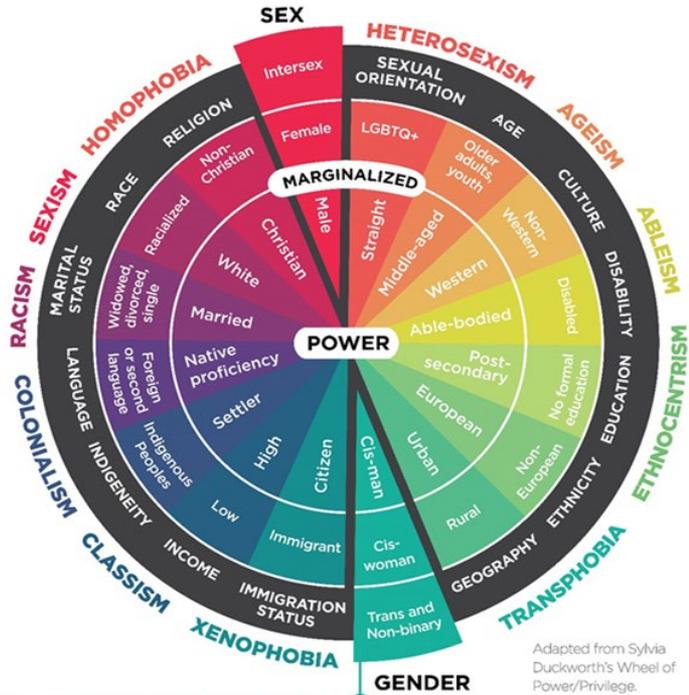
Common Phrases

- 1. Women ask for it in how they dress or will be tempted by how you dress**
- 2. They took too long to report it, so they must be lying.**
- 3. They just want money and attention.**
- 4. She just hates men.**
- 5. She led him on by going to his dorm room/making out with him/dating him.**
- 6. But the guy denied it, he's a great guy**

How to combat rape culture

- Avoid using language that objectifies or degrades women
- Speak out if you hear someone else making an offensive joke or trivializing rape
- If someone says they have been raped, take it seriously and be supportive
- Think critically about the media's messages about relationships, and violence,
- Be respectful of others' physical space
- Hold abusers accountable for their actions
- Always communicate with sexual partners and do not assume consent
- Define your own gender roles and don't stereotypes.
- Be an Active Bystander!

Intersectionality



Some gender identity terms include:

Agender	Genderfluid	Gender neutral	Transgender man
Bigender	Genderqueer	Non-binary	Transgender woman



What is Consent?

Consent is defined as a voluntary agreement or permission given to engage in the sexual activity in question (Criminal Code of Canada Section 273.1). The individual can freely choose what sexual act to engage in; without pressure, coercion, force or threat.

*** PERMISSION ***

- **Verbal Consent:** Using words such as “yes” or an enthusiastic verbal expression to communicate their agreement or permission to engage in the sexual act in question.
- **Non-Verbal Consent:** Includes features such as body language, facial expression, and eye contact. Communicating the agreement or showing discomfort in various methods other than words (ei. Avoiding eye contact, or avoidant behaviour) is not giving consent.

Although it is both parties' responsibility to ensure their partner is willingly consenting to the sexual agreement, the person initiating the encounter must ensure all participants are comfortable, willing and sober.

Teaching Consent Tip

CONSENT



Freely Given
Reversible
Informed
Enthusiastic
Specific

 Planned Parenthood®

What is Trauma?

Trauma Defined

Trauma is the response that results from exposure to an injury or unexpected event which presents a physical and/or psychological threat to ourselves or to others and which is outside of our control. Trauma generates intense feelings of helplessness, fear, and powerlessness, and overwhelms our individual ability to cope.

Trauma Symptoms

Intrusive Symptoms

- Intense reactions when exposed to triggers (e.g. anxiety, panic attacks, flashbacks)
- Dissociation/unawareness of current surroundings
- Repetitive distressing dreams, nightmares, and memories

Physical Symptoms

- Somatic pain/dysfunction (e.g. headaches, nausea, joint, muscle, or abdominal problems)

Arousal and Reactivity Change

- Difficulty adhering to a sleep routine
- Hypervigilant behaviours (e.g. easily startled, consumed by ensuring safety)
- Self-destructive behaviours (e.g. substance use, self-harm, eating disorders)
- Difficulty concentrating on tasks and on others & impaired memory capacity

Trauma Symptoms

Avoidance Symptoms

- Avoidance of or maladaptive safety behaviours related to the thoughts, feelings, and external reminders that are connected to the traumatic event

