



**MODULE 1:**

***GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE***  
**AND HEALTHY**  
**RELATIONSHIPS**



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

Canada

**These gender-based violence awareness modules have been created in partnership with Women and Gender Equality Canada, YWCA Canada, Wisdom2Action, FOXY/SMASH, Platform, White Ribbon Canada, The Centre for Sexuality, GRIS-Montréal, Possibility Seeds and We Worthy Women.**

# INTRODUCTION

**Gender-based violence (GBV)** is a serious issue that can affect anyone in Canada, no matter who you are or where you live. It can happen in intimate relationships, among family and friends, or even with strangers. It can also often be difficult to identify and report, because it's been so normalized in our society. That's why it's so important to take a stand, call it out, and help stop GBV from happening.

In this module, we'll explore what GBV is, why it happens, who it affects the most, and how we can put an end to it. We'll also talk about **healthy relationships** and friendships, and how you can make sure you're giving and receiving the respect that you and your friends deserve.

➔ **Not sure what a term means?**  
A glossary of **highlighted terms** is available on page 27.

## **Before you begin, remember:**

While talking about GBV can be important for healing and raising awareness, it's also essential to protect yourself and be mindful of your personal **triggers**. Triggers are anything that might cause a person to recall a traumatic experience they've had. For example, graphic images of violence might be a trigger for some people. Less obvious things, including songs, odours, or even colours, can also be triggers, depending on someone's experience.

If anything in this module triggers you, it's okay to take a step back and focus on your personal **safety** and well-being. Seek out resources if needed, or try self care strategies like exercise, meditation, or spending time with loved ones to help you feel more grounded and in control.

If you or a friend need help dealing with GBV, you can find a list of cross-Canada resources, including hotlines, counselling services and support groups for youth on the **youth-based resources database**.

## SECTION 1

# WHAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?



# WHAT IS GBV?

Gender-based violence, or GBV for short, is any act of violence based on someone's *gender*, *gender expression*, or *perceived gender*. It is rooted in gender inequality, abuse of *power*, and harmful norms and stereotypes.

While we may think of violence as "just physical," GBV typically falls into four categories:



**EMOTIONAL  
VIOLENCE**



**PHYSICAL  
VIOLENCE**



**FINANCIAL  
VIOLENCE**



**SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE**

We'll take a closer look at these categories later in the module.

# WHO IS IMPACTED BY **GBV?**

Gender-based violence can happen to anyone — including men. However, women, girls, and gender diverse people are at higher risk of being affected by GBV, especially if they are part of these groups:

⇒ **PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES**

⇒ **INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLE**

⇒ **BLACK AND  
RACIALIZED  
PEOPLE**

⇒ **PEOPLE IN  
RURAL AREAS**

⇒ **PEOPLE IN  
2SLGBTQI+  
COMMUNITIES**

⇒ **NEWCOMERS  
TO CANADA**

⇒ **WOMEN AND  
GIRLS UNDER 25**

# WHAT CAUSES GBV?

**Gender-based violence is all about someone wanting to assert power and control over others. It can happen in many places and can be carried out by anyone who has power over someone else. This could be a partner, family member, teacher, co-worker, classmate, friend, or even a stranger.**

Our culture, which influences how we think and act, plays a role in deciding who has power over others and keeps this violence going.

**Discrimination** based on gender, combined with other forms of discrimination, puts certain groups at an even higher risk of GBV. For example, in Canada, colonial systems and laws are a big reason why GBV happens, especially against First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women.

It's important to remember that marginalized communities aren't just at higher risk of GBV — they also face violence in different ways. They often face barriers to accessing supports and services, and the **oppression** they experience can also affect the quality of care they receive.

**Cultural views on gender, race, colonization, and social class are just some of the factors that influence GBV.**



# WHAT CAN VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE?

As mentioned above, gender-based violence comes in many forms, and can happen anywhere — at home or in public, in person or online. Typically, these forms are sorted into four categories: emotional, physical, financial, and sexual violence.

The list is not organized in order of severity — all types of violence are unacceptable and harmful to a person’s well-being.

