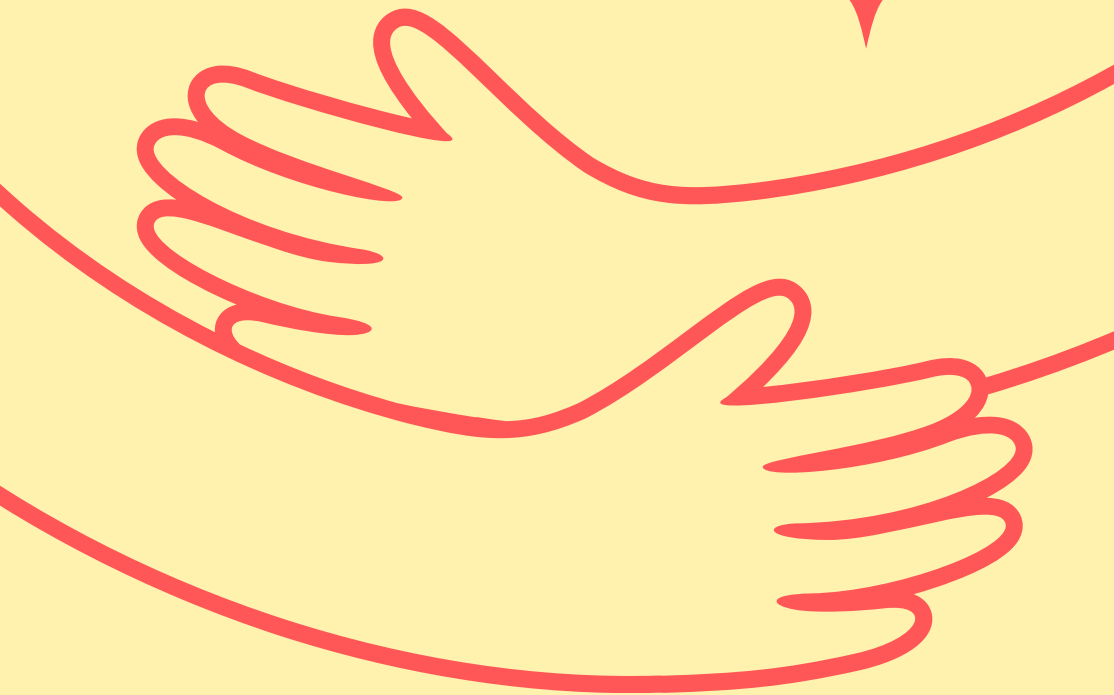
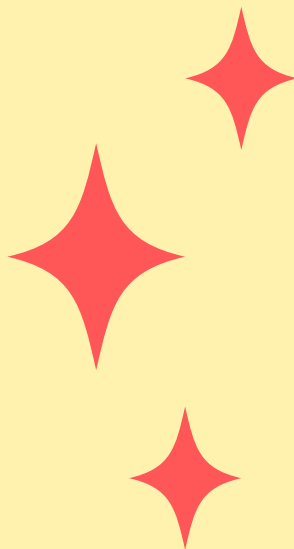

A guide for LGBTQ+ youth to prevent and respond to dating
violence and sexual assault in the LGBTQ+ community

HERE, QUEER, AND SAFE



National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence

A PROJECT OF THE LOS ANGELES LGBT CENTER

In partnership with the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs and In Our Own Voices, Inc.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is an agreement between individuals that is enthusiastic, reciprocal, and continuous.

Most importantly it is mandatory.



FORMS OF CONSENT



Verbal

- What do you like/don't like?
- Is this okay?
- Can I ____?
- Do you want to slow down?

Non-Verbal Consent

Unless you've been with a safe partner long enough to know their nonverbal cues, it's always best to get verbal consent.

For example, someone might be smiling because they are excited or they could be smiling because they are nervous. You can always check in or clarify if you think you are getting non-verbal consent, but want to make sure.

Non-verbal cues can look like:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Smiling | • Nodding |
| • Eye contact | • Pulling someone closer |
| • Body positionality | |

Ongoing Consent

- Consent one time does not mean consent indefinitely
- Consent to one sexual activity does not mean consent to all sexual activity.

