

# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## Identifying coercive and controlling behaviours



(NC) For many teens, figuring out what a healthy relationship looks like isn't easy, especially when they're just starting to explore dating and friendships. Without much experience to draw from, it can be hard to tell the difference between care and control, respect and pressure. Parents, guardians, and trusted adults all need to know how to recognize the signs of a controlling relationship, and how to intervene safely when it's needed.

### Identifying coercive and controlling behaviours

Coercive control can show up in many ways and is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) that youth and young adults can face in intimate relationships. It's a type of abuse rooted in controlling, manipulative and fear-instilling behaviours.

There are four common types of coercive controlling behaviours which include possessive behaviours, psychological abuse, sexual jealousy and stalking. This may look like a partner making threats, breaking personal belongings, isolating someone from family and friends or monitoring where they go and who they talk to. They may even threaten self-harm to pressure victims or survivors to comply and maintain power over them.

### The dangers of gaslighting

One particularly harmful tactic of coercive control and frequent type of GBV is gaslighting. Gaslighting makes someone doubt their own memory, perception or sense of reality. For example, a partner might deny their abusive actions, blame the victim for things they didn't do or twist events so the victim questions their own judgement. Over time, gaslighting erodes confidence, instills doubt and makes it harder to leave relationships.

### What you can do to help

It's important to be able to recognize when something isn't right. Look for signs like isolation, emotional manipulation and controlling acts, such as a victim being made to give up autonomy over their phone, money or social life.

If a young person confides in you, the best things you can do is listen, believe them, label the behaviour for what it is and remind them that it's not their fault. This can help them connect with resources to support their safety and well-being.

Everyone deserves healthy relationships without abuse or control. You can learn more and find resources to support the youth in your life at [canada.ca/itsnotjust](http://canada.ca/itsnotjust)

## VICTIM BLAMING

### How victims or survivors are unjustly scrutinized

Gender-based violence (GBV) can be difficult to identify and report because it's been so normalized in society. While it's often thought of as "just physical," GBV can take many forms, including emotional, sexual and financial. Unfortunately, a common experience for someone coming forward is being blamed for what happened.

This may happen subtly, like scrutinizing what type of clothes they were wearing, their upbringing or their appearance. Victims or survivors may even be blamed for not reporting instances when they were in danger. These behaviours can be perpetuated by media portrayals that judge victims or survivors rather than addressing the harm done. Victim blaming can have the effect of silencing survivors and protecting abusers.

### Defining consent

A recent Canadian Women's Foundation study found that 55 per cent of Canadians don't fully understand the meaning of sexual consent, which must be:

- Understood by the person giving it
- Given freely and enthusiastically
- Given without threats, manipulation or pressure
- Allowed to be withdrawn at any time

Remember: consent is not compliance which can be born of fear, social pressure and coercion.

### How to support victims and survivors

Trusted adults can play an important role by modelling allyship. This can start with something as simple as someone checking their biases and considering how to learn more by opening their perspective. By teaching the young people in your life about consent language and skills, questioning media narratives, making space for open dialogue and challenging victim-blaming biases, adults can make a positive impact in their lives.

Do your part by listening and believing victims and survivors when they share their experiences. Show empathy and avoid blaming or judging them. Starting more discussions and knowing how to recognize and challenge bias is the key to advocating and supporting change.

To learn more visit [canada.ca/itsnotjust](http://canada.ca/itsnotjust).

## Three things teens should watch out for at work

(NC) For many young Canadians, the workplace is their first step towards independence. Unfortunately, it can also be a place where they might experience gender-based violence (GBV) for the first time.

### Understanding gender-based violence

GBV is when someone is harmed or treated unfairly because of their gender, how they express it or how others see it. While GBV is often thought of as "just physical," it can take many forms including emotional, sexual and financial. And it isn't just happening in personal relationships, it can also occur in the workplace in the form of microaggressions, harassment and power-related abuse.

### GBV in the workplace might look like:

#### 1. Inappropriate comments or discriminatory jokes.

These might be remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance, or stereotypes and "jokes" that put someone down based on their gender.

**2. Unwelcome advances.** These can take the form of requests for "dates" from a supervisor, manager or coworker when someone has already said no, sexual comments, touching, or invading personal space or suggesting that someone's job security or promotion depends on appeasing a superior.

**3. Harassment from supervisors, coworkers or even customers.** This might look like a boss using their authority to intimidate or control an employee, coworkers spreading rumours or undermining someone's work based on their gender or customers making inappropriate remarks, touching or being hostile toward an employee.

Youth are especially vulnerable when they're new to the workforce. They may not be aware of their rights and may not be familiar with what abusive, unequal power dynamics look like. Additionally, the pressure to "fit in" to a new environment or fear of losing their job can make it harder to speak up.

### What you can do to help

Trusted adults play a critical role in supporting youth through these experiences. If a young person confides that they're dealing with harassment or abuse at work, the most important thing you can do is listen, believe them and remind them that they aren't at fault. Encourage them



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to document what's happening to them and help them connect with resources that can help protect their rights and safety.

Every young person deserves to participate in an environment where they feel respected. You can access more information and find resources to share at [canada.ca/itsnotjust](http://canada.ca/itsnotjust).]

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We believe that no kill is the only responsible approach to rescue, that Trap-Neuter-Return works and that cats are AWESOME!

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