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GOOD PRACTICE IN ADDRESSING SEXUALISED VIOLENCE: Guidelines Document



GOOD PRACTICE IN ADDRESSING SEXUALISED VIOLENCE **Guidelines Document**

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Good practice in addressing sexualised violence: Guidelines document

Perpetrator work is now well established across many parts of Europe. However, addressing sexualised violence in perpetrator programmes remains one of the areas in which professionals need support and guidance to do high quality work.

In this document, we present good practice in addressing sexualised violence. Some programmes are structured in detail – entering the group setting with a clear session plan, while others apply more client-responsive approach with less pre-planned exercises. These good practice guidelines are relevant for either approach and focus on providing directions and recommendations for high quality work that practitioners can adjust and apply to their programme's specific situations.

Experience has shown that the good practice in addressing sexualised violence needs to include understanding the impact of the work on practitioners, as well as their self-reflection on the topic. In line with that, the document offers guidance for practitioners on how to prepare for the work, alongside with the guidance and materials for addressing the topic with perpetrators.

Impacts on practitioners

In many, if not most cultures, talking about sex is a taboo subject. It is therefore likely that you have felt uncomfortable or anxious when it comes to addressing the topic of sexual abuse in group work with men. On top of this reluctance to talking about sex is the knowledge and perhaps experience that hearing about sexual abuse – whether from perpetrators or victims can be uncomfortable, painful, and even traumatic. In less structured group settings, our aversion to this discomfort can lead us to talk euphemistically or avoid the subject altogether, while in more structured groups it can lead to an over-reliance on structure, such that we minimise hearing about our client's stories and issues.

It is common for practitioners to be negatively affected by this work, and especially by the topic of sexual abuse. For decades now, researchers have looked into the vicarious or secondary trauma suffered by practitioners working with domestic violence/abuse and sexual abuse perpetrators. Impacts include depression and emotional fatigue, as well as cognitive intrusion and avoidance. You may experience the impacts of the work differently depending on your own gender, upbringing and experiences. Research indicates that women practitioners are more likely to feel threatened by their clients (79% as opposed to 21% of male practitioners), and to find themselves avoiding sexual contact in their own lives because of their encounters with sex offenders. On the other hand, a higher rate of male practitioners seem to defend from the impacts by avoiding difficult issues with their clients as well as becoming more cynical in attitudes to human nature and feeling



uncomfortable about their masculinity (DeCarvalho Petry, 2005; Ellerby, 1998; Farrenkopf, 1992). Despite a lack of research on the impacts of this work on LGBTQI+ practitioners, individuals report extensive additional complications – including whether to be ‘out’ with their clients, who tend to be more homophobic/traditional in their attitudes around gender than the population as a whole.

Watch the video session on “Impacts on practitioners” here: <https://youtu.be/BueaomwLiFc>

Stance

When you raise the issue of sexual abuse with a client, you bring into play a powerful mix of dynamics. Both you and your clients will come carrying your own histories of trauma and shame as well as your respective arousal profiles¹. Knowing your own triggers and sensitivities in advance can be a helpful preparation for them being touched upon in this work.

Your interactions will be further shaped by

- the intersection of power relationships between you and your clients (including gender, sexuality, age and racial/cultural differences),
- your respective family and relationship situations and
- the resonance of all these within the organisational system itself.

It is a minefield – and it is best navigated with preparation, ongoing supervision and a trauma-, power- and gender-informed organisational ethos, which encourages self-reflection, sharing and self-care for its workers.

By ‘trauma’, I mean the response to deeply distressing or disturbing events that can overwhelm our ability to cope, cause feelings of helplessness, an exaggerated and often disproportionate threat response, and a decrease in the sense of self and the ability to feel the full range of emotions. While you may think of sexual trauma as resulting only from painful and overwhelming events, a wide spectrum of experiences, sometimes traumatic in the frequency rather than severity, can produce such effects. Micro-aggressions, for example – such as being harassed on the street or looked at in a leering way – can accumulate over time and set the stage for traumatised responses by facilitators to clients. The more you are mindful of how much these things have and/or continue to affect you, the better you will be able to respond to your clients in ways that feel both safe for you and transformative for them.

Guilt and shame are often confused in everyday speech. **Shame**, in this document, is the sense that ‘there is something wrong with me’ as opposed to **guilt** – the sense that ‘I did something wrong’. While guilt only results from wrongdoing, perpetrators and victims often both feel shame and

¹Arousal profile = What makes you sexually aroused



indeed victims of abuse of all kinds often carry a greater weight of shame than their perpetrators. While guilt can be an important driver of behaviour change, shame tends to lead to avoidance and self-harming or aggressive defences/enactments. When we feel guilty we want to correct what we did wrong – when we feel ashamed we are more likely to hide, defend or deflect. While some parts of domestic violence and abuse perpetrator work function through the development of guilt, shame remains toxic to the work and unconstructive. The client-facing materials² on sexualised violence and abuse are designed to minimise shame while maximising the motivation to change.

Watch the video session on “shame and trauma” here: <https://youtu.be/sllOtbQPCxo>

If shame is unconstructive to the work, it is essential that as a practitioner, you find ways to engage with men around their abusive behaviours without invoking overwhelming feelings of shame in them. This requires more than just a toolkit of targeted materials. It is also a matter of **stance**, the position you take in relation to your client and their abusive behaviour. We need to avoid a collusive or persecutory stance if we are going to work effectively and stay in the neutral zone of the continuum of stance (Iwi & Newman, 2015). The table below might give you a better idea about how these different approaches feel and the client-worker relationships they foster.

Collusive Stance	Earlier in ←--- Neutral Useful Stance. ---→ Later in cycle of change or hyper-aroused		---→ Later in cycle of change or hypo-aroused		Persecutory Stance
You are like mates		You form an alliance with the side of them that wants to change			You are like enemies
There is little challenge or conflict	You work to get them ready for challenge	You make gentle but persistent invitations to them to challenge themselves	You can challenge them directly and effectively		There is a high level of challenge and judgement
You sit alongside them to look at others’ wrong behaviour	You work on their behaviours that harm themselves	You sit alongside them to look at their abusive behaviour	You work on their behaviours that harm others		You confront them with their wrongdoing
You empathise with them only as a victim of others	You empathise with them as victim sometimes for attunement and modelling	You empathise when they to feel things which could motivate them to stop their abuse	You use their victim experience to help them empathise with others		You don’t empathise at all

Watch the video session on “Stance” here: <https://youtu.be/1QGolRwtBfA>

² Client-facing materials = Materials to be used directly with the men in your groups



Staying in the 'neutral zone' does not mean you should avoid professional judgements about your client's abusive behaviour – it is an essential part of your job to assess the harm that he has caused and that he might cause in the future. It is also human that you will make personal judgements and have emotional reactions about some of the things you hear.