Ex: Consenting to making out does not necessarily means that's a 'yes' to sex.

COERCION AND CONSENT



Going Beyond “No Means No”

No always means no and never “convince me”.
However, the absence of a no does not mean a yes.

- Silence means no
- Apprehensiveness or uncertainty means no
- ‘Sure’ is not enthusiastic, therefore it means no
- Someone cannot give consent when they are intoxicated by drugs or alcohol.
- Intoxication also means no.



What is Coercion?

Coercion is when someone manipulates, pressures, or guilts someone into agreeing to sexual activity. All parties should feel safe expressing their needs and limits without fear of withdrawal or resentment (physically and emotionally). It's important to remember that sexual activity is not owed to anyone. Buying someone a drink does not give them a right to sex. Being in a relationship does not give them a right to sex. Not having had sex in a while does not give them a right to sex.

Consent is sexy. Seeking consent shows that someone truly respects you and values your wants/needs...and that's hot. But even when it doesn't feel like consent is sexy, or you are worried about killing the mood, it is still a mandatory and important part of all sexual activity.



UNDERSTANDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Hallmarks of Healthy Relationships include:

Mutual respect

Valuing each other's ideas, respecting each other's boundaries, and differences.



Trust and respect for one another's privacy

Mutual and reciprocal trust built on healthy communication and consistent patterns of behavior.

Empathy and care

Listening to your partners' feelings and trying to understand their perspective. Operating from a place of kindness, support, and mutual safety.





Communication

- Openly and respectfully expressing thoughts, feelings, and needs – as well as creating a safe space for your partner to do the same.
- Listening to understand your partner, with a willingness to work through misunderstandings together.
- Good communication builds trust and strengthens connections.

Equal agency in decision making

All parties feel free and safe to make their own choices without fear of withdrawal or backlash.



Individuality and ability to be separate and apart from one another

- Encouraging and allowing space for partners to have their own interests, friendships and personal time without feeling guilty or disconnected. Feeling secure while spending time apart helps build trust and ensures continued individual growth.
- Time apart allows partners to experience autonomy, when supported by the security fostered through consistent effort and emotional presence.



HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Everyone has disagreements.
But how we navigate those
with our partners comes
back to mutual respect.

- Understanding that conflict should be about you vs. the problem, not you versus each other.
- Finding solutions that work for all partners instead of trying to “win” the argument.
- Avoiding using inflammatory or derogatory language when speaking to each other.
- Allowing each other to speak without interrupting.
- Using ‘I’ statements to express your feelings without assigning blame. Instead of “You never listen to me” try “I feel unheard when I don't get a chance to speak.”
- Taking accountability for your part in the conflict, whether small or large.
- Asking questions for clarity rather than assuming one's intent.

UNDERSTANDING UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Love Bombing:

This is an emotional abuse strategy where a partner will use over-the-top displays of affection, particularly early on in the relationship. This could look like extravagant gifts, excessive compliments, constant communication, obsession, wanting to see you all the time. It can also look like getting serious really quickly such as saying ‘I Love You’ within the first couple weeks, posting excessively on social media, or planning big romantic dates very early on. Love bombing is often an early sign of unhealthy or abusive dynamics. It is a strategy to create a sense of ‘deep connection’ and reliance very quickly. This excessive early affection fades and often leads the other partner to overcompensate to get back that level of affection.



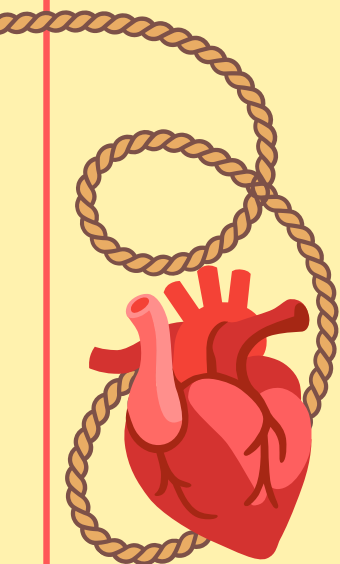
Gaslighting:

This is an emotional abuse strategy where a partner will try to make their partner question their reality. This can involve denying that something happened, questioning a survivor's memory, making the survivor feel as though their feelings are not valid or they are being "too sensitive".



