



Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response

Building a healthy community free from  
oppression and sexual trauma.

# Our Mission

To support survivors of sexual trauma, improve systems response, and create social change to end sexual violence.

# Trigger Warning

Learning about the dynamics of sexual violence can evoke a range of emotions and will have an impact on you at some point – whether today or sometime in the future

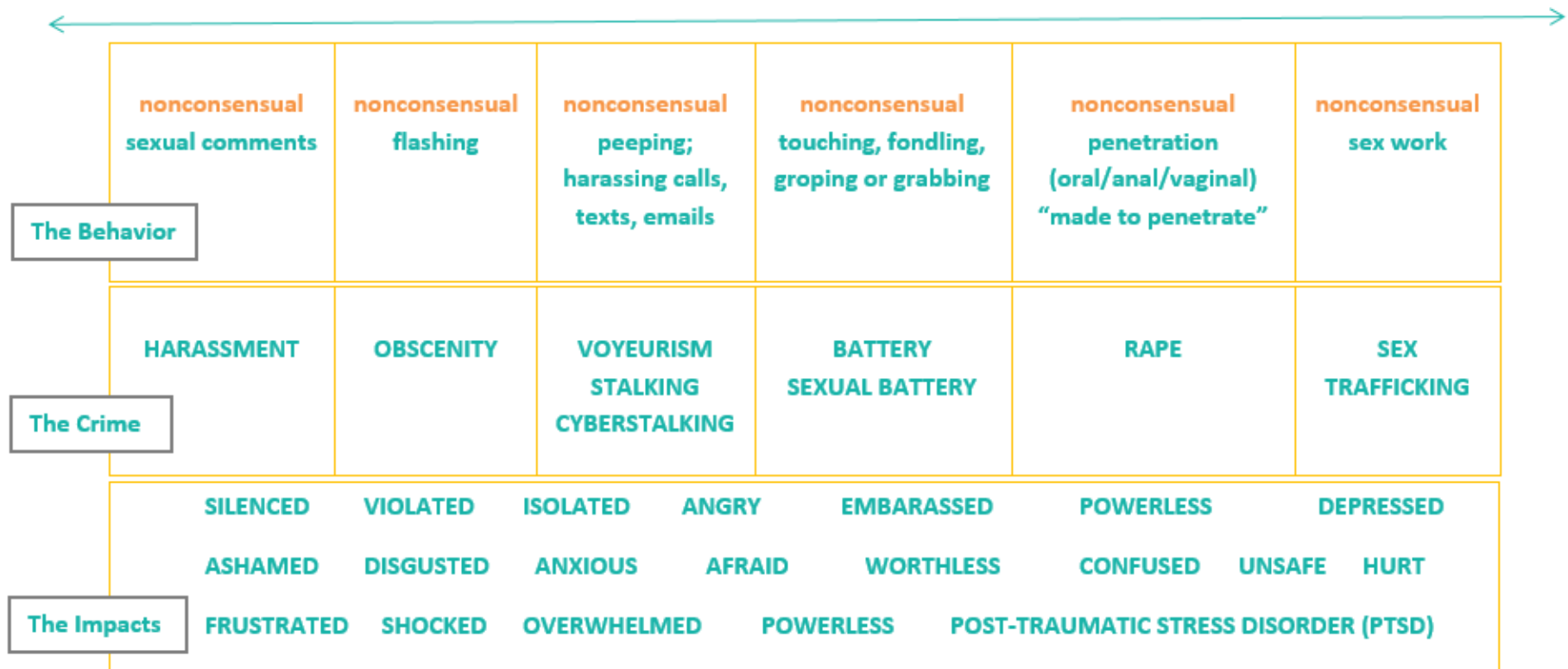
# What is Sexual Violence?

- Is sexual activity where consent is not granted or freely given. A non-legal umbrella term that encompasses all forms of sexual violation, from harassment to rape.
- Nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men have experienced sexual violence victimization other than rape at some point in their lives.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)

# The Continuum of Sexual Violence

As the continuum shifts to the right, the level of violence increases.



# What is Sexual Assault?

- According to the U.S. Department of Justice, sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient.
- Falling under the definition of sexual assault are forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape.

That's one  
sexual assault  
every two  
minutes.

There are  
**237,868 victims**  
(age 12 or older)  
of rape and  
sexual assault  
each year in the  
U.S.