At the same time, it is also important that you can form a motivational alliance with your clients towards change. To form such an alliance, you will need to avoid causing overwhelming shame in them. One way of doing this is through careful attention to your language. For example, if you use the terms "*sexual violence*", men will often imagine violent rapists and child sexual abusers and react with strong defensiveness.

Therefore, instead of asking "*have you ever sexually abused your partner?*" you might say, "*thinking back, do you think she might have felt pressured to do things sexually with you that she wasn't completely comfortable with?*". Similarly, if you need to label the module at all, do not call it the 'sexual violence' module, call it something like the 'sexual respect' or 'intimacy' module. As you move through the accompanying materials for engaging with domestic violence and abuse perpetrators on sexual respect, you will find that if you start here, you can much more easily lead them to identify and become accountable for their behaviour.

This linguistic change needs to come with an overall change in stance. To do this, you will need to put your feelings and reactions aside in the session, unless you are sure they are helpful to change in your client. Be curious and interested and share that interest with your client. Invite them to question their own behaviour as far as possible while remaining calm and non-confrontational with them.

From week to week or even in the course of a single session you or your client may get defensive, requiring you to temporarily pause more challenging work and return to connecting with them and grounding again, before moving back into the challenge. You can return to connecting and grounding in many ways, such as:

- *I think I've lost you, haven't I? It seems like you're feeling that I'm not understanding you.*
- *I can see this is difficult to talk about – what would it say about you if it weren't difficult?*
- *I'm wondering what just happened because we were really listening and talking a moment ago and now I feel more like we are fighting each other – can you feel the shift? I wonder how I made you feel disrespected or judged?*



- Use a little humour when the relationship can stand it - *“Wow, you are really expert at not answering my questions when you put your mind to it – it’s impressive.”*

This will all help along by using language, which feels natural to you and gets close to where your client is. To some degree that means matching your language with that of the client so that you use less technical jargon, for example:

- *How have arguments around sex got physical?*
- *It really gets to you when you feel rejected.*
- *You pressured her to do something she wasn’t into.*

Just as you and your clients might at times become defensive, it is likely that there will also be times when you feel like you are slipping into a more collusive relationship. This might take the form of moments or weeks of what feel like friendly, easy interactions while the subject of abuse is avoided, minimised or projected elsewhere. When this happens, you can simply lean the other way such as by:

- Naming it: *“I notice we’ve not talked much about how this relates to you and your partner and I’m concerned that while this makes our meetings easier, it might not make your relationship easier”.*
- Persevering in returning to the issue of abuse.
- Being very direct when speaking about the abusive behaviours: *“You made negative comparisons between her and other women”.*
- Speaking about victims and children by name in order to humanise them.
- Noting kindly when humour is used to escape awkwardness with your client.
- Avoiding getting swept up in humour that serves to minimise abuse or mock others.

The work becomes a continual dance as you step first this way to avoid a defensive clash and then that way to avoid a collusive lull. You will get much better at this if you are engaged in both preparatory and ongoing supervision. I have outlined some useful exercises around this below.



Norms, expectations and beliefs

All of us – practitioners and clients alike – are raised amidst a unique mix of cultures and experiences that lead us to understand what is taboo sexually, what can be expected, what is normal and what should and should not be desired.

Usually the mix of attitudes and beliefs within a group will allow men at least to notice that their own expectations around sex are different from other men's. This can be the first step in questioning and deconstructing preconceived ideas in order to make more conscious choices about which beliefs their future sex lives will be based on.

Keep in mind that these programmes target *abuse* and try to avoid being drawn into 'moralistic arguments' against practices you find distasteful. I also recommend that you not be drawn on inequalities which both of a couple buy into, and which are not risk related (e.g. he always initiates sex or that they normally have sex on Fridays) as long as both are happy with this. You can and should do work around how real such agreement is, and on both parties' freedom to disagree or change their preferences over time, but it probably is not the job of a perpetrator programme to go further.

Since sex is talked about so little in most cultures and communities, it is an area where our ideas around it have often hardly seen the light of day. We are often unaware of what our beliefs actually are – they are like the lenses of our glasses – they shape the way we see the world but we don't see them at all. This is true for you and for your clients, and if you are going to work effectively with others, you must be prepared to take a good look at your own norms, beliefs and expectations.

The intersections of identity and power are likely to play out in very particular ways when working with sexual abuse and respect. Whether and how you and your client differ in terms of gender, sexual orientation, age, race and ethnicity will affect everything: especially what can be said and how it is heard.

In therapeutic work, it is important to acknowledge reality and name the 'elephant in the room'. This provides an opportunity for clients to say how they experience the situation and relationship with us – without needing to push for it. You can start this conversation for example by saying:

- *It must be weird talking about what is usually seen as a private subject with a woman whom you hardly know.*
- *We've probably had very different learning around this stuff, haven't we?*
- *It's unusual to have a serious conversation about sex isn't it?*

It is also helpful to establish an understanding of our clients' wider cultural context and how intimate relationships play out. While it is your responsibility to educate yourself as much as possible about cultures other than your own, provided that you ask in a neutral way and without judgement, your clients are likely willing to offer insight into their unique learning and understandings around sex.



Similarly, and with the same attention around neutrality and non-judgement, colleagues may be able to help, for example, by offering what they think might be common sex-related arguments within their culture and how such arguments might start, sound and end.

These kinds of conversations by necessity rely heavily on generalisations and stereotypes. Obviously, you cannot take a commonly held belief in a certain group and assume that everyone who identifies with that group holds the same belief. If you keep this in mind you will find that the more you understand about a person's cultural context, the better you will be able to work effectively with them around this difficult subject.

Watch the video session on "Culture" here: https://youtu.be/pyzF_W9Fa2M

Watch the video session on "Working with Young People" here:
<https://youtu.be/tiShQj1R7zo>



Exercises for worker preparation and ongoing wellbeing

Watch the video session on “What helps” here: <https://youtu.be/GJ-UH4R1Bfo>

Scrutinise your beliefs and expectations

Is this always abusive?

