

# Breaking the Cycle: Sexual Assault Workshop

## 1. Intro to facilitators 5 mins

- deb and Claudette
- TRCC/MWAR

## 2. Safe Space Discussion: what do you need from others in the group to feel like you can talk freely about this stuff?

- Confidentiality
- Disclosures
- Safe space (one at a time, no stupid questions, passing, respect and non-judgemental)

## 2. Check in 10 MINS

- *Name, how are you*
- *One thing you want to take away from this workshop*

## 3. Ice breaker 10 MINS

- *2 lies and one truth:* ask the group to find a partner. Each person is to tell the other 2 lies and one truth about themselves and the other person is to guess which one was the truth. Since this group will not know each other well, ask the pairs to explain why they chose to tell the 3 things about themselves as lies or truth.

*OR*

**Word Tree** - Generate a list of words related to the topic. For example, in an infection prevention course, ask participants to give you words related to the phrase, "body fluids." Participants may suggest: "dangerous," "disease," "HIV," "gloves," "infectious," etc. Write all the words on the board, clustering by theme where possible. You can use this opportunity to introduce essential terms, too.

*OR*

The wind blows

- The wind blows for anyone who watches TV
- The wind blows for anyone who likes music videos
- The wind blows for anyone who knows who Tila Tequila is
- The wind blows for anyone who watches ANTM
- The wind blows for anyone who has an email address
- The wind blows for anyone who has access to a computer

4. **Brainstorm:** What is Violence? 10 mins

Remember to talk about **Consent, Power, Acts** (physical and non physical) **Personal, Structural/Systematic, Institutional**

5. **Myths around sexual violence** 30 MINS

*Where do these myths come from? What do they produce in society?*

Give everyone in the group 3 cards that say: agree, disagree, don't know/undecided. Ask a participant to read on of the myths on a card. Then ask the group to put up the card they feel responds to the statement. Ask 1 or 2 people from each side to discuss why they agreed, disagreed or wasn't sure about the statement. Explain some facts that relate to each statement. (most participants will do this themselves through the debate.)

Myths/Statements:

- ***Women lie about being sexually assaulted, often because they feel guilty about having had sex.***
- ***Sexual assault is most often committed by strangers***
- ***The best way for a woman to protect herself from sexual assault is to avoid being alone at night in the dark, deserted places, such as alleys or parking lots.***
- ***Women who are sexually assaulted "ask for it" by the way they dress or act.***
- ***Men who sexually assault women are either mentally ill or sexually starved.***
- ***Men of certain races or backgrounds are more likely to sexually assault women***
- ***Men are always the abuser in the situation.***
- ***Women cannot be sexually assaulted by their husbands or boyfriends.***
- ***Rape is a sexual crime.***
- ***Women can leave violent situations, if they really wanted to.***
- ***Sexual abuse is always violent. REALITY:*** Sexual abuse is a violent crime, this is true. But the manner in which it is inflicted doesn't have to involve violence at all. A perpetrator doesn't have to use a weapon or beat their victim into submission in order to achieve their end. Incest, for example, can involve the subtle seduction of a child, through what amounts to brainwashing. A child may exist in a family where the only touch and love s/he gets is from sexual abuse. They may be rewarded with treats or extra love and attention when they are sexual with adults, or bribed to keep silent in the same manner. Or sexual abuse can be entirely verbal, with the perpetrator's main weapon being words (such as inappropriate sexual comments, or an overly invasive interest in the victim's body and sexuality). In many instances, the perpetrator doesn't even have to touch the victim at all -- leaving pornography around the house (spread out, open, on the coffee table) where children have easy, involuntary access to it is WAY out of line.
- ***Sexual abuse never involves pleasure for the victim. REALITY:*** Many adult survivors report a deep sense of shame, because as children they were sexually abused, and they felt some pleasure while it was happening. Perhaps the abuse was the only affection they got, perhaps it was soothing, perhaps the perpetrator got off on making the victim feel pleasure, whatever. Just because the victim felt pleasure, that doesn't mean that they weren't horribly violated. Human bodies are designed to feel pleasure and respond in particular ways to particular kinds of touch. If a victim's body responds, it doesn't negate the abuse. The violation is still there: the perpetrator is still using the victim for their

own ends, and has still usurped the victim's free will and right to let their own sexuality develop as it will.

