



Stopping



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Sexual Harassment

at School



Most teachers and other adults want to protect children and would never do anything to make you feel unsafe. But there are some adults who might try to do things to or with you. Things that have to do with sex. This book gives you information about this so you can protect yourself.



Gauteng
Department
of Safety and
Liaison

Has this ever happened to you or to someone you know?



If you sleep with me I'll give you a very good mark!



He raped me!



All these pictures show sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is when a person does something that you *do not want them to do* related to sex.

It is your right to say NO to sexual harassment!

There are different types of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is when a person:

- says things or asks questions that make you feel uncomfortable
- shows you sexy or rude pictures that make you feel uncomfortable
- touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable
- gives you something, like better results or admission to school, in return for sex
- talks you into having sex with them; or forces you to have sex (this is rape)
- talks you into or forces you to have sex with objects – such as putting a finger into your genitals
- talks you into or forces you to perform sexual acts in front of other learners.

Look at the pictures on page 1. What kind of sexual harassment is happening in each picture?

Sexual harassment can happen to *anyone* – girls, boys and adults! It can happen *anywhere* – in schools, offices, on the street, even in people's homes.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is a very serious type of sexual harassment. It often happens regularly, over a long time.

Many children are sexually abused by people they know well and trust. This makes it difficult for children to do anything about it. Children often blame themselves for the abuse. But sexual abuse is **NEVER YOUR** fault.

People you can tell

If you have been abused or sexually harassed, think of someone you trust who you can talk to. You can also call Childline: 08000 55 555. You do not have to pay to make the call. Your call will be answered by someone who knows a lot about child abuse and who will listen to you.

Why does sexual harassment happen?

Girls and women experience sexual harassment more than boys or men. Why do you think this is?

Sexual harassment happens for two main reasons:

- Abuse (or misuse) of power, for example a teacher asking for sexual favours from a learner; a boy using his physical strength to rape a girl.
- A lack of respect for women or girl children. For example, some people think it's OK to treat girls like sex objects.

According to South Africa's Constitution, everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect. Sexual harassment goes against this right. But you can do something about it!

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Activity 1

How does sexual harassment make you feel?

When something bad like sexual harassment happens to us we have lots of mixed up feelings inside us. Instead of keeping feelings inside, it often helps to write them down or to draw them.

- Do you know anyone who has been sexually harassed? How do you think they felt?
- Have you ever experienced sexual harassment? How did it make you feel?

Think about these questions and draw a picture or write a poem to show how you felt.

What sexual harassment can do to people

Look at what the children in these pictures are saying. What else do you think a person may feel after being sexually harassed?

I can't concentrate on my lessons anymore.

I feel so guilty. It's my fault for wearing a short skirt.

I can't sleep anymore and my mother asks me why I'm not eating all my food.

I skip school whenever I can because my teacher keeps touching me.

At first I thought it meant the teacher liked me, but now I'm feeling confused.

I am afraid of being alone with my teacher. I can't trust any of the teachers now.



If you think you are being sexually harassed, find an older person you trust and talk to them. Don't keep it a secret!

What you can do about sexual harassment at school



If you have been sexually harassed at school, you can do something about it.

1. **Say NO!** If possible, tell the person who is harassing you to stop. This is not an easy thing to do, so if you feel you cannot do this on your own, ask someone to help you – start with Step 2.
2. **Tell someone about it!** Find someone you trust – a friend, your guidance teacher, or a member of your family. Tell them exactly what happened. They could come with you to tell the person who harassed you to stop. Or, if the harassment was very serious, they could help you report it to someone in authority, such as the school principal, who could deal with the harasser.
3. **Keep a record of what happened.** Write down what happened, when it happened (the date and time) and where it happened. Try to remember if anyone else was there. They may have seen what happened and could be a witness for you.

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted, see page 7.



Protect yourself at school

Sometimes we do things that may put us in danger of being sexually harassed. Knowing about these things helps us to protect ourselves. Here are some things you should be careful about at school.

- Do not allow a teacher or member of the School Governing Body (SGB) to ask or order you to clean their home. It is not your job to do their cleaning!
- Do not stay on your own in a classroom or anywhere else on the school premises.
- If someone says something rude or unkind to you, either ignore it or ask them politely not to talk to you like that.
- If a teacher asks to check your underwear – do not do it!



- If a teacher touches you or gets too close to you, ask them to move away.
- If a teacher, or someone else older than you, shows you rude or sexy pictures or tapes – do not look at them. Tell someone you trust.
- If a teacher or the principal says you must come to his or her office after school, make sure that you tell someone you trust. This is because if something happens to you they will be able to say where you were.
- Be careful about accepting gifts or favours from a teacher. This is because child abusers often use gifts or favours to attract children.

If a teacher scolds you for doing any of these things that protect you, or for refusing to have sex with him or her, report it to someone you trust.

Remember: You have a right to a school that feels safe.

What to do if you are raped

Ask someone you trust to help you report the incident to the police. The police will link you up with the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCSU) in your area. The FCSU is part of the police department. It has people who have been specially trained to deal with children who have been sexually assaulted.

Report to the FCSU as soon as you can. Do not wash before you go. Washing could destroy evidence that could help to prove who attacked you. If you have been forced to wash after the rape you must still report to the FCSU within two days. If the rapist wore a condom or used an object to rape you, you must still report it to the FCSU to get medical evidence.

Rape, or attempted rape, is a crime. It takes courage to report such attacks but you are not alone! See the back page for organisations that can help you.

A rape is when a man puts his penis into your vagina. Indecent assault is when a man puts his penis into your mouth or anus, or when someone puts a finger, a stick or any other object inside you.