Create a line across the room from ‘always abusive’ to ‘never abusive’ and get workers to place themselves along it in relation to one of the following examples one after the other. Feel free to add and remove practices to fit what you think is most relevant to your local context. Encourage them to include consideration of these practices within relationships where there is domestic violence/abuse. Once they stand on the line, ask them why they are where they are and encourage conversation and debate from different positions. You do not need to define where the line of abusiveness is for all examples, but you want to discuss the cases thoroughly.

- Having sex with people outside of the relationship
- One partner always decides when to have sex
- Sending or requesting explicit images between partners
- Make-up sex³
- BDSM⁴
- Waking a partner up for sex
- Having sex at defined times
- Buying flowers and giving a massage in the hopes of getting sex
- One partner wanting to stop all sexual activity
- Telling a partner what you do and do not want sexually

³ „Make-up sex“ = having sex after a fight or as a way to make peace

⁴ BDSM = Bondage & Discipline, Dominance & Submission, Sadism & Masochism



Inventory of 'shoulds'

Make a searching and fearless inventory of your preconceived ideas relating to sex – especially focussed on relationship sex. Do this by setting a timer for 5 minutes and writing (VERY fast):

I should/shouldn't...

Then repeat the same again for 5 minutes beginning with:

My partner should/shouldn't...

Try to cover areas including what you should or shouldn't do, how you should or shouldn't look, what you should or shouldn't want, what you should or shouldn't say. Be sure to include 'the obvious'. Do not censor yourself – you don't have to share this with anyone.

Take a look at what is there and consider what it would be like if you had not received these ideas. Which ideas would you have *chosen*? How unavoidable are any of them? Which ones would you want to let go of if you could?

Learning about sex

Consider how you learned about sex (this is one of the exercises from the accompanying resources for clients).

- *What experiences, stories and language gave you your learning about sex?*
- *From whom did you hear them?*
- *What messages did you receive from these different sources?*

This exercise can be done alone, but is most useful to do as a team with your colleagues. In a group setting, you will not only have a test of how this discussion feels, but it will also help you practice speaking and listening with others on the subject.

Know your painful points

Most people, and almost all women, will have a history of incidents around sexual harassment, abuse and violence ranging from the uncomfortable to the scary to the horrific. Both a mix of small micro-abuses and/or one or more significant incidents leave most of us with a pattern of painful points, which are easily triggered when a client tells us about incidents with similar features. Practitioner painful points can also relate to a triggering of shame, e.g. as around their own past



behaviour, gender or arousal profile⁵. Inevitably, these can prevent doing constructive work in the area.

Start by acknowledging to yourself what trauma and shame you carry. It can help to make an inventory of traumatic/shaming experiences, including those you have experienced or those you may have perpetrated. This inventory can include:

- Poor sexual boundaries in non-intimate relationships
- Experiences of child sexual abuse
- Adolescent sexual exploitation
- Sexual harassment – including in the street, school or in the workplace
- The use of pornography that is felt to be abusive as a concept or for the people in it
- BDSM or other sexual practices that are not ‘clean’ in terms of consent, impacts, receptivity and exploitation of vulnerabilities
- Sexual pressuring – from sulking⁶, to moodiness to pestering to verbal abuse to force
- Sexual disrespect and swears

From your own experiences, you may get clues as to what would trigger you. In my own direct and supervisory experience, I have come across a range of situations which workers found particularly hard to work with. You can also go through the checklist of these below and scale from 1-5 how uncomfortable they would be for you:

	Discomfort level 1-5
Having to speak frankly about sex, masturbation etc. with a group of men	
Men who make homophobic comments in groups	
Men who make jokes together on a group about women being ‘frigid’	

⁵ Arousal profile = What makes you sexually aroused

⁶ To sulk = to be in a bad mood on purpose



Men who use sexualised swearing and disrespect – “she’s a dirty slut, cunt etc.”	
A man who seems only to be attending because he wants his wife to resume their sexual relationship with him and who is constantly pushing and pestering around this	
A man whose 12 year old daughter was raped by his friend and who appears to blame the girl as much as the friend	
A man with a conviction for sexual exploitation of young women	
A man who disclosed that his earliest learning about sex was through being sexually abused as a child	
A man who tells me explicit details of his sexual abuse of his partner in a way that he is clearly getting off on	
A man who tells you that he and his partner are really into BDSM but that he has also forced sex with her in just the same way as part of arguments	
A man who has shared explicit images of his partner	
A man who has argued with his partner about his 8 year old child hearing and seeing them having sex (he thinks it’s no problem)	
A man who believes that a wife does not have the right to say no to sex with her husband (according to cultural and religious doctrine)	

Co-worker discussion questions

In new co-working partnerships, it is important to agree how to manage some of the difficult group dynamics that can emerge. This is especially true in sexual respect work.

If you are going to be working with a new co-facilitator share the following with them:

- *Which of the materials do/don't I feel comfortable to deliver*
- *What kinds of situations in the groups might be difficult for me*



- *How can we work together to ensure we are both as comfortable as possible?*
- *What do I want from my co-facilitator?*

In some situations, it may be necessary or helpful to 'step in' and redirect questions, undue attention or aggression directed towards your co-facilitator. In the heat of the moment, there may not be time to check in with colleague first about their wishes, so it is important to discuss and set out some agreements for doing this before you start working together.

The following are some redirection strategies you may wish to consider and/or use:

- If one of the clients seems to be ignoring one of the facilitators, the worker they are addressing should 'redirect them'. For example: if they always answer to the man, even when the woman has asked them a question, then the man should simply look back at his female co-worker for the answer.
- If one of the men begins to get confrontational with one of the facilitators, the other facilitator should step in temporarily and say something like: *"if I were in NAME shoes right now I might feel a bit intimidated – I wonder if that surprises you?"*
- If one of the men begins asking invasive questions to one facilitator, the other should say something like: *"I'm interested in your question to my colleague – if he says 'yes' what will that mean for you and if he says 'no' what will that mean for you"*. They should then help the client deconstruct their wish to ask the question.
- If humour in a group on sexual abuse is more than a way for men to manage their tension and has become minimising or nasty in some way, the worker who is less the target of the nastiness should intervene first. For example, misogynistic humour might be met by the male co-worker saying something like:

While sex is definitely funny in some ways, I often wonder how it would feel for them if our mothers, wives, girlfriends, sisters and daughters were here listening to this. How do you think they would feel about the humour the group are getting into?