- ***It isn't sexual abuse if the victim consented.*** REALITY: On the surface of it, this is a true statement; but the term "consent" must be strictly defined. Ideally, a consenting individual is fully aware of what they are doing, has a good grasp of the consequences, and is free from any manipulation or coercion to choose a certain way. If a person is NOT capable of knowing what they are getting into, THEN THEY HAVE NOT CONSENTED. Consequently, if a child victim of incest goes along with the abuse, even seeks it out, THEY ARE NOT CONSENTING, AND IT IS STILL ABUSE. The reason is that a child is not a fully sexual being. They aren't *supposed* to be. They are not fully aware of sex and all its complexities, and their own sexuality is supposed to be developing slowly and surely over the course of about eighteen years.
- ***Alcohol abuse causes domestic violence.***

## 6. Scenarios: 20 MINS

*What caused this violence? What circumstances made this violence happen or made it worse?*

Ask the group to go into groups of 5-10 people. Ask the group to take a scenario and read it aloud and answer the questions in discussion.

Natasha is 18 years old. Natasha starts dating someone who is the same gender as her. She decides to keep the relationship a secret from her family because her parents won't understand and might kick her out of the house. Natasha and her new girlfriend Jules are having fun dating and doing things together.

Both Natasha and Jules aren't out to everyone at school either but a few of their closest friends know about their relationship.

One day Jules begins to comment on Natasha's outfit and says its kind of slutty and she doesn't want her wearing those kind of clothes. Later that day, Jules starts going through Natasha's cell phone, when she is in the bathroom. Natasha begins to question the relationship with Jules and Jules gets upset and says that she's really sorry and not to leave her.

Natasha forgives her but she realizes that this might happen again and she is not sure what to do.

Jamara and her new boyfriend go to a party. There are a lot of people they both know at the party. Jamara is having fun with her boyfriend and they end up in a room. Jamara and her boyfriend have been drinking and smoking a bit of weed and they start to make out. Jamara starts to feel like she is going to throw up or pass out. Her body is pretty tired but she can't even talk really, its just coming out in slurs.

Jamara wakes up the next day in a bed at the house where the party was. She is naked and there are condoms in the garbage can. She picks up her clothes from the floor, gets dressed and leaves the house.

Her boyfriend calls her 2 days later and asks her to go to the movies. Jamara feels really weird and doesn't want to see him but know that if she doesn't go, he'll ask what's wrong and get mad at her.

Danielle is 17 years old and only lives with her mom. On the weekends, she goes and visits with her dad.

Danielle has a neighbour who has been known to be loud and obnoxious at times in their shared backyard and front yard.

One day Danielle comes home and her neighbour is outside yelling “You Pakis” at her front door. Danielle decides to go around the back so she can get into the house but the neighbour sees her and continues to yell.

Danielle is really upset and doesn’t know what to do. She calls her dad. Her father comes over and the neighbour sees this and goes in the house. He is quiet for the rest of the night. Danielle is not really scared because the neighbour has done this before but it bothers her that this doesn’t happen to the other people in the neighbourhood.

Seema is a 16 years old and begins dating for the first time. She starts hanging out with a guy named James and they have a great time together.

Seema knows she is not ready to have sex but she feels like she should be since many of her friends say they are having sex. James keeps talking about it and Seema feels like she should tell him that she’s not ready.

James says he understands and that he wants her to have sex when she is sure and ready.

Seema and James keep going out and having fun. Eventually James begins dropping hints that he wants to have sex and keeps bringing it up every time they go out or are alone or in other situations, like at parties. Seema is getting a bit annoyed with saying no so she decides to do it, even though she knows she is not ready.

### Scenario Questions:

1. How is the person in the scenario feeling right now?
2. What would you say to this person? What concerns might you have for her?
3. What do you think might help her deal with the situation?
  - Give out sheet about what to do when a friend’s been assaulted.
7. The Centre and what we offer:
  - Face 2 Face Counselling
  - Crisis line
  - Drop-in support
  - Public education
  - Volunteer opportunities
  - Events
  - Student Placements

Pamphlet, flyers and resources

8. Check out:

## **EXTRAS:**

### **9. Discussion: How did your identity change after rape?**

Exercise: Ask participants to answer the following questions on their own, written?

- What do I think I do differently because of the assault?
- What is the same about me?
- How do I feel about the changes that are in me?

Discuss with the group:

- Everyone is different and will act differently when they've experienced violence
- Whatever is different or the same, is okay
- What are the things I want to change about having experienced assault? How can I? (specific maps on thinking about my triggers, behaviors, etc)

### **10. Building Strength: We are already strong! What do we think it takes to build strength?**

- Knowing when we are ready
- We are the experts of our own life
- What kinds of things already build strength in you? (knowing my triggers, taking care of myself, slowing down, thinking decisions through, knowing I have the right to say yes or no, etc.)