

A GUIDE TO  
**SELF-CARE** AND  
**HEALTHY**  
**RELATIONSHIPS**  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

\*blocked\*

green flags

OR that's cool.

consent

gaslighting

No <3



Ooooh,  
right in the  
boundaries



We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We also pay sincere respect to our Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the impact of colonialism on intergenerational trauma and violence on First Nations People.



Specialist  
Domestic Violence  
& Women's Wellbeing  
Services



Thank you to Logan City Council for their ongoing support and funding for this project.

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## LET'S TALK

Your connections to friends, family members, partners and co-workers are all relationships. Healthy relationships make you feel supported, loved and respected. Unhealthy relationships (AKA toxic relationships) can make you feel disrespected, controlled and fearful. Unhealthy relationships can be perpetrated and experienced by anyone. Some unhealthy relationships cross over into Domestic and Family Violence (DFV).

## Cultural considerations

Many cultural factors play into how somebody thinks about, identifies, experiences and talks about their experience with unhealthy relationships and DFV. Some of these include:

- Attempted destruction of race/culture and systemic racism
- Fear of bringing shame to one's family
- Being a member of the LGBTQI+ community
- Strict gender roles and expectations
- Loss of identity
- Intergenerational trauma
- Used violence to survive past experiences
- Discrimination
- Witnessed violence growing up



No matter who you  
are, where you  
come from or where  
you're going, you  
deserve to feel  
safe and respected.

# HEALTHY

# RELATIONSHIPS

A healthy relationship exists when both people feel safe, connected and supported. This applies to relationships with family, friends or with someone you might be romantically involved with.

In a healthy relationship you may:

- feel comfortable together
- trust one another completely
- respect one another
- lift each other up
- feel good spending time together.

You have the right to feel safe in any relationship you are part of.