-Source: U.S. Department of Justice's  
National Crime Victimization Survey

# What is Rape?

“The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”

- 1 in 5 women will experience rape in their lifetime
- 1 in 71 men will experience rape in their lifetime
- 1 in 21 men will be “made to penetrate someone” in their lifetime





# Rape $\neq$ Sex

Rape is also about power, control,  
anger, and hostility.

"Yes, a person who commits rape usually receives sexual gratification, but this is because, for that person, **power and control are sexualized**. The underlying motivation of rape is the **perverse gratification** they receive by **exercising dominance** over and sexually violating another person."

- "The Sexy Rapist," [www.brstarcenter.wordpress.com](http://www.brstarcenter.wordpress.com)

# Sexual Trauma

- Sexual violence can cause many long-lasting, traumatic impacts that affect survivors and those who care about them.
- Sexual trauma refers to long-lasting mental, emotional and/or physical injury resulting from unwanted sexual contact inflicted upon a person through coercion, intimidation or physical force

# Physical, Sexual, and Mental Health

- Injuries
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Unintended pregnancies
- Gynecological problems
- Induced abortions
- Adverse pregnancy outcomes, including miscarriage, low birth weight and fetal death
- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Emotional distress

# Behavioral Health

- Substance abuse
- Sleep difficulties
- Eating disorders
- Sexual risk-taking (e.g. first sex at an early age, multiple partners and unprotected sex), which can lead to being at a greater risk of re-victimization

# Social and Economic Health

- Isolation
- Decreased trust of others
- Inability to work or pursue education
- Loss of wages
- Lack of participation in regular activities
- Limited ability to care for self and children

# Survivors of Sexual Trauma are:

- 3 times more likely to suffer from depression
- 6 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol
- 26 times more likely to abuse drugs
- 4 times more likely to contemplate suicide

# Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Trauma

How to handle disclosures of sexual trauma



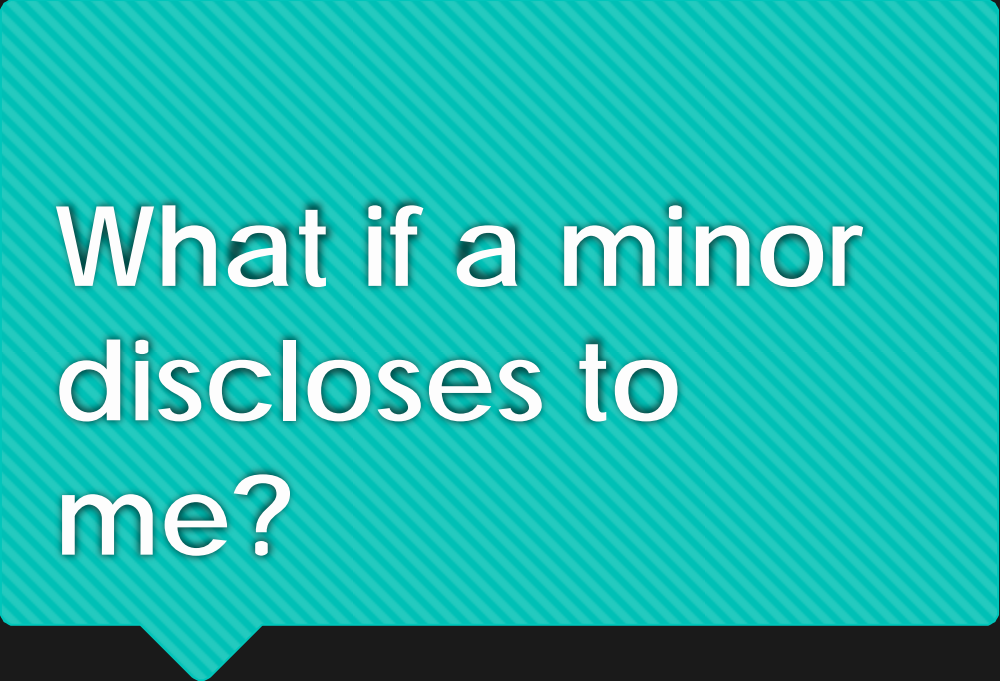


# What is a Disclosure?

- A process, not a single event
- To make known, reveal, uncover
- Allows people to express previously suppressed information

Where can Disclosures Happen?

**ANYWHERE!**



What if a minor  
discloses to  
me?