**Emotional violence** aims to hurt the person receiving it emotionally by making them feel worthless, guilty, devalued, lonely, hurt, angry, or sad. Acts of emotional abuse can include:

- Insulting or name-calling
- Threatening or intimidating
- Humiliating someone
- Controlling behaviour
- Stalking or monitoring behaviour
- Deadnaming or denying someone’s **gender identity**
- Isolating someone from friends and family
- Threatening suicide
- **Gaslighting**
- Publishing private information about someone (doxing)

**Physical violence** can include any form of physical contact that is aggressive and unwanted. Acts of physical violence include:

- Slapping, hitting, or punching
- Choking
- Pinching
- Kicking
- Spitting
- Punching walls and doors
- Throwing or breaking objects
- Threatening with a weapon
- Causing fear for physical safety

**Financial violence** includes any actions to control or limit a person’s finances or resources, including access to cars. Acts of financial violence can include:

- Stealing financial information like personal identification numbers (PINs)
- Pressuring or blackmailing for money
- Controlling someone’s purchases
- Preventing someone from going to work or school

**Sexual violence** can include any form of sexual contact that is not wanted. This can include:

- Unwelcome kissing
- Verbally or physically forcing a sexual act
- Threatening or intimidating someone to perform a sexual act
- Removing a condom without **consent**
- Forcing someone to get naked or send naked images
- Sharing intimate images without consent
- Online sexual exploitation
- Sex trafficking
- Blackmailing using sexual information or content (sextortion)

Please note that these lists are not exhaustive. Many other acts of GBV may fall into the categories above. If you’re unsure whether something you’ve seen or experienced was gender-based violence, you can find more information on the **[Gender-Based Violence: It’s Not Just webpage](#)**.

# HOW DOES GBV AFFECT VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS?

**Gender-based violence can cause serious trauma and distress to victims and survivors. It can have a range of potential physical, emotional, mental health, and social impacts.**

People facing the immediate (or ongoing) impacts of violence may be dealing with:

- Ongoing abuse or harassment from the perpetrator
- Feelings of shock, anger or fear
- Physical or sexual health impacts
- Involvement in any police investigation or child protection measures
- Potential loss of home due to domestic abuse

There may also be disruption to their relationships. Survivors may be blamed or shamed by their friend groups, family, or community if they are seen as “responsible” for the abuse or for exposing the abuser by reporting it.

In the longer term, GBV may impact someone’s mental health, relationships, and interest in school or work.

**Every individual and their circumstances are unique,** but there is a range of common impacts, like:

- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Sleeping problems
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Flashbacks
- Self-blame
- Anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dissociation
- Self-harm

- Anxiety
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Nightmares
- Impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Missing school or work
- Relationship difficulties
- Physical illness
- Chronic pain

**Remember:  
Gender-based  
violence is never  
the victim or  
survivor’s fault.**

## WHAT IS CONSENT?

**Throughout this and the other modules, we often talk about the concept of consent. Consent is when someone agrees to do something or allows something to happen to**

**them. It’s an important part of our relationships, whether we are consenting to talking about difficult topics, lending money, engaging in sexual activities or anything else.**

**In order for consent to count, it must be:**

- understood by the person giving it
- given freely and enthusiastically
- given without pressure, threats or manipulation
- able to be withdrawn at any time



# ARE MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR GBV?

**Power imbalances and gender norms often define who causes violence and who is at the receiving end.**

Historically, men and boys have been taught that masculinity is defined by being tough, not showing emotion, and using violence. In many cases, these values have been taught over conflict resolution skills, emotional intelligence, and empathy towards other genders.

Because masculinity has been defined this way for so long, acts of violence have more often been committed by men. Research has shown that men who strictly follow these traditional gender norms are more likely to be violent and **abusive** toward female partners.

**This doesn't mean that masculinity is bad or that most men are violent.**

It also doesn't mean that other genders can't cause harm. What it *does* mean, though, is that most of the violence in our communities (even against other men) is caused by men — and that it can be prevented.

## WHY DO WE LET GBV HAPPEN?

If you've had conversations about gender-based violence before, you may have heard someone ask the question, "Why don't survivors of GBV just report it?"

Sadly, GBV has become so normalized — and even accepted — in society that victims and survivors are often blamed, silenced, or shamed. Sometimes they are told that their abuse was insignificant and not a crime. Other times, the existence of GBV is even denied altogether.