Or

I feel quite comfortable with humour in these sessions usually, but I feel uncomfortable with this humour. Can any of you say what it is about it that makes it different?

Once the less-attacked worker has redirected the group dynamic, they should always check whether the more-targeted worker wants to add anything. This is not about disempowering your colleagues



or taking away their voice, it is just about taking the attention off them long enough for them to collect their thoughts.

Support and supervision

Once the co-working relationship is established, it will benefit from frequent checking. I recommend co-workers ask each other weekly *"What would you want more of from me?"* and *"What would you want less of from me?"*.

The conversation is not unlike the continual re-negotiation that is needed for a healthy sexual relationship. Co-workers need be encouraged to speak up on a tricky subject in a context where power dynamics (such as gender and experience) are inevitably at work. Delicate supervision of the co-working relationship can make a very positive difference. Supervisors should take into account power relations between co-workers such as gender and experience, as well as survivor histories. Supervision should encourage a *positive* parallel process in which experiences of women and other sexually oppressed groups/individual survivors are given voice and are supported.

Watch the video session on "Final thoughts" here: <https://youtu.be/eb1foXN-k4I>



Materials for working with clients on sexual respect

The following materials are set out for delivery in three 2.5 hour group work sessions, with a few optional extra exercises added at the end. You can and should adapt them to your standard session lengths, context and to individual work as needed.

Sexual respect (1) – learning about sex

Healthy sexual relationships	20 mins
Learning about sex	40 mins
Pornography	20 mins
The man box	20 mins
Tony porter 'A call to men'	20 mins

This is the first of a 3-session module of a domestic abuse perpetrator programme addressing the issue of sexual respect. These sessions are followed by some additional materials targeting particular forms of abuse.

Trajectory of the module

This session begins with a brief look at healthy relationships – asking for some behavioural and relationships goals to travel towards before exploring the negative effects of 'traditional' male socialisation on attitudes and beliefs about sex.

The session includes a general discussion about where we learned about sex and a more specific look at pornography - with the intention of highlighting that many of these sources are very unreliable, that early messages were mainly myth, and that they lead us away from, rather than towards, the healthy relationship goals we identified at the start.



The session moves on to a 'man box' exercise, which provides a summary of how 'traditional' masculinities tend to leave out the skills and behaviours needed to maintain respectful intimate relationships. For those societies where it feels culturally relevant, there is a final look at the subject via tony Porter's 'A call to men'.

Healthy sexual relationships

This exercise is one that will be revisited towards the end of the module in the hope that the men will be able to add detail to it following a more in-depth exploration of the subject. At this stage, we are only expecting general points from them – such as 'communication' – without yet needing to establish the detail of what this would look like in practice.

To allow the opportunity of starting with lightness and humour in an un-offensive context, you could use the analogy of a cake

Making and maintaining a healthy sexual relationship with your partner is like baking a cake with them. When you bake a cake, you need the right ingredients as well as the right method and timing. If you get it wrong, your cake will come out hard and dry or will be floppy and small. We are going to think about the recipe for a cake that will taste good for both of you.

Get the men to brainstorm this subject and put the list that they create aside for later. Ideally, the list will include communication in some form, mutual pleasure in some form. Facilitators can ask some questions to bring out a little more detail from the men such as:

How will you decide whether to make a vanilla cake or a fruit cake?

How will you decide when to bake the cake?

What if one of you likes raisins and the other gets sick from them: Do they go in or not?

What if one of you is not hungry: Should they be forced to eat or should you eat alone?

Learning about sex

Get the men to divide into small groups of three or four and discuss with each other about

- *How did you hear or learn about sex and what messages came from these different sources?*



- *What didn't you learn about sex? Are there things you wish you had understood or known back then?*

Put the questions on the flipchart. After about 20 minutes, bring them back to the group as a whole and get them to share what they discussed in their small groups.

The object of this exercise is to draw out the messages, which form the basis of unhealthy attitudes to sex. The messages that place emphasis on male pleasure over female, those that form the basis of sexual double standards, those that associate sex with shame, those that make men more likely to pressure women for sex or women more likely to go along with sex they don't want, etc.

Note for facilitators

It is possible that some of the men first learned about sex through an abusive experience. Name this possibility to the group and ask them to speak about this topic with that in mind. Have the number of some helplines for men displayed in the group room and let the group know that you are available to talk with them individually.

What does porn teach us, how does it change us?

Pornography is now freely and immediately available to any child or adult who owns a smart phone.⁷ More than ever, it is one of the main sources of (mis-)information about sex and sexuality.

Discuss:

- *What messages and expectations are given in pornography about how men and women 'should' look?*
- *What messages are conveyed about what women should want and enjoy during sex?*
- *What messages are conveyed about what men should want from sex and about how men should 'perform'?*
- *What could be the impact of this in our relationships?*

Possible effects that may emerge in discussion, or which facilitators can raise themselves include:

- Women feeling that their bodies do not match up to an unrealistic ideal and that they should have no body hair, large breasts and otherwise girl-ish figures. Most people have physical flaws and everyone's body changes over time and especially with having children.

⁷ About one third of the world's population watch porn, 95% of 16-24 year olds in the UK in 2019 watch porn, most accessing this by the age of 11. You can add local statistics here since it is important for fathers in the group to think of their sons' learning and development as well as their own.



This can make them spend a lot of time and money on beauty routines such as makeup and hair removal. They may also be on diets or even have plastic surgeries. They are still unlikely to feel they fit the ideal. They are likely to feel less confident and less sexy.

- Men feeling that their penis is not large enough and that they must perform at sex. Men acting out what they see in pornography, trying to be rough and athletic and dominant, always able to last a long time and always able to ejaculate. They are likely to feel shame when they can't.
- Women feeling they must enjoy whatever the man does, even when it feels painful (such as rough sex), humiliating (such as ejaculating in her face) or dirty (such as anal sex) to them. They feel they must want sex whenever and however the man does, so that much of sex becomes a pretence and performance of pleasure.