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Looking after yourself

After an experience of sexual harassment you will be upset, confused, even shocked. You may feel sad, depressed or unable to study properly. Such reactions are normal. They will go away in time. But many children have found that it helps to talk to someone who can give them the emotional support they need to help them through this difficult time.

Some people, like counsellors, are specially trained to help people in this way. If you would like to talk to a counsellor, your school should be able to put you in touch with one. You can also call Childline: 08000 55 555.

The law says that teachers must report any incidents of rape or sexual abuse. If you tell your teacher that you have been sexually abused or raped, your teacher will have to tell a social worker or another responsible grown-up, your parents (unless they are abusing you) and the police.

More about sexual abuse

Sexual abuse often happens at home but also happens at school. Child abusers try to trick or trap children into doing something they don't want to do. They often ask you to keep what they do to you a secret, or bribe you with gifts and treats. Sometimes abusers threaten you not to tell anybody about the abuse. They may say that they will kill you or harm your family if you tell.

Listen to your warning feelings!

Sometimes people talk of 'a little voice in my head' or 'a gut feeling'. These are ways people describe a feeling of things not being right. These feelings warn us that something is wrong. If you ever feel a warning feeling about the way someone is talking to you or touching you, listen to that feeling. Get away from the person and tell someone you trust about it.

Remember: Most adults want to protect children. But some people have a problem and do things that harm children. If you know about sexual abuse it can help you to protect yourself from it.

Activity 2

People you can tell

With some of your friends, think of people you can tell about abuse. Make a list of all these people.

Find out more

Find out the telephone number of a social worker, the police, the Community Policing Forum, a priest, or the welfare office in your area; or a chief (if you live in a rural area). Look in the telephone book or ask at the local clinic or police station. Make a poster for your school. On the poster give information about who children can talk to about abuse. Don't forget to include the Childline number (08000 55 555).

(Adapted from *Soul Buddyz: Tomorrow is ours*, published by Soul City 2000)



Saying **NO** to sexual

Here are some ideas for things you can do to tell others in your school about sexual harassment. For some of them you may need the help of older learners or a teacher.

Everyone at school – teachers, parents, and learners – can help to make it a safer place. Here are some ideas for what learners can do. What could you do in your school?



Talk with your friends about sexual harassment and why it happens. Perhaps the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) could organise a debate about it.



Form support groups to help people who have experienced sexual harassment.



Draw up a Learners' Code of Conduct.

harassment in our school!



Make a list of organisations that can provide support and advice to people who have experienced sexual harassment. Put the list up on the school notice board or in classrooms so everyone can find it.



Tell others about sexual harassment and how it can affect learners. Perhaps you could make some posters to put up in school, or make some leaflets to hand out at a school event or a parents' meeting.



Act as sexual harassment watch dogs! You could form a group to keep a record of sexual harassment incidents that learners see or that they hear about at school. Also record what was done about them. You could report back to the School Governing Body (SGB).



You could work with teachers and members of the SGB to draw up a school policy on sexual harassment and how cases will be dealt with at school.



Getting help

The Department of Education and SHEP acknowledge all learner victims, their families and teachers for sharing their painful but invaluable experiences with us. It is those experiences that enrich our work and make us realise the challenges ahead of us.

There are many organisations that provide counselling, advice or other support to people who are affected by sexual harassment or abuse.

Childline: 08000 55 555

Crime Stop: 08600 10111

LifeLine: 0861 322 322

**Stop Women Abuse Help Line:
0800 150 150**

AIDS Help Line: 0800 012 322

SHEP

Braamfontein Centre , Johannesburg

Tel: 011 403 0541 Fax: 011 403 7535

E-mail: shep@icon.co.za

South African Council of Educators:
(012) 663 0406

**South African Human Rights
Commission:** (011) 484 8300

Commission on Gender Equality:
(011) 403 7182

Gauteng

Centre for the Study of Violence and
Reconciliation, Trauma Clinic:

(011) 403 5102

Child Abuse Action Group: (011) 793 5033

Lungelo: (011) 982 1521

NICRO, head office: (012) 322 7419

NISAA: (011) 854 5804

People Against Human Abuse:

(012) 805 7416

People Opposing Women Abuse:

(011) 642 4345

Eastern Cape

Masimanyane Women's Support Centre:

(043) 743 9169

Port Elizabeth Rape Crisis Centre:

041) 481 3804

Western Cape

Ilitha Labantu: (021) 633 2383

Rape Crisis Centre: (021) 447 9762

Rape Crisis Centre Somerset West:

(021) 852 5620 / 083 484 9409

KwaZulu-Natal

NICRO: (035) 772 1574

Rape Crisis (Pietermaritzburg):

(033) 342 5929

University of Durban Westville, advice desk

for abused women and girls:
(031) 204 4111

Mpumalanga

GRIP (Rape Intervention Programme):

(013) 752 4404

NICRO (Nelspruit): (013) 755 3540

Limpopo

NICRO: (015) 297 7538

Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment

Project: (015) 963 1976

Northern Cape

NICRO (Kimberley): (053) 831 1715

NICRO (De Aar): (053) 631 2267

Free State

NICRO (Bloemfontein): (058) 303 5386

NICRO (Kroonstad): (056) 215 1861

North West

Adapt: 083 575 6222

Department of Education
Gender Equity Directorate
Tel: 012 312 5420
Fax: 012 312 5218



TOGETHER
ERADICATING GENDER VIOLENCE

Written by Patricia Kumalo, Rachel Adatia
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Design and Artwork by The Departure Lounge

The production of this leaflet was funded by
the Gauteng Department of Safety and Liaison