Types of Abuse Activity

Goal:
- To show various abusive behaviours by separating them into four categories.

Have Ready:
- “Types of Abuse” (emotional, sexual, physical, financial) cards.
- Behaviour cards (create large cards using the list below).
- Tape and wall space to post the cards.

Things to do:
- Post the four types of abuse (Emotional, Physical, Sexual, Financial), ideally one on each wall.
- Get the youth to post the remaining behaviour cards below the corresponding type of abuse.

Things to know:
- For simplicity, verbal, psychological, and mental abuse are combined in “Emotional abuse”.
- We use the “Types of Abuse” as general headings to categorize abuse. Many abusive behaviours could be found in more than one category. For example, sexual assault is considered sexual abuse and it is also emotionally and physically abusive.
- All types of abuse are damaging. This activity is not intended to show the “worst” type of abuse.

Debrief & Card Placement:
- Debrief this activity by reading-out and going through each type of abuse.
- After the cards under one type abuse are read out you might ask the group, “Are all of these in the right spot, or should any be moved?”
- You might ask for volunteers to get involved by helping to read the cards.
- Pick and chose which card to explain in more detail. You might ask the group about certain cards, for example, “What is coercion?” or “What’s an example of guilt-tripping?”

Emotional Abuse
- Manipulation/mind games/guilt-tripping: Making someone doubt themselves. Debrief how verbal abuse hurts and can be hard to explain because unlike physical abuse, it doesn’t leave a black eye or a broken limb. It can also be very subtle and hard to notice because we live in a culture where sarcastic humour and put-downs are sometimes thought to be okay.
- Isolation (being cut off from other people): Talk about how we can start to believe a lot of negative things about ourselves if our partner cuts us off from our friends and family. It can make us feel like we have nobody to talk to and it becomes harder to seek help.
- Insults: Putting down a partner’s looks, the way they dress, their decisions, friends, family, culture, background, religion, etc.
Jealousy and anger: Normalize jealousy and anger as human emotions. Debrief the difference between feeling jealous or angry and acting on the emotion by trying to control their partner or intimidate them and make them feel scared. This does not always happen in person; people use their partner’s cell phones, Facebook, email, or other social networking pages to try and control them or to check up on what they are doing/who they are talking to. At Teen Talk we ask youth, “What is a healthy way to deal with jealousy and anger?” Being honest with a partner by telling them about how you feel and trying to work it out together.

Threatening suicide: Debrief how this is a powerful form of control. Remind youth that they are not responsible for another person’s life and you are not helping your partner or yourself if you stay in the relationship for fear that he/she may harm themselves. Because you’re with them doesn’t ensure that they won’t attempt suicide. Ultimately, your partner needs help and support from an outside source such as counselling – you cannot be their sole means of support!

Physical Abuse: causes, or threatens to cause bodily harm.

- **Throwing objects/punching walls/trashing the room:** These behaviours may not cause physical pain, but do create a climate of fear and intimidation.
- **Threats (to you or your family):** Similar to throwing objects, threats create a climate of fear.
- **Murder**
- **Burning**
- **“Play-fighting”:** Abusive when used as a show of power, control, or force.
- **Restraining (blocking doorways, holding your wrists, etc.):** Even though we get the message sometimes that holding wrists and trying to “passionately” solve our problems is “romantic,” everyone should have the freedom to leave a situation if they want to.
- **Burning, hitting, pinching, etc:** Mention how people are often hurt in places on their bodies that are not visible to others, such as their chest, upper arms, or legs. Ask why that may be. (No visible signs of abuse). This is a clear indication that abuse is about a choice to take away another person’s power and control, not about losing control because they are making the effort to think about how to hide the abuse.

Sexual Abuse: any unwanted sexual contact or attention.