The masculinity box and sex

Draw a box entitled 'masculine sexuality'. Ask your clients to think back over the last two discussions and to what the group has identified as society's codes and messages as to "how sex should be". Brainstorm and write into the box all the behaviours, attitudes and sexual codes that lead us to define someone as a 'high status male' sexually – especially among youth (which is the developmental period when our sexual attitudes develop). You may also use some of these questions to help the discussion along:

- *What is in the box, and what is out of the box?*
- *What sexual behaviours make a boy high status?*
- *Can you think of one or two boys who were seen like this?*
- *Did he have a lot of sex or a little?*
- *Did he have many or few partners?*
- *Did he talk about sex a lot? With whom and how?*
- *Did he often initiate sex?*
- *Did he take responsibility for safe sex?*
- *Was there any idea of sex as winning, as conquest?*
- *Did he focus more on his pleasure or hers?*

The key points to draw out here is that men tend to receive particular messages about sex growing up, and that these usually include the following ideas:



- Sex is about chasing women and overcoming obstacles that are put in the men's way. Men should initiate sex. Seduction is about overcoming obstacles that the woman puts in his path. 'No' doesn't always mean 'No'. Sex and women are worth more when they're harder to get. Sex which is 'just offered' is less valuable
- Sex is something that gives you status and is therefore something to brag about.
- Men should have a lot of sex, while women shouldn't.

Watch the video session on "The Man Box" here: <https://youtu.be/vjNc9QXv8Dw>

Tony porter 'A call to men'

A moving video resource on all this is a speech by Tony Porter, which is useful to play to the group. This may not be culturally relevant to your local population, so watch it first and consider whether it will be alienating or relatable to your group.

Watch 'A call to men' here:
https://www.ted.com/talks/tony_porter_a_call_to_men?language=en



Sexual respect (2) – Sexual pressuring

Sexual abuse scenario: consent and receptivity	30 mins
What we want from sex	10 mins
Sexual pressure	15 mins
Impacts of sexual pressuring	30
Tea and consent	10 mins
Consent within a scary relationship	15 mins

Trajectory of the session

In this session, we go on to explore the ideas of consent and receptivity⁸, and encourage men to think in a more empathetic and relationship-focused way about this issue.

We begin by establishing the idea that consent alone is an insufficient basis for ensuring that an intimate relationship is sexually healthy. Instead, we propose that men start to think about their partner's receptivity as a way to tell if something is sexually abusive or not.

The session goes on to raise awareness of the direct and indirect ways in which one can pressure a partner for sex. In this session, the work is focused on the counterproductive nature of sexual pressuring, pointing out that mostly we want sex because we want intimacy, acceptance and closeness, and if we sexually pressure a partner we achieve the exact opposite of this.

We explore the impacts of sexual pressuring and sexual abuse on women. The topic closes using 'tea and consent' to highlight and revisit some of what has been covered while reminding the group that most women in abusive relationships actually are not free to say no.

⁸ Receptivity = positive responsiveness, interest



Sexual abuse scenario: Consent and receptivity

[Play the Johnny and Sheila audio](#) or read out the sexual abuse scenario from the handout. Ask the men to get into small groups with their copies of this scenario, and to consider when they think Johnny gets sexually abusive (if they do) and why they chose that point. Afterwards the small groups should give feedback to the larger group.

There is likely to be a range of responses. Simply acknowledge at this point that there is no clear shared scheme in the group for judging what is and is not abusive.

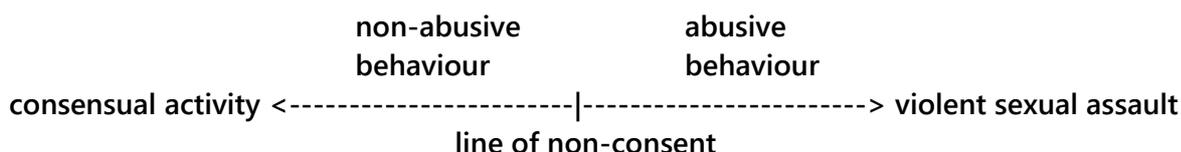
Go through the following teaching input:

We need to find a clear, shared standard against which to judge whether our own behaviour is sexually abusive or not. Let us start by looking at the legal definition of abuse.

Legal view of sexual abuse: based on consent

The law views sexual interaction between men and women in terms of a continuum from consensual activity to violent rape. In the middle is the line where she actively signals her non-consent – where she says ‘No’.

Draw the continuum on the flipchart and ask at what point, if at all, Johnny crosses the line between consensual activity and rape.



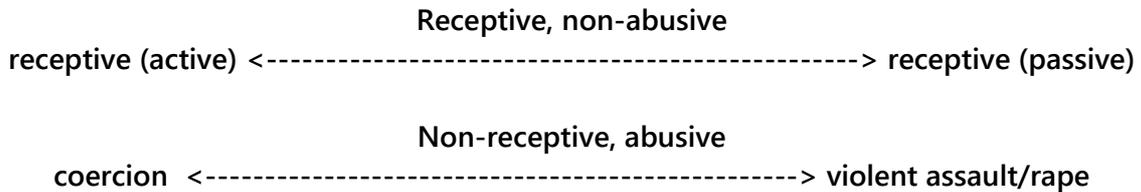
If Johnny tries x, Sheila says ‘No’ and Johnny continues to do x, he has crossed this line and is sexually abusive. Look at Johnny’s actual behaviour. We see that he just moves towards and away from the line of non-consent. When Sheila says ‘No’, Johnny retracts and tries a different tactic. Legally, it is highly questionable whether he can be considered abusive at all.

However, we hope some of the group will think he has been abusive. This model, while it might be useful in legal terms, is clearly inadequate for people to use in judging whether their own behaviour is OK or not.

You can then offer the following as a more useful model:



An alternative model: Based on receptivity



Present the two continuums and explain that sex between two receptive adult partners is non-abusive. It's not a matter of who initiates or of them playing equal roles. They can be active or passive or 50/50, as long as they are both receptive. Any sexual advance when one person is not receptive should be considered abusive. As soon as one partner is not receptive (actively or passively), the other's behaviour jumps onto the continuum of sexually abusive behaviours.

Ask at what points Johnny's behaviour fits into the coercion/rape continuum. In fact, he is on the abuse continuum pretty much from the start of the scenario, depending on whether you read the flowers as a coercive gesture – that is, something given with the expectation to get something back for it. If, when Sheila refuses sex, Johnny will be moody because he has given her flowers, then giving flowers counts as coercion and abuse. If, however, it is totally open to Sheila to say 'No' to sex, and Johnny will not be at all moody with her, then buying flowers is not abusive.



Handout - Sexual abuse scenario

Johnny and Sheila have been together for three years. Initially they had sex frequently, but now she's often not in the mood and Johnny feels she has to be coaxed.