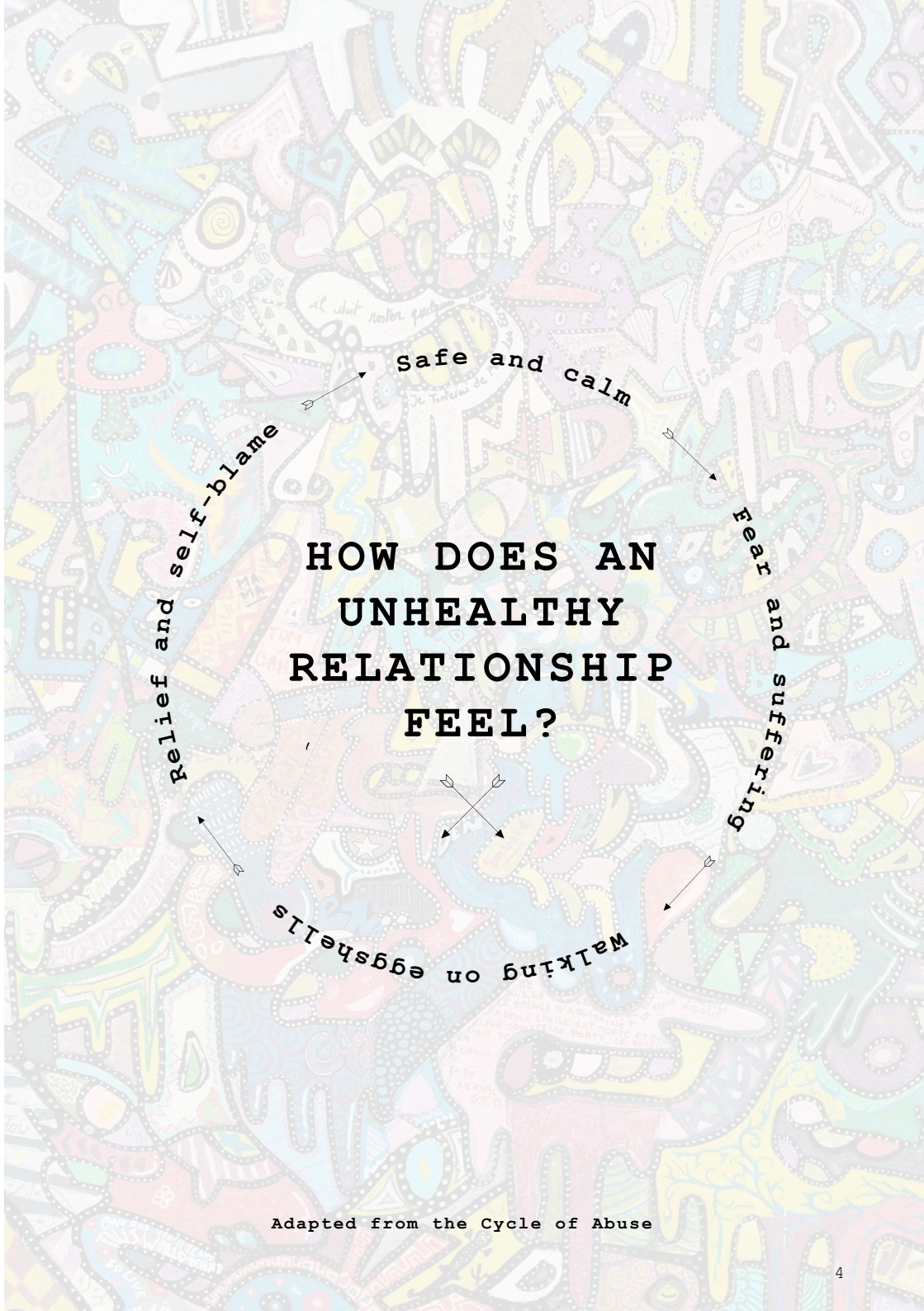
# UNHEALTHY

# RELATIONSHIPS

AKA healthy relationship's evil twin. Someone in an unhealthy relationship might feel unsafe, controlled or unsupported.

In an unhealthy relationship you may:

- feel worse after spending time together
- have trust issues
- have your boundaries pushed
- lack respect
- feel hurt emotionally and/or physically



**HOW DOES AN  
UNHEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIP  
FEEL?**

Relief and self-blame

safe and calm

Fear and suffering

Walking on eggshells

Adapted from the Cycle of Abuse

# Check-in: how do your relationships make you feel?

It can be really hard to see harmful behaviours - in yourself and in those you love. Instead, focus on how your relationships make you feel.

Healthy relationships usually make you feel good.

Unhealthy relationships are more cyclic; good then bad then good again...then bad...

A hand with a tattoo is touching a red sign that says "TRUST YOUR FEELINGS" in a 3D grid. The sign is red with a white center and black text. The background is a black space with a white grid and stars.

**TRUST  
YOUR  
FEELINGS**

# RED FLAGS

In the 18th century, a red flag was flown to warn of impending danger. Today, the term red flag is similar; it warns of an unhealthy and unsafe relationship. It's important not to ignore or minimise any red flags.

## Their behaviour

- They leave you out of plans.
- "All my exes are crazy"
- They put you down.
- They keep score of old fights.
- They are negative about other people and situations.
- They never apologise.
- They don't have friends outside of your relationship.
- They use abusive, disrespectful language when they are angry.
- They claim to trust you but their actions don't show it.
- They use ultimatums.
- They invade your privacy.

## Your experience

- You constantly have to ask if they can be your plus one.
- You wonder if their behaviour had anything to do with their crazy exes.
- You constantly defend them to others.
- You agree even when you actually disagree.
- You feel their opinions might be unfair sometimes.
- You apologise a lot.
- You decline invites from other friends to avoid hurting them.
- You keep quiet to avoid conflict.
- You feel that they are trying to find reasons to call you untrustworthy.









# GREEN FLAGS

Green flags and signs are used in life to represent safety and to 'proceed' or 'go'. In a relationship, green flags are signs of positive behaviours that make it safe for you to proceed and move forward.

## Their behaviour

- They include you.
- They check in to see if you're okay.
- They care about your mental health.
- They celebrate your successes (big and small).
- They're honest, even when it's hard to hear.
- They apologise when they've hurt you.
- They are self-reflective and work on themselves.
- They stand up for you.
- They respect your boundaries.
- They show up - especially in the tough times.
- They talk to you, not about you.