**JUST 45%**  
**OF CANADIANS FULLY UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF CONSENT**

*Canadian Women's Foundation, 2022*

Because of these attitudes, sexual violence continues — and it can be confusing to understand what consent really is. To change this, we need to create a culture where people respect each other's boundaries and treat everyone equally, no matter their gender.

# HOW CAN WE STOP GBV?

To stop gender-based violence, we have to change the way things work in our society. We need to end systems that support unfair power differences between men, women, and gender-diverse people — systems which make GBV common in our society. As long as these inequalities exist, GBV will continue to happen.

To do this, we also need to learn about why GBV happens and how it affects people. By understanding these things, we can make better choices and create a safer and more equal world for everyone.

It's a big job, and we all have to work together to make it happen. By speaking up and supporting each other, we can make a difference and end GBV.

**“Open discussions about GBV create a safe space for survivors to seek support from peers and professionals.”**

— Yasmin A.  
*Youth Leader*



## ACTIVITY 1

# HOW DO YOU DEFINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

⇒ **Remember:** Your definition can evolve and change over time as you learn more about GBV and its impacts.

Read pages 5–10 of this module. Refer to the glossary on page 27 if you're confused by any terms. After reviewing, think about your own experiences and the experiences of people you know:

- **HAVE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW EXPERIENCED GBV?**
- **WHAT DID IT INVOLVE?**
- **HOW DID IT AFFECT YOU OR THE PERSON YOU KNOW?**
- **WHAT DOES GBV PREVENTION LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?**

Based on your research and experiences, write down your own definition of GBV here. Your definition should include a brief explanation of what GBV is, how it can impact different people, and what GBV prevention looks like. Reflect on solutions, prevention ideas, and how to better support survivors.

When finished, share your definition with someone you trust and ask for their feedback. This could be a friend, family member, teacher, or counsellor. Revise your definition based on the feedback you receive and make changes as needed.

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## SECTION 2

# WHAT ARE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?



# HOW HEALTHY ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS?

Have you ever been in a relationship or friendship that didn't always feel right?

When we hear the word “relationship,” we often think of romantic relationships. But we also have relationships with our friends, family, teachers, coaches, and co-workers. Whether you have a romantic partner or not, relationships are a big part of your life.

Relationships can be tough to navigate. They can be fun, exciting, and rewarding, but sometimes they can become unhealthy, too. You deserve safety and respect in your life and all the relationships you have.

**“Anyone who truly cares for you will respect your boundaries.”**

— Micah K.  
*Youth Leader*



## ACTIVITY 2

# WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS FOR A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

To start this exercise, reflect on the following:

- Have you ever made a mistake that ended a relationship? What emotions did you experience? How did you try to fix your mistake? What did you take away from this experience?
- What does a healthy relationship look like to you? How does it feel? What values do you want to represent in your relationship? What are your wants, needs and desires in a relationship? What are your boundaries and limits in relationships?

After your reflection, think back to a time when you faced challenges in a relationship or friendship.

Use the space here to answer these questions:

- What personal strengths did you bring to the relationship or friendship that contributed to its success?
- What strategies did you use to repair and strengthen the relationship or friendship when faced with difficulties?
- In what ways did this experience highlight your resilience and adaptability in navigating relationship or friendship challenges?
- How did this experience enhance your self-awareness and personal growth, and what strengths did you develop as a result?

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# WHAT DOES IT LOOK AND FEEL LIKE WHEN MY RELATIONSHIPS ARE HEALTHIER?

**Healthy relationships may look different for different people. In general, though, in a healthy relationship (including friendships, situationships, and family or romantic relationships), the people involved in the relationship should:**

- Feel good about the relationship and not put each other down
- Have their own likes and dislikes alongside their similarities
- Be able to talk about their wants and needs in ways that do not hurt each other
- Have fun with each other and with other people
- Not prevent each other from having friends
- Be good to each other and not hurt one another purposefully
- Feel comfortable and safe with each other
- Have fully and freely given consent to what is happening

Relationships typically start out healthy but can shift into something else as they go on. At first, relationships are exciting and make you feel good. This is called the honeymoon stage. This phase tends to decline the more you settle into the relationship — and, sometimes, this is when **unhealthy relationships** start to occur.

It can be hard to believe that someone you care about is not treating you with the respect you deserve. If you no longer want to be in a relationship, unhealthy or otherwise, it is always okay to decide that you want to leave.