On the night in question, Johnny brings her home some flowers. Later, they are sitting together watching TV and Johnny starts to be affectionate with her. He puts his arm around her, tells her she looks great and kisses her. Then he begins trying to get sexual with her by touching her breasts. She pushes him away, gives a little laugh and says, 'cheeky!'.

He says, 'Come on, sweetheart, I'm just messing around,' and tries again to kiss her. Now she pulls away again, still smiling, and tells him, 'Not now, I'm tired, I'm just not in the mood.' Johnny says, 'But we haven't made love for ages and I just want to show you I love you.' and once more tries to kiss her. She is now not smiling. She pushes him away and says more firmly 'No, I said I don't feel like it.'

Johnny asks, 'Why? What's wrong with me?', but Sheila just replies, 'Look, I just don't feel like it, OK?'

For a while, Johnny questions Sheila about her not loving him anymore. He asks her if she's seeing someone else and she tells him not to be silly, but otherwise she generally doesn't react.

Johnny says that he might as well get it somewhere else since Sheila doesn't care. He moves away and begins to sulk⁹.

Finally, she goes to bed. Johnny continues to watch TV for a while and then goes up to bed. He wakes her by kissing and touching her. She is initially unresponsive, but he annoys and touches her some more, and finally she stops protesting and they have sex.

⁹ To sulk = to be in a bad mood on purpose



Sexual pressuring

Step 1

Ask the group - *In what ways do people pressure their partners for sex?*

Brainstorm on the tactics and behaviours.

Tactics of sexual pressuring – example answers

Verbal pressure – ‘You did not used to be like this: Aren’t you interested in me anymore?’, ‘Aren't I good enough anymore?’, ‘Are you having an affair?’, ‘You don't love me anymore’

Sleep deprivation – keeping her awake or waking her up by shuffling about, sighing, turning over deliberately loudly, or touching her when it is unwelcome

Having a crisis of insecurity when she won't have sex – making her feel it's easier to have sex than not

Sulking¹⁰ with her directly – refusing affection, giving her the silent treatment

Sulking with her the next day

Using masturbation in such a way that she’s likely to feel guilty, inadequate or afraid

Intimidation or violence – pushing her out of bed, pressuring for sex and then having sex in an emotionally abusive manner (being cold or rough with her, hurting her sexually), forcing sex, or using other tactics of violence and abuse listed earlier in this module and in the physical abuse modules of the programme

Threats to get sex elsewhere

Put-downs¹¹ - calling her frigid

Annoying or exhausting her when she isn’t receptive

Picking on her the next day about other things if you don’t get sex – being moody and uncooperative, being more likely to pick a fight, being more insecure and demanding that she take care of you, not admitting the link between not getting sex when you want it and later abusive behaviour.

Guilt-tripping¹² her – talking a lot about how frustrated or horny you feel

¹⁰ To sulk = to be in a bad mood on purpose

¹¹To put someone down = criticize someone



Discuss:

How does this link to the codes we learn in youth (as discussed earlier in the session on 'Learning about sex')?

Step 2

What, apart from what you would get out of masturbation, do you want out of sex with your partner?

What do you want to get from sex that goes beyond masturbation – example answers

Feeling close

Showing love / Feeling loved

Feeling as though everything's OK between you

Getting an ego boost

Feeling more manly

Intimacy

Step 3

What are the effects of using sexually pressuring behaviours?

- *If you exhaust her or scare her into having sex? What are the effects on you, on her and on the relationship?*
- *If you try all this stuff and don't get sex? What are the effects on you, on her and on the relationship?*

What results from sexual pressuring – example answers

You feel less close

She is angry and turned off

You feel rejected and less manly

You feel sick at yourself

She feels objectified

She feels dirty

¹²To guilt-trip = Making somebody feel guilty on purpose



She feels exhausted
She has sex with you but hates you for it
She completely stops having sex with you
Everything between you is less OK
You are about as far from intimacy as you can get

Tea and consent

Show the video 'Tea and consent' to sum up some of the ideas about receptivity being the important factor.

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

Consent within a scary relationship

Good as the tea and consent video is, we established at the start of this session that, though consent is everything in the law, receptivity is more important for a healthy sexual relationship. Ask the group to listen carefully while you read out the following scenario:

"Carla used to have a really good sexual relationship with Dan. But when they had kids, she found that her role changed to that of a mother. She found it difficult to go from being a mother to being sexy. She didn't often get a chance to take the time to change from one role to the other. As a result, she wanted sex less often. But she also noticed that Dan was always in a better mood when she did what he wanted sexually – and this better mood could last for days.

At some point in their relationship, Dan became increasingly aggressive with her during arguments and moodier with her in general. When she didn't go along with sex, at first he didn't pressure her directly. He just got 'in a mood' and would get much angrier and more irritated about 100 other things she or the kids hadn't done 'right'.

Increasingly, Carla would force herself to have sex with Dan and do the things he wanted to 'keep him sweet', because the cost of not doing so was too great. When he apologised after fights and they made up, she'd often feel so relieved that the tension and fear was gone, that she'd go along with 'make-up' sex¹³ because she didn't want to do anything to upset the balance again."

Ask the group: *Is Carla still consenting to sex? Is she actually receptive to sex? Do you think would Dan even know if she wasn't receptive?*

¹³ „Make-up sex“ = having sex after a fight or as a way to make peace



Sexual respect (3) – building intimacy

Check-in	15 mins
Ingredients of a healthy sexual relationship revisited	20 mins
Talking about sex with your partner	20 mins
Sex in long term relationships	20 mins
Alternative routes to intimacy	20 mins

Thus far, we have deconstructed the men's learned attitudes and expectations around sex and looked at the ways that sexual pressure backfires on them and damages their partners and their relationships. We have introduced the idea of consent and extended it towards receptivity as an indicator for measuring sexually respectful behaviour.

The final session in the module is about how the men can take this learning back into their own lives and rebuild healthier, more respectful and more enjoyable intimacy with their partners. They can do this by thinking in detail about how to improve their communication with their partners and by building closeness and love in completely other ways.

Ingredients of a healthy sexual relationship revisited

Remind the men that when you began this module they listed the ingredients of a healthy sexual relationship and show them their list. Draw attention to items on the list relating to communication. Tell them that this week you are going to explore this area in more detail.

Remind the men of the story of Carla and Dan from last session.