## Your experience

- You feel valued.
- You feel heard.
- You can be open and honest about your feelings.
- You don't have to minimise your 'wins' to make them feel better.
- You know they want you to be the best version of yourself.
- You feel comfortable with them.
- You know you have support when you need it.
- You can always turn to them in a crisis.
- You enjoy spending time with them.
- You know they've always got your back.

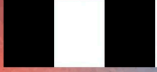
# Possible signs of someone experiencing an unhealthy relationship

- Quieter than usual
- Isolated
- Bruising or injuries with no or poor explanations
- Spoken over or afraid to voice their opinion
- Emotionally withdrawn or easily angered
- Avoid going home as much as possible
- Sense of humour changes or disappears
- Cancelling of plans without good explanation
- Struggle to make decisions
- Drop in self-esteem
- Flakes on commitments
- Memory lapses

**You might recognise some of these in a loved one, or in yourself.**

"People are  
so afraid to  
talk about  
real things,  
but they're  
experiences that  
everyone goes  
through."

-Halsey



**You aren't  
'overly-sensitive'.  
You just have feelings.**

# GASLIGHTING

Gaslighting is an intentional manipulation tactic. It's a mind game used to make another person doubt their memory, feelings and judgement. This makes it easier for the gaslighter to get their way.

Gaslighting can include:

**Playing dumb:** "I don't know what you're talking about."

**Denial:** "I never said that."

**Questioning your memory:** "Are you sure? Your imagination is pretty wild..."

**Mocking or minimising your feelings:** "You're overreacting again."

**Projecting their feelings and behaviours onto you:** \*If they are cheating, they may accuse you of cheating\*

**Blatantly lying:** "You are making that up."

**Blame:** "If you hadn't gotten upset, I wouldn't have reacted this way"

**Compassion as a weapon:** "I love you, I would never intentionally hurt you. How could you think that?"

# COERCIVE CONTROL

Coercive control is sometimes described as 'intimate terrorism'. Like gaslighting, it's intentional. It's a pattern of behaviour used to scare, harm or punish someone into being submissive.

Coercive control can include:

**Threats:** suggestions they'll harm you or themselves if you don't do what they say

**Humiliation:** they embarrass you in company to lower your self-worth

**Forced consent:** they make you feel guilty or scared to say "no"

**Isolation:** they prevent you from seeing certain or all people

**Blackmail:** making you do something or not do something in order to keep a secret for you (this is especially prevalent with sexting and 'outing' people in the LGBTQI+ community)

It can be psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, verbal, financial, sexual, religious, image-based or identity-based.

For more info on either of these, check out [centreforwomen.org.au/dfv-info](http://centreforwomen.org.au/dfv-info)



# Domestic and family violence

In some relationships the other person might make you feel disrespected and fearful through manipulation, control and physical harm. This is called Domestic and Family Violence (DFV).

DFV is defined as someone in an intimate personal or family relationship using abuse and/or violence to maintain power and control over the other person. DFV is a pattern of coercive, controlling behaviour. Friends can also be controlling and abusive, however, this is not classed as DFV.

The types of DFV and some examples of each are included on the next page.



## **Verbal**

- Swearing, screaming and name-calling.
- Attacking somebody's intelligence, sexuality or abilities.

## **Physical**

- Choking, slapping, hitting, pushing, burning, kicking and shaking.
- Withholding medication, food and medical assistance.

## **Social**

- Isolation from friends and family
- Restricting use of cars, phones and laptop.

## **Psychological**

- Making threats and creating fear.
- Apologising without corresponding behaviour change (i.e. manipulation).

## **Emotional**

- Blame, blackmail and suicidal threats.
- Comparing the person to others to make them feel worthless.

## **Sexual**

- Forced, unwanted or pressured sexual acts.
- Criticising or degrading someone regarding sex.