## 4 TIPS TO FEEL SAFER IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

1. BE ASSERTIVE AND SET BOUNDARIES
2. MEET IN PUBLIC THE FIRST FEW TIMES YOU HANG OUT
3. LET SOMEONE YOU TRUST KNOW WHERE YOU ARE AND WHEN YOU'LL BE BACK
4. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS IF SOMETHING FEELS WRONG

# WHAT ARE THE RED FLAGS OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

Unhealthy relationships can quickly turn into abusive ones. It's important to recognize patterns or instances in your relationship that could lead to abuse or that are already abusive.

Abuse can happen in many ways, whether it's a single incident of physical violence or ongoing emotional abuse. As we covered when discussing gender-based violence, abuse isn't always physical. It may consist of:

- Physical violence, like being hit, slapped, or pushed around.
- Emotional violence, like verbal or psychological abuse or isolation from friends.
- Financial violence, like monitoring, controlling, or stealing someone's finances.
- Sexual violence, like sexual assault, coercion or sextortion.

## Too much of a good thing?

When someone overwhelms you with loving words and actions, that's called **love bombing**.

Unfortunately, this isn't a sign of real love — it's a manipulation technique to make you feel dependent on the person and can quickly turn into abuse.

➔ For more information on the four types of violence, see page 7: **What can violence look like?**



# HEALTHY, UNHEALTHY OR ABUSIVE?



Not sure if a relationship is on the right track? Use this chart to see if the behaviours in your relationship are healthy, unhealthy or abusive.



## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

A **healthy relationship** means both people are...

### Communicating

Both partners talk openly about problems without shouting or yelling. They listen to one another, hear each other out, respect each other's opinions and are willing to compromise.

### Respectful

Both partners value each other as they are: culture, beliefs, opinions, and boundaries are valued. They treat each other in a way that demonstrates the care they have for one another.



## UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

An **unhealthy relationship** starts when one or both people are...

### Refusing to communicate

One or both partners are unwilling to receive feedback and do not talk about ways to make the relationship better.

### Disrespectful

One or both partners are inconsiderate toward the other, not treating each other in a way that shows they care.



## ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

An **abusive relationship** happens when one or both people are...

### Communicating abusively

During communication, there is screaming, swearing or threatening. One partner is demeaning or insulting towards the other.

### Disrespectful through abuse

One partner intentionally and continuously disregards the other's feelings and physical safety.





## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

### Trusting

Both partners trust each other, and that trust has been earned.

### Honest

Both partners are honest with each other about things that affect the relationship, but can still choose to keep certain things private.

### Equal

Both partners make decisions together and hold each other to the same standard.

### Free to enjoy personal space

Both partners enjoy spending time apart and respect when the other partner needs space.



## UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

### Not trusting

There is suspicion that one partner is doing things behind the other's back, or one partner is suspicious of the other's loyalty without reason.

### Dishonest

One or both partners are telling lies to each other.

### Trying to take control

One or both partners see their desires or decisions as more important and are focused only on getting their own way.

### Feeling smothered or not spending time with others

So much time is spent together that one partner is beginning to feel uncomfortable, or both partners spend so much time together that they ignore friends, family or other things that used to be important to them.



## ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

### Making false accusations

One partner accuses the other of flirting or cheating without reason, often harming them verbally or physically.

### Refusing to take responsibility

The violent or verbally abusive partner denies or minimizes their actions. They try to blame the other for the harm they're doing.

### Controlling

There is no *equality* in the relationship. What one partner says goes, and if the other partner tries to change this, there is increased abuse.

### Isolating the other

One partner controls where the other partner goes and who they see and talk to. The other partner has no personal space and is often isolated from other people altogether.

# GREEN, YELLOW AND RED FLAGS

**We can sort different behaviours in a relationship into red, yellow and green flags.**

Each yellow or red point on the pages below represents a harmful action. If you recognize them in any of your relationships, that's a big deal. You don't have to experience all of them to know something is wrong. Even one sign can be serious enough to seek help and support.

When you're in a relationship, it can sometimes be hard to see the yellow and red flags. You might downplay them as "just one time" or "just a bad day". As you evaluate your relationships, take a step back and try to look at things from an outside perspective — would you be concerned if those same red and yellow flags were happening to someone you love?