- **Getting someone drunk/stoned to have sex with them:** Legally, consent does not count when under the influence of drugs and or alcohol. Alcohol is the most common date rape drug and anyone who feels they have been assaulted while drunk or high has the right to press charges.
- **Forcing oral, anal, or vaginal sex:** 85% of teens who are assaulted are assaulted by someone they know (partner, friend, family member).
- **Forcing any kind of intimate activity** (including hugging, kissing, etc.): Can also include forced prostitution, forced watching or making pornography, forced stripping, or forced sex with friends.
- **Spreading rumors**
- **Unwanted “sexting”:** Sending or sharing unwanted sexual text messages, Facebook posts, or nude pictures, or being pressured to send them.
- **Sexual pranks or hazing** (panting, bra-snapping, etc.): Humiliates the person and makes them feel ashamed.
- **Sexual remarks/derogatory language** (“slut”, “ho”, etc.): These labels increase someone’s chances of being assaulted and make it harder to go for help.
• **Sexual Coercion:** This is when a person manipulates other or situation unfairly in order to get sex. *This may include being threatened to do something sexual they don’t want to, or trying to turn someone’s “no” into a “yes”.* Examples would be threatening to have sex with other people if you don’t do it or stating that, “if you love me, prove it.” *If someone says “no” to sex, it’s not okay to nag them or beg until they say yes.* People also use coercion to pressure others into sending nude pictures, sexting or having cyber sex when they don’t really want to.

• **Coercion also includes getting someone drunk or stoned in order to have sex with them.** The number one date rape drug is alcohol. *No one has the right to ask you to consent to sex when you have been drinking or using drugs.* A person that tries to get another person drunk or high in order to have sex with them is breaking the law and you have the right to press charges if you feel like you were taken advantage of while under the influence. There are times when people have sex when one or both of them are drunk or high. However, people can make choices after using drugs or alcohol that they would not normally make. Just because someone voluntarily uses alcohol or drugs does not mean they are asking to be assaulted.

• **Not stopping when a partner wants to stop:** Everyone has the right to say no to sex or making-out at any point, right before, partway through, even if the other person really wants it to continue.

• **Sexual Harassment:** This includes any unwanted sexual behaviour, actions, or words. Some examples are sending someone unwanted sexual text messages, Facebook posts, or nude pictures, especially when it is repeated after they’ve been asked to stop. *When you are persistent, you are harassing someone.* It would also include spreading rumors, sexual remarks or any humiliating or insulting comments related to a person’s gender, sexuality or body parts such as being called a ho or slut. Harassment also includes sexual hazing or pranks (snapping bra-straps, pulling down pants as humiliation based on one’s sexuality or body).

• **Consent:** What has to happen before sex? Both people have to give their consent. Consent means to give permission, or say “yes.” Only “yes means yes” and everything else means no. The way the law is written, if you don’t get permission for sex, it can be viewed as a sexual assault.

• We know that people don’t always talk about sex before it happens. Sometimes people communicate non-verbally, through eye contact and body language. The thing is, when you actually talk about sex out loud, you are more likely to ensure that sexual assault isn’t happening. If someone thinks they received non-verbal consent for sex but the other person really wasn’t interested, then it could lead to rape or sexual coercion.¹ At Teen Talk we ask youth, “What if I wanted to touch someone’s bum? What would I have to do?” This doesn’t have to sound weird. You can say “are you okay with this?” or “is this alright for you?” If they say “yes”, then it’s bum-touching time! Anything else means “no”. If they say “maybe later”, you’d have to ask again later on. If someone says “stop” or “wait” or is pulling away, you have to stop and check in with your partner. You have a right to say no to sex at anytime, even right before or during, even if your partner really wants to have sex.

Note: Research has shown that there is usually less verbal consent as a relationship goes on.\(^2\) When working with youth point out that it is still important to check in with your partner on a regular basis.

**Financial Abuse**

- **Stealing (also blackmail):** Can include “borrowing” and not paying back.
- **Not letting you have a job or go to school:** Debrief that both of these things allow independence/new information/allow you to form other meaningful relationships/increased self-esteem/education/opportunities and by not having access to these, it can isolate you from current and potential friends and peers.
- **Bribery (you or your friends or family):** Any time the abusive partner is super-nice to the other person’s parents, family and friends but then treats them like dirt when they are alone, it can be an example of abuse. It makes it harder to get support if everyone else is telling you that you should stay with the abusive partner because they are so nice.
- **Forcing you to work:** If “prostitution” comes up when discussing financial or sexual abuse, you can say that anytime someone feels they have to have sex with a person so that they can get food, shelter or money it is considered abuse. Being involved in the sex trade is not necessarily about abuse, but many sex-trade workers are treated badly and may experience abuse from the people who buy sex. Also, many youth under 18 are sexually exploited through the sex trade. Sexual exploitation is defined as “the exchange of sex for food, shelter, drugs/alcohol, money and/or approval.”\(^3\)
- Financial abuse can also include demanding to know how a partner spends their money, or pimping (which is also Sexual Abuse).

---

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Stop Sex With Kids, *Know the Issue.* http://www.stopsexwithkids.ca/app/en/what_is