"Carla used to have a really good sexual relationship with Dan. But when they had kids, she found that her role changed to that of a mother. She found it difficult to go from being a mother to being sexy. She didn't often get a chance to take the time to change from one role to the other. As a result, she wanted sex less often. But she also noticed that Dan was always in a better mood when she did what he wanted sexually – and this better mood could last for days.

At some point in their relationship, Dan became increasingly aggressive with her during arguments and moodier with her in general. When she didn't go along with sex, at first he didn't pressure her



directly. He just got 'in a mood' and would get much angrier and more irritated about 100 other things she or the kids hadn't done 'right'.

Increasingly, Carla would force herself to have sex with Dan and do the things he wanted to 'keep him sweet', because the cost of not doing so was too great. When he apologised after fights and they made up, she'd often feel so relieved that the tension and fear was gone, that she'd go along with 'make-up' sex¹⁴ because she didn't want to do anything to upset the balance again."

Ask the men:

How could Dan possibly find out when Carla is actually receptive at this point in the relationship?"

Explain to the men that for Carla to feel safe discussing this, Dan would need to reassure her that there will not be any negative consequences, whatever she says. He may also have to say that he knows a lot of women don't want sex as much as a relationship goes on, and that children, stress and violence can all really kill the libido.

He could ask her to imagine a situation where she was totally in charge of when they had sex. That doesn't mean that she has to start it, though. Let's say she has an app that lets him know when she's really receptive – how often would it 'ping'? In what sort of circumstances is it most and least likely to 'ping'? Does she need a night away from the kids? Does she prefer spontaneity or a planned date? What might help her make the transition from the other roles and stresses in her life?

Ask the group:

How could Dan find out what Carla wants and likes sexually – both in general and in any given moment?"

Explain to the men that for someone's 'Yes' to mean anything, they also need to be able to say 'No'. So Carla needs to practice saying 'No' to sex, saying "not like that" or "I've suddenly lost the feeling - let's stop". She also needs to be able to say these kinds of things without being punished by Dan.

Of course, some couples may find that it kills the mood to keep asking "Is this okay?" during sex. Dan should therefore talk to Carla about this when they aren't getting sexual – asking her what she generally wants more and less of, and whether there are ways that she can let him know in the moment.

Ask the men:

Why do you think Dan gets in a bad mood when Carla doesn't feel like having sex with him?

It is likely to be partly about feeling rejected and partly about feeling sexually frustrated.

¹⁴ „Make-up sex“ = having sex after a fight or as a way to make peace



But the main reason Carla doesn't feel like sex is because she's stressed or tired or a mum, or because that's just how she is after the honeymoon stage of the relationship. Whether or not Dan is happy about that, *it's not about him*. Remind the men of 'tea and consent' – it's like Dan feeling that because he wants a cup of tea and she doesn't, that's a rejection of him! We all sometimes start sex and then just 'lose the feeling'. Again, it's usually because something just distracts us.

If Dan can recognise that (he may have to talk to her about it), the 'feelings of rejection' part of his bad mood can just evaporate.

As for 'sexual frustration' – Dan can find private, non-pressuring ways to masturbate, just like any single person would.

Ask the group:

How can Dan help create situations in which Carla would feel more able to choose and enjoy sex?

Often removing obstacles is the best start – helping her with her workload, taking some of her stressors off her and getting the kids to stay somewhere else for a night. However, this cannot be connected to any expectations. If it is, it will only pile more pressure on Carla and make her less receptive.

In the end, it's really only Carla who can answer the question. Dan needs to ask Sheila what would help her.

Talking about sex with your partner

Ask the men:

If two people wanted to create a really healthy sexual relationship, what would they need to be able to talk about and find out from each other?

Have you ever talked about these things with your partner?

Would you? Could you? Could you make it safe enough for her to answer honestly?'

Note that many women feel that they must have sex whenever and however their partner wants to, so expressing their own wishes and preferences can be really difficult.

Ask the men how they might make this easier – you may need to share some ideas with them, such as:

- *Pick your moment – ideally one where you are peaceful with each other and feels emotionally 'safe'*



- *Explain why you are asking*
- *Reassure your partner that you will not be blaming them, whatever they say*
- *You go first – but not by sharing just ‘what I want more of’ but some of the ways you feel pressured and push yourself towards sex or to go on with sex even when you aren’t fully feeling it or some of the reasons you sometimes feel less like sex (those that aren’t about what she does – so that they reduce rather than increase the pressure on her)*

The men can ask their partners some of the following:

- *What would you like more of in terms of affection and sex, and what would like less of?*
- *How could you show me if you didn’t feel like sex?*
- *When do you feel most/least like sex?*
- *In terms of how to pleasure her, it might be easiest for her to answer either/or questions, such as ‘is this or that better?’*
- *When have you felt less comfortable with sex? What kinds of things have you felt less comfortable with? How might I have spotted this?*
- *How often do you think you would want to have sex ideally?*
- *What might stop you interrupting or stopping sex if you lost connection with it and stopped to be receptive?*
- *How could we make it easier for each other to say if we were having sex and lost connection with it/stopped being receptive?*

Sex in long-term relationships

Explain to the men that sex in long-term relationships inevitably goes through different stages. The end of the ‘honeymoon stage’ tends to be one turning point. Conception, pregnancy and the arrival of children usually brings about another huge shift. Things change as our stress levels rise and fall and as health issues come and go, and they change as we age and as women go through menopause.



To discuss, you can ask the men the following questions:

- *How have you managed the changes that happen in a sexual relationship, for instance once children come along?*
- *What is the hardest thing about these changes?*
- *What feelings do they evoke, even if they seem irrational or selfish?*
- *How would those feelings have you acting, if they got their way? What are the costs and benefits of going along with this?*
- *What would be the best way to handle these changes?*

Alternative routes to intimacy

Get the men into small groups discussing what else they can do with their desires for intimacy and affection that doesn't involve sexually pressuring their partner.

Non-abusive alternatives – example answers

- *Leaving her to initiate sex*
- *Practicing either one interrupting or possibly stopping sex altogether without any comeback when they no longer feel receptive*
- *Setting strict and explicit rules – for instance, if she goes to bed in a T-shirt, this means she isn't receptive*
- *More touching that is solely affectionate*
- *Spending time with her*
- *Being intimate with her by sharing your feelings and thoughts*
- *Sharing experiences, such as going out together*
- *Taking care of your own esteem and ego – doing sports or courses or whatever makes you proud of yourself*



Extras

BDSM – Bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism

This exercise might be one that you undertake with an individual or group where it emerges from earlier sessions that BDSM is a likely feature of their relationship. Point out that BDSM practices – from power play and rough sex onwards – are becoming increasingly common. This is hardly surprising since – according to Covenant Eyes¹⁵ – 88% of scenes in porn films contain acts of physical aggression, and the majority of boys have seen pornography before the age of 12. Read the following quote to the individual or group (it is from a 17 year old, UK teenager).