We use the term "partner" on the pages below, but this applies to any relationship, whether it's with a friend, family member, or romantic partner. Trust your instincts and listen to your gut feelings. If something doesn't feel right, it's essential to protect yourself and seek help. You deserve to be treated with respect and kindness, always.



**GREEN FLAGS**  
ARE THE SIGNS OF A  
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP.



**YELLOW FLAGS**  
ARE SIGNS YOU'RE  
HEADED INTO  
UNHEALTHY TERRITORY.



**AND RED FLAGS**  
ARE SIGNS OF AN  
ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP.

# MY RELATIONSHIP FEELS GREAT BECAUSE...



## **We respect boundaries.**

You and your partner respect each other's boundaries physically, sexually, emotionally, and verbally. You ask consent from each other when engaging in physical, emotional and sexual activities.

## **We have mutual respect.**

You and your partner value each other as you are. You respect each other's feelings, opinions and differences.

## **We trust each other.**

You and your partner feel safe and comfortable with each other. You both feel you can rely on each other and have confidence that your partner wants the best for you. You and your partner respect each other's wishes, feelings and opinions.

## **There are no threats.**

You and your partner talk, act and resolve conflicts in ways that make you both feel comfortable and safe.

## **We have open communication.**

You and your partner can talk about what's going on when it's going on. You listen to each other without judgment. You're both open about details of your lives, like plans or who your friends are, but you respect each other's privacy, too. You're not forced to share information you don't want to.

## **We can resolve conflict.**

Disagreements and frustrations are normal. You and your partner look for compromises and solutions together by discussing respectfully and honestly while remaining on the topic being discussed.

## **We make efforts and compromises.**

Both you and your partner actively make efforts and compromise to maintain the relationship. You each work through conflict so that both of you are satisfied.

## **We have individuality.**

You and your partner remain unique individuals who can each reach your own goals, have your friends outside of the relationship, and spend time pursuing your interests and hobbies.

## **We're honest and responsible.**

You and your partner accept responsibility for your actions, admit when you are wrong and talk openly and honestly with each other. You and your partner make decisions and solve problems or conflicts together.

## **We have financial partnership and respect.**

If sharing financial decisions and responsibility, it is done with respect and consent. If you are not sharing an economic or financial partnership, you and your partner are fully responsible for your own finances and are not influenced by the other.

# MY RELATIONSHIP DOESN'T ALWAYS FEEL GREAT, BECAUSE...

## **They force and push my boundaries.**

Your partner is pushing your boundaries and making you uncomfortable. They may pressure you into doing things you don't want to do or don't approve of. For example, they pressure you into using drugs or alcohol with them if you don't want to, and make you feel guilty for saying no.

## **They blame me or deny responsibility.**

Your partner blames you for all the problems in your relationship. They blame you for making conflicts and/or abuse happen. They avoid personal responsibility or deny that there is a problem.

## **They're jealous.**

Your partner expresses extreme jealousy toward you, checks up on you excessively, or acts possessively.

## **They make mean or sarcastic jokes.**

Your partner regularly makes jokes or comments that make you feel uncomfortable or put you down.

## **They're in control.**

Your partner orders you around or makes all the decisions. They may control who you spend time with, or constantly check on what you are doing or who you are with. Your partner forbids you from participating in activities that don't include them or make you ask for permission to do things you would ordinarily do. They are monitoring your activities or invading your privacy.

## **They have mood swings.**

Your partner has unpredictable mood swings or explosive anger and apologizes after.

## **They're critical.**

Your partner criticizes your appearance, ideas, family, and friends or purposely embarrasses you in front of others.

## **I fear them.**

Your partner has a quick temper, a history of mistreating others or a history of violence in their relationships, threatens suicide or self-harm, or makes you feel afraid.

## **They don't respect me.**

Your partner views you as unequal or "not as good as" them because they see themselves as more intelligent or superior. They humiliate or belittle you in front of other people. They ignore or minimize your accomplishments or interests.

# MY RELATIONSHIP FEELS DANGEROUS BECAUSE...

## **They ignore consent.**

Your partner uses power and control to force you to do things you don't consent to or approve of.

## **They physically abuse me.**

Your partner slaps, pushes, or kicks you. They become angry or violent when using substances, angry about minor problems or have an explosive temper. Your partner threatens to hurt you or your family members, friends or pets, throws objects at you, or deliberately breaks things.