## **Identity-based**

- Threatening to 'out' someone's gender or sexuality.
- Commenting negatively about someone's developing or transitioning body.
- Intentionally use the wrong pronouns and gender.

## **Financial**

- No access to accounts, only a small allowance.

## **Spiritual or religious**

- Forbidding someone to practice their beliefs or forcing them to practice yours.
- Using religion as an excuse for abusive behaviour.

## **Reproductive**

- Forcing unprotected sex to conceive or hiding/discarding birth control.
- Forcing someone to have an abortion or not have one.
- Not disclosing and passing on a known STI.

## **Image-based**

- Explicit photo and video distribution - this is spoken about later in the booklet.

# Consent

Consent is a conversation between people where they discuss what they are and are not comfortable with.

## Consent cannot:

- Be assumed
- Be coerced (which means to persuade using threats or force)
- Be given or obtained if either party is asleep, unconscious or under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. *If you are in this situation and do something, you would be acting without consent which is a criminal sex offence.*

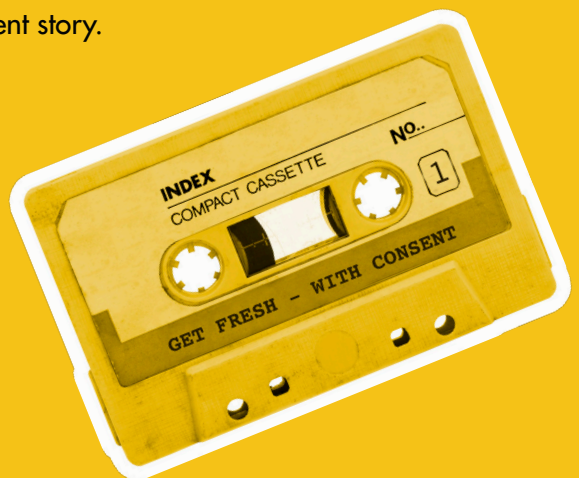
Everyone has the right to choose what they consent to. When someone's consent is not respected it can have serious and lasting negative effects on that person including significant mental health issues.

## Consent can:

Be taken back at any time - under any circumstances.

Sometimes people can consent with words but their body language is telling a different story. Remember to double check with someone if they are saying yes but you can see from their body that they are uncomfortable.

So, what does consent look like and sound like?



## Side A: ASKING FOR CONSENT

1. "Do you want to do this?"
2. "Let me know if you change your mind."
3. "Would you like to have sex?"
4. "Is this okay?"
5. "If you tell me to stop, I will"
6. "Do you feel safe doing this with me?"
7. "Is it OK for me too touch you here?"

## Side B: NO CONSENT

8. "I'm not sure"
9. Silence
10. "I've changed my mind"
11. "No"
12. Being in a relationship (*you still need to ask for consent*)
13. "I feel scared"
14. "Maybe"

## Secret track: BODY LANGUAGE

1. Clenched fist
2. Minimal facial expressions
3. Rapid blinking
4. Minimal eye contact
5. Physical distance
6. Hands and arms across their own body

OK that's cool.



# What to say when someone says no

Being turned down for a date, a relationship, when being physically intimate or sex can be hurtful and embarrassing. We are all human and rejection can be upsetting. But it is never an excuse to shame someone or push them to change their mind. Choose to respect and be respected.

"Okay, that's cool."

"No worries!"

"That's okay. Is there anything else about our relationship you want to talk about?"

"Thanks for being honest with me."

"Wanna get some snacks and watch Marvel movies instead?"

"Okay. Great, now we're on the same page."

"Too easy, not a problem."

"Do you want to go for a walk and chat then?"

"I'm glad you felt safe enough to be honest."



# Ways to say 'no'

You are totally within your rights to say 'no' in any way you feel is effective. However, it can be difficult to think of ways to say no on the spot sometimes. Below is a list of ways that might help you to feel more confident in saying 'no'.

"No."

"I don't want to right now, if I change my mind I'll tell you."

"No thanks."

"No, I'm not comfy with that."

"That's not something that I wanna do, so no thanks."

"Nah :) "

"I'm not keen, thanks."

"Maybe another time - I'll let you know though."