Cognition and Mood Changes

- Chronic and distorted negative beliefs about the self, about others, and about the world
- Ongoing feelings of anger, depression, shame, guilt, blame, powerlessness, and fear
- Decreased interest in activities and detachment from people/sense of numbness
- Difficulty regulating and controlling our emotions and impulses
- Inability to trust, fears of criticism, rejection, and abandonment, or overtrusting
- Avoidance of sexual activity or promiscuous sexual activity
- Confused self-identity, diminished belief system, negative future outlook
- Hopelessness/despair or unrealistic optimism

Physiology of Trauma

Hyperarousal Zone: Sympathetic “Fight Flight or Freeze” Response



Optimal Arousal Zone: Ventral Vagal “Window of Tolerance”



Hypoarousal Zone: Parasympathetic “Immobilization Response”

(Source: Kerr, L. K., 2021)

What is a Trauma-Informed Approach?

Understand...

- Trauma-informed approaches allow survivors to build trust and confidence and to work on healing and recovery without being further traumatized
- Sexual violence survivors may have additional adverse childhood experiences contributing to their trauma
- Goal is to recognize survivors' current problems and maladaptive coping skills within the context of their traumatic experience

What is a Trauma-Informed Approach?

Four Key Principles

- Promoting an awareness of trauma
- Focusing on safety and trust
- Providing choice, connection, and collaboration
- Emphasizing strengths and building skills

(Source: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2014)

Four Important Points

Remember...

- Sexual violence can happen to anyone and survivors will often respond in different ways so try not to express surprise by who or what you encounter
- Know that when you are speaking with survivors that it will always be at different stages of their recovery process because sexual violence has devastating effects on many fundamental areas of a survivor's life
- Your personal and learned knowledge can help immensely but unless you have “walked in their shoes” you cannot genuinely understand survivors' experiences
- As you begin speaking with a survivor about their experience, the most important thing you can do is to make them feel safe and to express patience, respect, and compassion

(Source: Western Centre for Research & Education, 2020)

Trauma-Informed Steps for Working with Survivors

Step 1: Create a Safe Space

- Private Environment (of their choice if possible)
- Confidentiality
- Active Listening- be present
- Giving space and moments of silence
- Rapport/Trust Building
- Judgement-free (knowing your own biases, myths and misconceptions, etc)
- Follow-up/Reliability
- Be Understanding and Patient
- Being Transparent

Trauma-Informed Steps for Working with Survivors

Step 2: Empower the Survivor

- Believe
- Validate feelings and experiences
- Provide options/allow them to make choices
- Show Respect
- No Victim Blaming- Get to know your own bias and educate yourself on the myths and misconceptions of rape culture
- Strength-Based Approach
 - Skill building
 - Improve self-esteem
 - Focus on strengths rather than weaknesses- Finding the benefits/strengths that come from trauma

Trauma-Informed Steps for Working with Survivors

Step 3: Knowledge of Community Resources

- Acknowledge that each survivor will have different needs (housing, medical, financial, mental health, shelters, etc)
- Having knowledge of various community resources will assist you in supporting the survivor to the best of your ability
- Connecting and providing advocacy to community resources can display a level of commitment and care to a survivor

How to Respond to a Survivor

- YOU play a significant role in a survivor's recovery
- What you say can impact the survivor in both negative and positive ways
- Keep it simple - go back to the basics
 - Take a deep breath/ground yourself
 - Listen & Hear
 - Believe their story
 - Just be there

Avoid saying

- Why didn't you fight back? It's not that bad. You shouldn't have been drunk. You should not have worn that outfit, or been out that late. ETC.

Try this instead

- Thank you for trusting me with your story. I believe you. You're not alone. It wasn't your fault. Can I do anything for you?

Here is an example of a response to a disclosure:

"Thank you for telling me. That sounds really hard. I'm sorry that you had to go through that. I want you to know that I believe you and I'm here for you. You didn't ask for this and it's not okay that this happened. **How can I support you?** I know about some resources that could be helpful to you. Do you want to hear about them?"

Closing and Resources

Learning outcomes:

- Understanding sexual violence from a systemic lens
- Understand important terms like consent, trauma, and working with a trauma informed approach
- Practical ways to support survivors

For more information contact...

<https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/support/>

<http://www.ocrcc.ca/>

Look for your local Victim Services and Sexual Assault Centre

Summary Takeaway

The presence of sexual violence and the resulting effects of trauma are significant, particularly among the student population. Students need continued support and education in the form of appropriate professional resources and services. Therefore, a serious investment in students' physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing requires institutions to allocate **much-needed funding** in the areas of sexual violence and mental health.