## **They sexually abuse me.**

Your partner forces you to participate in sexual activity or touches you when you haven't given consent.

This can include any form of sexual contact that is unwanted, from kissing you without consent to using any type of force (such as verbal or physical) to make you engage in an unwanted or unwelcome intimate or sexual act. This may also include removing a condom without consent or forcing you to get naked or send a nude image.

## **They financially abuse me.**

Your partner is stealing financial information like personal identification numbers (PINs), pressuring or blackmailing you into giving them money, controlling your purchases, or preventing you from going to work or school.

## **They emotionally abuse me.**

Your partner threatens, humiliates, insults, stalks, deadnames you, or denies your gender identity.

## **They abuse me online.**

Your partner causes you any form of harm, abuse, or violence using technology, such as **cyberbullying**, online harassment, online stalking or non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

## **They verbally abuse me.**

Your partner uses words to hurt you, such as name-calling, swearing, or yelling. They make degrading or humiliating comments that make you feel worthless, devalued, empty, lonely, hurt, angry, or sad.

## **They control or manipulate me.**

Your partner shows controlling behaviour and seeks to dominate and manipulate you. This includes monitoring your activities, isolating you from friends and family, dictating what you wear or where you go, or controlling your finances.

# MY RELATIONSHIP FEELS DANGEROUS BECAUSE...

## **They're VERY jealous.**

Your partner displays extreme jealousy, constantly questioning your interactions with others, accusing you of cheating without evidence, or acting possessive and controlling over your social connections.

## **They isolate me.**

Your partner intentionally isolates you from others, making you feel dependent on them for emotional or practical needs. They may discourage or prevent you from spending time with friends and family or engaging in activities outside the relationship.

## **They threaten or intimidate me.**

Your partner uses threats (against you or your family, friends, pets, and others), intimidation, or coercion to gain control over you. This can include threats of physical harm, harming themselves, or damaging your reputation or personal belongings.

## **They gaslight me.**

Your partner engages in gaslighting tactics, which distort your reality and make you doubt your own perceptions, memories, or sanity. They may deny their abusive behaviour, blame you for their actions, or manipulate situations to make you question your judgment.

# HOW CAN I HAVE A HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIP?

For relationships to work and stay healthy, both partners must make an effort. Make sure you're doing your part to keep your relationships happy and healthy by following these ten tips:

## 1. KEEP EXPECTATIONS REALISTIC

No one can be everything we might want them to be. Sometimes people disappoint us. It's not all or nothing, though — healthy relationships mean accepting people as they are, not trying to change them!

## 2. TALK TO EACH OTHER

It can't be said enough: communication is the key to healthy relationships! This means:

- **Being present.** Really be there for the other person when they need you.
- **Genuinely listening.** Don't plan what to say next while you're trying to listen. Don't interrupt.
- **Listening with both your ears and your heart.** There is often more meaning to what a person says than just the words they use. Consider the context of the conversation and their body language to understand the bigger picture.
- **Asking questions.** Ask friendly (and appropriate!) questions to make sure you understand their point. Ask for opinions. Show your interest. Open the door to further communication.
- **Giving it time.** Studies show that sharing information can especially help relationships when they're just beginning. Healthy relationships take time to develop and to let trust grow.

## 3. BE FLEXIBLE

It is natural to feel worried, sad, or angry when people or things change and we aren't ready for it. Try to work through these feelings if they come up: healthy relationships mean change and growth are allowed!

## 4. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Healthy relationships are mutual! Don't feel like you need to change yourself for others to like you. You aren't getting anyone to like you if you're not being true to yourself.

## 5. BE DEPENDABLE

If you make plans with someone, follow through. If you have an assignment deadline, meet it. If you take on a responsibility, complete it. Healthy relationships are trustworthy relationships!

- Remember: Being dependable is important, but you need to look out for yourself, too. If you feel burnt out or need some space, **communicate** with your friend or partner to reschedule or do a different activity.