"Ooh no thanks, not for me."

"I'm flattered but no."

"I don't feel like it (now)."

# What to do when you say 'no'

You are totally within your rights to say 'no' at any time. But that doesn't mean it isn't uncomfortable. Make sure you look after yourself and disconnect from the situation if you need.

You might also like to:

- speak with someone you trust
- remove yourself from the situation (turn your phone off, switch off your computer, walk away or mute your conversation)
- focus on something else (go for a walk or binge your favourite TV series)
- have a conversation about what you are or are not comfortable with and talk about ways you can keep checking in with each other

You do not get to  
decide what is okay  
for another person.

Another person does  
not get to decide  
what is okay for you.





# What if something happens that you don't want to happen?

Sexual violence is any form of unwanted or forced sexual behaviour or act toward another, regardless of age or gender, that occurs without consent. It includes penetrative and non-penetrative acts including sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape.

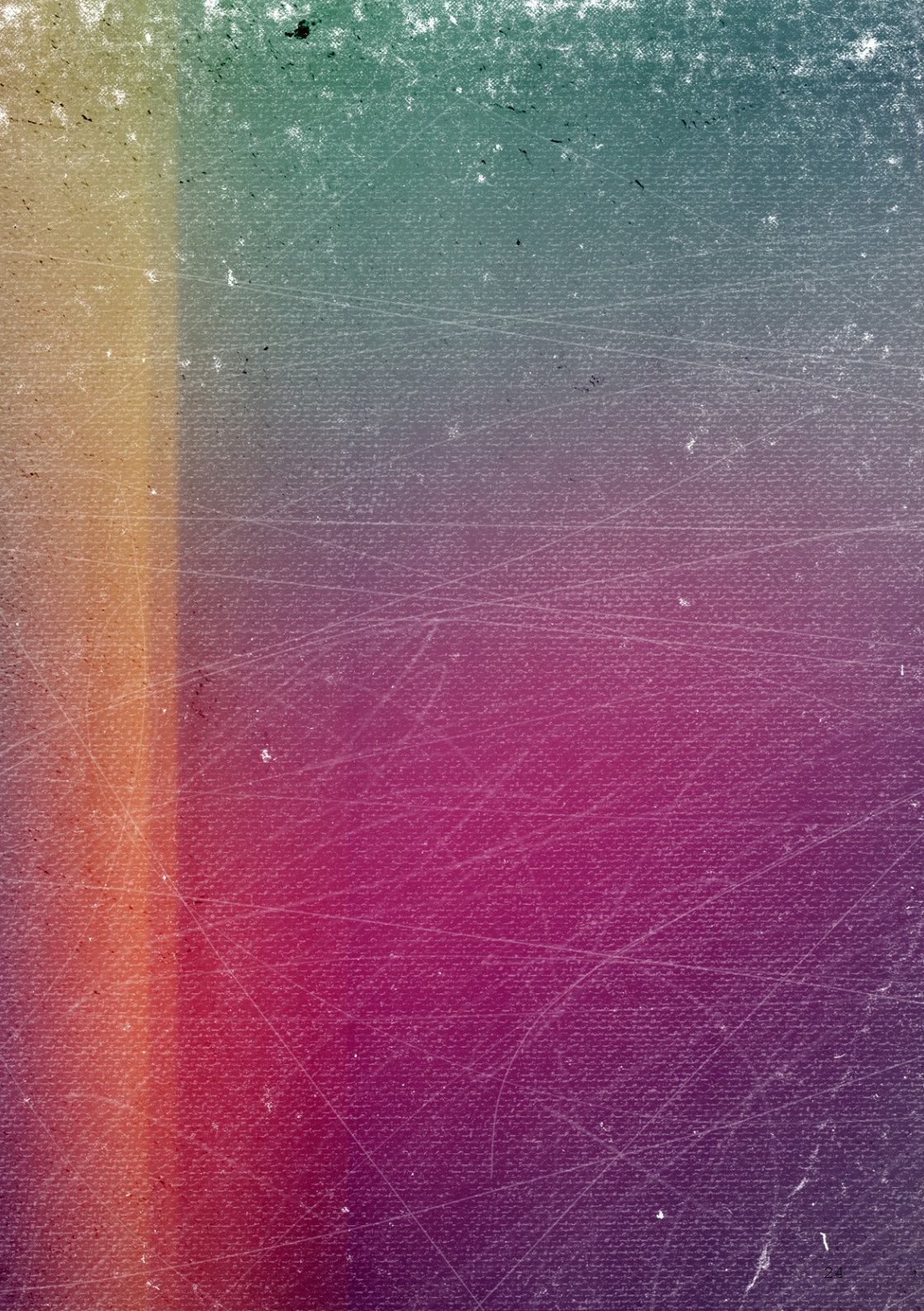
This can include:

- Stalking e.g. repeatedly being followed or watched by someone;
- Rape e.g. being forced to have vaginal, anal or oral sex;
- Unwanted touching e.g. pinching, patting, embracing, rubbing, groping, flicking, kissing, fondling, being touched on the breasts, bum, legs etc
- Sexual harassment e.g. dirty jokes or rude comments about a person's sex life;
- Being forced to watch or participate in porn e.g. taking a photo without permission, forcing someone to be on video, making someone watch a pornographic movie.

You can read more at [qsan.org.au/what-is-sexual-violence](http://qsan.org.au/what-is-sexual-violence).

## What to do if something unwanted happens:

- Talk with someone you trust
- Visit the Queensland Sexual Assault Network website [www.qsan.org.au](http://www.qsan.org.au) to find out what support services are available to you in your area
- You can seek counselling to talk about happened and help you work through your healing process
- You have the option to contact police. If you would like support in this process a service listed on the QSAN website can support you with this
- Remember that it is not your fault. **No one has the right to harm you.**









# Sexting

Sexting refers to sending, receiving or forwarding sexual photos, videos, texts or emails.

In Australia, it is illegal to ask for, create, send, possess and distribute sexual images of a person under 18. You could be charged with creating, possessing or distributing child pornography.


Even with an agreement to keep it between you and another person, sexting is still illegal and dangerous. Once you hit send, it's not in your control anymore.


Pressuring someone into sexting is coercive, manipulative behaviour which is not okay.

Another person's boundaries can be different to yours.


Respect them.

The laws are not in place to prevent young people from loving their bodies or having sexual relationships. The laws are in place to protect you.


 Nudes?


No, <3 


 OK that's cool!


 Are you working tomorrow?


...


Swapsies? 


 Nah.


Come on, you've sent some before 


 Yep. And I don't want to now.


LOL good. You're ugly anyway. Prude. 


 K, cya


Hey send me a pic ;D 

 A nude? Em, not happening!

You're just insecure in your body 


 Nope. Love my body. 10/10

Why so shy then? 

 Not shy. Not interested.

Enjoy! 

 Error, the recipient did not consent to this MMS. It will be deleted and your number will be blocked.

## Ways to say no in a text

"Not going to happen :) "

"Ooh right in the boundaries!"

"Nah, I'm good"

\*Blocked\*



We've uploaded some gifs that you can also use to text back. Check them out on Giphy - search for #CFWCO

## What to say when someone says no online

"OK, that's cool. Can we keep hanging out?"

"No worries :) "

"I respect that."

"Boundaries - I get it :) "

# COMMUNICATION

Your feelings are ALWAYS valid. It can be difficult or embarrassing when you are turned down or don't get the answer you were expecting. But, they are NEVER a reason to speak disrespectfully towards another person.

Passive communication disrespects YOU.

Aggressive communication disrespects OTHERS.

Assertive communication respects ALL.

## **Disrespectful communication**

- Speaking over the top of someone or ignoring their ideas.
- Yelling, screaming or swearing at someone.
- Telling someone their feelings are stupid or irrelevant.
- Inducing fear.

## **Assertive communication**

- Be honest about your feelings and experiences.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Acknowledge the other person's feelings.
- Know when to walk away (or put the phone away).
- Use "I" language i.e. "I felt upset when you said that".