When my boyfriend wanted to engage in BDSM sex, he did not ask me before he did specific things, but instead told me to tell him to stop if I was uncomfortable. He would, suddenly, out of nowhere, hit me hard in the face, and I didn't know how to react. I would just hope and pray that he wasn't going to do it again. I felt nervous asking him to stop, partly because he didn't always listen when I did, and partly because the way he behaved afterwards confused me. He would apologise for hurting me, as if he was finding it difficult to control himself. I would then spend my time trying to make him feel better about what he'd done to me, even though I hadn't really felt comfortable with it.' – Anonymous, cis-female¹⁶, age 17

Divide the group into subgroups to discuss

What can this couple do to ensure that their sex life is non-abusive?

The answers should include:

- They would need to be able to have an open and equal conversation about the potential options and impacts and about what interested them.
- They need to talk specifically about what acts they are interested in.
- The couple needs to establish a safeword¹⁷.
- The couple can practice on non-BDSM sex, with either partner stopping sex when it is no longer comfortable and they no longer connect with it.
- The couple needs to make sure to remove the barriers to stopping sex, whether such barriers might be direct punishment or making the unwilling partner feel guilty.

¹⁵ <https://www.covenanteyes.com/>

¹⁶ Cis-female = a person who was assigned female at birth and whose gender identity is female

¹⁷ Safeword = word or code that signals that a boundary is being crossed and that the dominant partner should stop or slow down



- It is agreed and practiced that there is no punishment for either partner stopping sex.
- They discuss the overall interest in different kinds of sex is frequently.
- The submissive partner initiates and controls the boundaries.
- Receptivity is established for every single act.

Emphasise how difficult this is to achieve in a relationship where there is no domestic violence/abuse. Ask the group/individual how domestic violence or abuse could make this situation more complicated for either partner.

Sharing indecent images

We live in a world where people routinely share 'indecent' images¹⁸ with partners. Once shared, control of such materials is lost, and it is not surprising that sometimes – especially when things have soured between the couple - these are shared for status and/or for revenge.

If you suspect that one of your clients has done this, then you will need to focus on this area. The response that will be most effective will depend on the motivation for the behaviour. Different interventions will be appropriate depending on whether social status or revenge were the main drivers.

1. Status-motivated sharing

Some men will share images and other intimate details trying to gain status with others. They may not feel personally angry or hostile with the person whose privacy they are violating. They are simply doing it because they imagine it will impress or excite others and raise their own sexual/social status.

In this case, a 'bystander' approach can help them reassess the responses of others and the impacts of the behaviour on both themselves and their partner. Put simply, this amounts to asking things such as:

- *What if someone was going to share such pictures of your sister or a woman you respect?*
- *Why would it bother you?*
- *What would you say to them to try to convince them not to share the picture?*
- *How do you think people receiving such images might think differently about the sender? (including the things they might not find easy to say to him)*

¹⁸ 'indecent' images = naked selfies, pictures of genitals, etc.



Alternatively, you can show them the following clip (https://youtu.be/siJAS_g-lqM) and ask:

- *Why does this young man show his friends indecent images of this young woman?*
- *What might be the impact on the young woman?*
- *If one of the other young men feels uncomfortable about it, what can he say and what response could he get?*
- *What could happen to him if he is caught?* (This will differ from place to place but in the UK, the maximum sentence available for possession of indecent images is five years' imprisonment and 10 years' imprisonment for distribution and production -so he is effectively committing a serious crime whilst providing irrefutable evidence that he has done it).

2. Revenge-motivated sharing

When the sharing of 'indecent' images is motivated by hostility/anger/aggression, usually following a relationship breakup, there is little point in emphasising the impacts on the victim since this is likely what the man wanted and will not keep him from doing it again.

It may still be effective to emphasise the potential legal consequences of the behaviour along with other implications for the abuser. You could ask:

Is this something you would want your mother to know you've done, your sister, your imam etc.? If not, why not?

Revenge has two functions. The first is broadly instrumental: by punishing one person, it is possible to get a 'reputation' which makes others less likely to make you angry in the future. However, you can point out that this does not really work with revenge porn where it is unlikely to impress potential future partners.

The second function is that revenge is used to restore a sense of power over another person – not so much to control them, but to rid the abuser of feelings of vulnerability and damaged self-esteem that can result from a breakup or other perceived insults. It can bring a sense of satisfaction or relief. However, it only does further damage to the 'wiser part' of the abuser, which wants to be respected and this is why it is often said that "revenge is the poison you drink yourself in the hopes of killing someone else".

If you are able to establish some motivation to stop the behaviour, by connecting a client with the 'wiser part of himself' – again using a bystander approach as follows:

Note to facilitators

It is important to remember that stalking often precedes high severity violence, so if you believe that one of the people you are working with is very irrational and persistent in their stalking behaviour and seems immune to reason, be sure to report this and use the multi-agency network to advocate for protective actions.

Read out the following scenario:

James' partner Rita has ended their relationship. She says she cannot take his controlling and bullying behaviour anymore.

James took this badly. He doesn't understand what Rita is talking about when she says that he is a bully. He thinks she is finished with him because she wants to be with another man. He couldn't believe it at first and kept calling her to get her to explain. At first, Rita did try to explain but James always got angry and ended up shouting at her on the phone.

Then she told him that he was frightening her, and she did not want to see or speak with him again.

The last time he called Rita on the phone she said she would call the police if he didn't leave her alone.

James is sitting at home with his phone on the table next to him. One of his friends told him that he saw Rita out at a club earlier that night. He is feeling hurt, and he is feeling very angry. He is considering sharing pictures she sent him early in their relationship when they trusted each other and were in love.

Reality checking

- *If you asked James about how he is behaving, what explanation do you think he would give?*
- *What advice can you give him? (both about sharing the images and about how else he can deal with the painful emotions he is experiencing)*
- *Is he breaking the law?*

You will need to check the law on sharing indecent images locally. Laws are very different from country to country. It is useful to clarify the legal situation to the men precisely because of the global differences and because many of the laws around this are relatively new so that they may not yet be well understood in the general population.



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