## 6. HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

Most relationships have some conflict. That's okay! It only means you disagree about something — not that you don't like each other. When you have a problem:

- **Negotiate a time to talk about it.** Don't have difficult conversations when you are very angry or tired. Ask, "When is a good time to talk about something that's bothering me?" Healthy relationships are based on respect and have room for both people.
- **Don't criticize.** Focus on the problem, not the other person. Open sensitive conversations with "I" statements (e.g., "I feel sad when you aren't willing to talk things through"). Share how you personally struggle with the problem. Avoid blaming the other person for your thoughts and feelings. Healthy relationships don't blame.
- **Don't assume or assign feelings or motives.** Let others speak for themselves. Healthy relationships recognize each person's right to explain what they're thinking or feeling.
- **Stay on topic.** Don't use a current concern as a reason to jump into everything that bothers you. Healthy relationships don't use the past to fuel the present.

If the current concern is part of a pattern, acknowledging that ongoing issue is not the same as launching into a discussion about all past conflicts or concerns.

- **Say "I'm sorry" when you're wrong — and mean it.** A genuine apology goes a long way in making things right again. Focus on acknowledging the feelings of the person that is hurt and less on your own remorse or trying to validate your actions. Healthy relationships can admit mistakes.
- **Ask for help if you need it.** Talk with someone you trust who can help you find a resolution. Healthy relationships aren't afraid to ask for help.
- **Understand there may not be a perfect ending.** Be prepared to compromise or agree to disagree about some things. Healthy relationships don't demand conformity or perfect agreement.
- **Make sure everyone is a winner.** Be ready to compromise. Healthy relationships involve a balance between respecting your and the other person's needs.
- **Know you can leave the relationship.** If you feel a lack of respect and your needs are not being met, it is okay to end a relationship. Loyalty is important in good relationships, but healthy relationships are NOW, not some hoped-for future development.

## 7. USE EMPATHY

Studies tell us that emotional warmth is highly valued by most people in their relationships. Try to see any issues through the other person's eyes. Healthy relationships show warmth!



## **8. KEEP YOUR LIFE BALANCED**

Happiness comes from many different places. Other people help make our lives satisfying, but only you can fill your life. Use your time to try new things, like clubs, volunteering, physical activities, and projects. You'll have more opportunities to meet people and more to share with them.

## **9. KNOW THAT IT'S A PROCESS**

Sometimes it looks like everyone else around you is confident and connected. But really, most people feel just like you, wondering how to fit in and have good relationships. It takes time to meet people and get to know them. Healthy relationships can be learned and practiced — and keep getting better!

## **10. BE YOURSELF**

It's easier and way more fun to be you than pretending to be something or someone else. A true friend accepts you for your flaws and loves you anyway.



# YOUR GBV GLOSSARY



**Not sure about a word or phrase found in this module?** Gain a better understanding of gender-based violence by learning the terms below.

## 2SLGBTQI+



- **2S**, at the front, recognizes Two-Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities
- **L**: Lesbian
- **G**: Gay
- **B**: Bisexual
- **T**: Transgender
- **Q**: Queer
- **I**: Intersex (considers sex characteristics beyond sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression)
- **+**: Inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities and use additional terminologies.

## ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP



A relationship where one person hurts or controls another person in a harmful way through physical, emotional, sexual or financial violence.

## CONSENT



Giving permission or agreeing to participate in something freely and with a complete understanding of what you are getting into. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

## CYBERBULLYING



The use of computers, smartphones or other connected devices to embarrass, hurt, mock, threaten or be mean to someone online.

## DISCRIMINATION



Unfair treatment or unjust behaviour towards a particular group based on their race, gender, religion, ability, etc., often resulting from stereotypes or biases.

## EQUALITY



Treating everyone, regardless of their race, gender, religion, ability, etc., the same way, without any discrimination or oppression.

## EQUITY



Giving everyone what they need based on their unique circumstances so that they can have equal opportunities and access to resources and power.



## **GASLIGHTING**



Manipulating someone into questioning their own sanity or powers of reasoning.

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## **GENDER**



The social and cultural expectations and roles associated with being a man, a woman, or another gender, including behaviour, clothing choices, and interests.

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## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)**



Violence and harmful behaviour that happens in response to someone's gender, including physical, emotional, financial or sexual violence.

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## **GENDER EXPRESSION**



The way someone shows their gender identity to others, such as through chosen name, pronouns, clothing choices, hairstyles, or mannerisms.

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## **GENDER IDENTITY**



A person's internal sense of their own gender, which may not always align with their assigned gender at birth or their gender expression.

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## **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP**



A relationship based on mutual trust, respect, and communication, where all people involved feel safe, valued, and supported.