# When relationships end

Relationships break down, it's normal. It's old school but it's true; treat others how you want to be treated - even when relationships end.

## Priority

- End the relationship in a respectful way
- Be honest when talking about your feelings and experience
- Be empathetic when listening

## Ongoing

- Speak fairly of the person in future, or say nothing at all
- Focus on internal healing
- Identify what you learned from that relationship
- Open your mind to see progress and changes
- Keep boundaries secure

# Dictionary

## **Fauxpology.**

Verb. A fake apology. Example: "I'm sorry you think I'm a bad friend."

## **Flying monkeys.**

Noun. People employed by the other person to reel you back in. Example: Your ex partner's friend begging you to give your ex another chance; "they've changed." Similar word: hoovering. Hoovering is when someone convinces you to come back to them; "I've worked on myself, I'm better, I promise."

## **Triangulation.**

Verb. When a third party is dragged into a relationship conflict. Example: "Tell your mother she's overreacting."

## **Emotional intelligence.**

Noun. The ability to understand and control your own feelings, understand the feelings of others and react to them in a suitable way.

## **Manipulative.**

Adjective. Skilled in influencing others for their own gain. Example: Apologising so that the fight ends, but with no intention of changing poor/toxic behaviour.

## **No.**

Noun. A negative answer. Example: "No, I don't want to continue this relationship."

## **Jealousy.**

Noun. Excessive envy and suspicion of rival attention. Example: Feeling anxious and distressed about a friend spending time with another friend.

## **Empathetic.**

Adjective. The psychological or emotional identification with the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of others.

### **Coercion.**

Verb. Forcing or attempting to force someone to behave or think a certain way. Example: Making threats or not giving choice.

### **Dominating.**

Verb. Dominating in this context refers to the act of asserting physical, sexual, emotional, financial, or psychological control in a relationship, situation, or particular interaction.

### **Self-awareness.**

Noun. The ability to understand what's going on for you - your thoughts, behaviours, feelings and how to

### **Stealthing.**

Verb. Stealthing is the act of removing a condom during sex without the consent of the partner. It's illegal in many countries, and is a form of sexual assault. This is a serious breach of consent.

### **Toxic.**

Adjective. This describes a relationship dynamic that's one or more of damaging, unhealthy, unbalanced, controlling, codependent, emotionally draining, socially isolating, destabilising, abusive.

### **Non-judgmental.**

Adjective. Avoids making judgments of others based on their own moral standards.



# 21

## QUESTIONS

If you know someone who is in an unhealthy relationship, or you suspect they might be, talk to them. It doesn't matter if you don't say the perfect thing, just start the conversation.

**Remember:** you can only support them not make decisions for them.

- "Wanna talk?"
- "Is everything okay?"
- "Is there anything you want to tell me?"
- "Are you okay?"
- "Is something going on?"
- "Do you need to chat?"
- "How can I help you through this?"
- "What do you need?"
- "What's going on?"
- "Can we talk seriously?"
- "Is something wrong?"
- "Are you in an unhealthy relationship?"
- "What's been happening?"
- "Need an ear?"
- "What's up?"
- "Want to get coffee and chat?"
- "Anything on your mind?"
- "Are you hurting?"
- "Can I check in?"
- "Can I ask you something?"

# What can you do if you find yourself in an unhealthy relationship?

Identifying and acknowledging an unhealthy relationship is tough and it's okay if that's all you can or want to do. But, if you do want to make some bigger moves, we've got some suggestions.

**1. Talk to the person.** If you are safe and feel comfortable to, you can talk to the person about how you feel. Your feelings are valid no matter what they say and you aren't responsible for their reaction.

**2. Talk to someone else.** It could be a family member, friend, teacher, social worker or counsellor. You can be supported even if you remain in the unhealthy relationship.

**3. Investigate your options.** You can talk to a police officer or about your options. They can explain your options and will not make decisions for you. Only you can choose how to move forward.

**4. Stay connected.** Human connection is super important. Try and be open with trusted loved ones. There are also community organisations and clubs you can join to meet and connect with new people.