It's complicated!

- Be aware of State Mandated Reporter Laws
- When in doubt, make a call
- It's not your job to investigate
- Refer to services

# LA Mandated Reporter Laws

Criminal statute L.S.A.-R.S.14:403 specifies that any person in the Children's Code who is required to report abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse of a child under age 18, is to report information to authorities when that person has cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare is endangered. Willful and knowing failure to report can result in \$500.00 fine or imprisonment for six (6) months, or both.

# Who is a Mandated Reporter?

- Health practitioner
- Mental health/social service practitioner
- Police officer or law enforcement
- Commercial film and photographic print processor
- Mediators
- Teacher or child care provider (is any person who provides training and supervision of a child, including any public or private teacher, teacher's aide, instructional aide, school principal, school staff member, social worker, probation officer, foster home parent, group home or other child care institutional staff member, personnel of residential home facilities, a licensed or unlicensed day care provider, or any individual who provides such services to a child)

# Who is a Mandated Report?

- Clergy (exception for information obtained under the seal of confession)
- Any person over the age of 18 who witnesses sexual abuse of a child
- Anyone who assists in teaching children
- Bus driver
- Coach
- Professor or university staff member, whether paid or volunteer
- Organizational or youth activity provider (which means any person who is providing organized activities for children, including administrators, employees, volunteers of any day camp, summer camp, youth center or youth recreation program or other organization that provide organized activities for children)

# Types of Disclosures

- Personal accounts of trauma
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party accounts of trauma
- Veiled accounts
- Active accounts of trauma
- Past accounts of trauma



# Benefits of Disclosing

- Creates opportunity for increased understanding about the incident
- Fewer illness related doctor visits
- Decreased lasting negative effects
- Facilitates recovery
- Improves self esteem
- Improves relationships with others
- As disclosure becomes easier, the intensity of emotions around the trauma lessen

# Factors in Deciding to Disclose

- Circumstances of the assault and how the survivor interprets it
- The culture and upbringing of the survivor
- Motivations and reasons for disclosing (or not)
- The survivor's current places in their healing process



How do I  
respond to a  
disclosure?

It's all about the  
communication!

# What to Remember

- Don't panic
- You're only human and can respond as so
- Don't stress about saying the wrong thing
- Be present
- Be engaged
- It's uncomfortable for both parties
- They chose you for a reason

The goal is to provide  
a safe place that  
empowers a survivor  
to seek what they  
need.

S- Safety

E- Empowerment

E- Empathy

K- Knowledge

# Key Principals of Responding

- Do not judge, interrupt, give advice
- Do not reassure that it will all be okay
- Believe the survivors account of what happened
- Help the survivor understand that thoughts and feelings are **NORMAL** reactions to an **ABNORMAL** event
- Keep focus on the survivor's needs
- Focus on strengths!
- Help survivor regain control. Provide choices.
- Be realistic. Do not expect miracles.

# Active Listening

- Active listening skills are basic to helping and there are separate skills involved in this process:
  - Attending—make eye contact in manner that displays a warm genuine interest in the person
  - Posture—appear relaxed; may want to lean towards the victim while listening to convey interest
  - Verbal Message—reflect and confirm words that help and encourage the survivor to continue and to focus on feelings and experiences

# Empathy

- Believe the survivor
- Actively listen
- Use responses that are genuine

“Thank you for telling me”

“Thank you for trusting me with this information”

“I know it’s hard to open up”

“I know it’s hard to talk about this”

“It’s takes courage to open up”

“I believe you”



# Validating & Normalizing

**Validating and normalizing** help reassure survivors that they are not alone and it helps build trust, openness and self-respect.

- **Use encouragers**

- Non-verbal minimal responses such as a nod of the head or appropriate facial expressions
- Verbal minimal responses such as "Uh-huh," "right," and "I hear what you're saying"

# Validating & Normalizing

- **Normalize feeling and situations.**
  - "The things you're sharing are normal reactions to trauma."
  - "Many people say that about their experience."
  - "That is understandable, because others would have a similar reaction to this situation."
  - "That's a pretty common reaction."

# Activity

1. Break into groups of 2-3
2. Read the scenario given
3. Take turns practicing responding to scenario

# Questions to Consider

- What is your first reaction to the situation?
- How do you respond to the person?
- What should you do with the information that you learned?

Q & A