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## **HETERONORMATIVE**



The assumption that everyone is straight; that heterosexuality is the default, standard and superior sexuality.

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## **JUSTICE**



Fairness and equality in the way people are treated.

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## **MISOGYNY**



Attitudes, behaviours and belief systems that perpetuate or promote hatred, dislike, or prejudice against women and girls solely based on their gender.

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## **OPPRESSION**



Mistreatment or devaluation or control of a particular group based on race, gender, religion, ability, etc., often characterized by denying them equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources.

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## **PATRIARCHY**



A system of society with rules and laws based on outdated ideas about being a man, which treats women, girls, and gender-diverse people unfairly.

Patriarchy puts pressure on everyone, including men, to follow strict and unrealistic expectations about how they should act.

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## **PERCEIVED GENDER**



The gender that people assume someone is based on factors such as appearance, behaviour, or clothing.

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## **POWER**



The ability to influence or control others and the resources that shape their lives and experiences.



## **PRIVILEGE**



Unearned advantages, rights, and benefits that individuals or groups have based on their race, gender, class, ability, etc., often resulting in unequal opportunities and unequal access to resources and power.

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## **RIGHTS**



Legal or moral rules that entitle people to have certain things or to act in certain ways; for example, the right to practice a religion.

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## **SAFETY**



The condition of being free from harm, danger, or injury; often refers to physical, emotional, and psychological safety.

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## **TRIGGERS**



Situations, events, or circumstances can cause overwhelming or difficult emotional reactions or symptoms in a person.

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## **UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP**



A relationship in which one or all people involved feel unsafe, unsupported, or disrespected and where there is little or no communication or trust between them.

# WHERE CAN I FIND SUPPORT?

If you are experiencing gender-based violence, you are not alone. Support is available, whether you just want someone to talk to or need help getting out of an unsafe situation.

## 24/7 SUPPORT SERVICES

[Kids Help Phone](#): Confidential chat, text and phone mental health support services for kids, teens and young adults.

1-800-668-6868

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[Hope for Wellness Help Line](#): Counselling and crisis intervention offering immediate help to Indigenous peoples across Canada.

1-855-242-3310

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[Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#): Chat and text support to connect human trafficking victims and survivors with support services.

1-833-900-1010

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[Trans Lifeline](#): Confidential peer support and resources for trans and gender-diverse people, not connected to the police.

1-877-330-6366

# FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

[GBV Myths and Realities \(YWCA Canada\)](#)

[Queering Gender-Based Violence and Prevention Responses in Canada \(Wisdom2Action\)](#)

[A girl's right to learn without fear: Working to end gender-based violence at school \(Plan International\)](#)

[Fact sheet: Women with Disabilities and Violence \(DAWN Canada\)](#)

[Is Our Relationship Healthy? \(YWCA Canada\)](#)

# SOURCES

*These modules were developed using information from our partners and the following sources:*

**Canadian Women's Foundation**

**The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health**

**Center For Disease Control and Prevention**

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/facts.html#:~:text=Developmental%20disabilities%20are%20a%20group,last%20throughout%20a%20person%27s%20lifetime>

**The Center for Nonviolent Communication**

**Equally Safe at School**

<https://www.equallysafeatschool.org.uk/about-esas/>

**Government of Newfoundland and Labrador**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/vpi/information-about-violence/warning-signs-of-violence-and-abuse/>

**Harvard University: Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging**

**Kansas State University**

**Kids Help Phone**

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/how-overcome-obstacles-when-reaching-out/>

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/trauma-what-it-is-and-how-to-cope>

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/my-fill-in-the-blanks-safety-plan-for-any-time/>

**Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children**

<https://metrac.org/resources/are-you-cool-brochure/>

**Planned Parenthood**

**Right to Be**

**Statistics Canada**

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&id=85010>

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&id=103339>

**United Way for Southeastern Michigan**

<https://unitedwaysem.org/wp-content/uploads/2021-21-Day-Equity-Challenge-Social-Identity-Wheel-FINAL.pdf>

**U.S Department of Health and Human Services: Office on Women's Health**

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/get-help/how-help-friend>

**Women's Centre of Calgary**

**YWCA Edmonton**

**YWCA Regina**

**YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin**

**YWCA Vancouver**