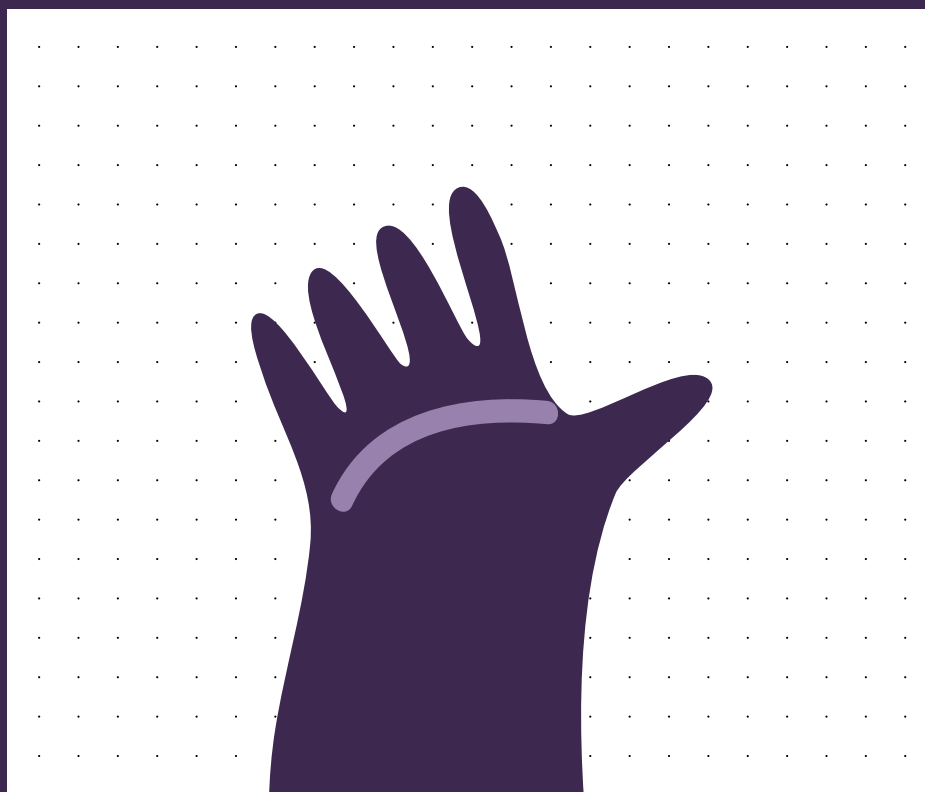
**SAFETY FIRST!**  
Only do what you  
feel is safe for  
you at any time.

# My

# support

# network

On each finger, add in a person who you could speak to if you were having a tough time or feeling unsafe. These should be people you trust and feel safe with. Remember to write their number in too!



## Some support Services in Logan

### Centre Against Sexual Violence (CASV)

Call (07) 3808 3299  
casv.org.au

### Ladders

*(drug and alcohol support)*  
Call (07) 3299 3963

### The Centre for Women & Co.

*(domestic & family violence & mental health support)*  
Call (07) 3050 3060  
centreforwomen.org.au

### YFS

*(domestic and family violence support and general youth support services, including legal support)*  
Call (07) 3826 1500  
yfs.org.au

## Places to stay connected in Logan

### ETHNI

Call 0450 70 60 50  
ethni.com.au

### PCYC Beenleigh

Call (07) 3380 1777  
pcyc.org.au/clubs/pcyc-beenleigh

## Other places you can find support

### 1800 RESPECT

*(sexual assault and domestic & family violence support)*  
Call 1800 73 77 32  
Chat online at  
1800respect.org.au

### KIDS HELPLINE

*(any time, any reason)*  
Call 1800 55 18 00  
Chat online at  
kidshelpline.com.au

### OPEN DOORS

*(LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl & Brotherboy support)*  
Call (07) 3357 7660  
opendoors.net.au

### YOUTH BEYOND BLUE

*(mental health support)*  
Call 1300 22 46 36  
Chat online at  
youthbeyondblue.com

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