Push/Pull Dynamics:

This is an abuse strategy where a partner will alternate between treating a partner with closeness and affection and then becoming distant and cold. This can lead to uncertainty and fear which make the survivor feel like they are always trying to stay on their partners good side. A toxic cycle is created where one partner is constantly chasing the others reassurance and validation.



Toxic Communication:

These are emotionally abusive strategies where a partner will be frequently argumentative and combative, starting arguments, yelling, name-calling, mocking, being passive aggressive, exploiting their partner's insecurities, exposing things that are meant to be private, or giving their partner the silent treatment.



Excessive Jealousy_ and Possessiveness:

If a partner constantly throws out accusations that their partner is cheating on them or uses these suspicions as a way of controlling their partner's behavior, this may be a sign of abuse and attempts at isolating their partner. This insecurity often manifests as control issues.

HEALTHY | BOUNDARIES

“Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.”

— Brené Brown

By recognizing the need to set and enforce boundaries, you protect your physical and emotional wellbeing and build healthy relationships. Boundaries are important in all relationships including friends, family, coworkers, and romantic or sexual partners.

- **Physical (your body, sense of personal space, & privacy)**
- **Sexual (emotional & physical aspects of sexuality)**
- **Material (money & possessions)**
- **Time (how you use your time)**
- **Emotional (thoughts and ideas)**



TIPS FOR SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES



-
- To set effective boundaries, we must be able to recognize and acknowledge what it is that we are feeling. Did this person's critical comment make me feel bad? Is this person making me feel overwhelmed or drained?
 - When you identify the need to set a boundary, do it respectfully, clearly, calmly, and firmly. You do not need to justify or apologize for the boundary you are setting.
 - You are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful manner.

- When a boundary is set, you might want to set consequences if boundaries are ever crossed. Establishing healthy boundaries and enforcing them allows you to step into your authentic self with confidence.
- Take care of yourself. If setting the boundary brought up guilt or anxiety, then be sure to take care of yourself. Do something to help yourself get re-centered like going for a walk, being in nature, journaling, or focusing on your breathing.
- After trying these tips, if you still feel anxiety, seek help with a trusted adult or counselor.



Remember:

Your boundaries are not meant to control someone's behavior; they are about mutual respect. Boundaries are guidelines to be followed in order for all parties to feel safe, valued, and respected.



Developing healthier boundaries, as with any life change, is a process!
It will take time and practice.



Breaking the Cycle: Boundaries in Action!



One way of setting boundaries is to communicate your feelings and needs directly and honestly, without attacking the other person.

The “I” Statement is a way of doing this.

Step 1: I feel _____

Step 2: Because _____

Step 3: I want or need _____

Ex: I feel uncomfortable when you take my phone without asking me because it feels like an invasion of privacy. I want you to ask me first in the future before taking my phone.

Ex: I feel overwhelmed and need to take a break from this conversation because I need some time to breathe. I want to continue this conversation at a later time when we are both calmer.





Now It's Your Turn!

Practice writing how you would respond to these different scenarios:

1. Your partner always cancels plans at the last minute. Recently you were waiting for them to pick you up for your plans for 45 minutes and they didn't call you to tell you that they were running late.

2. Your partner has put pressure on you to attend their family dinner for Thanksgiving. Last year, multiple of their family members said homophobic things repeatedly throughout the night and you don't want to spend time with them anymore.

3. Your partner has come over to your home unannounced many times in the last few weeks because they got into a fight with their parents. You want to support them, but their unexpected visits disrupt your personal time to relax and take care of yourself and decompress from the day.

4. One of your sexual partners frequently pressures you to have sex without using the protection that you want to use (condoms, PrEP, dental dams, birth control, etc.). This makes you feel uncomfortable, but you feel bad telling them no.

5. Think about a situation you have been in recently that you wanted to set a boundary but didn't.

Sexual and Reproductive Coercion



You have the right to have control over your sexual health and reproductive decisions. This includes:

- Using a condom, dental dam, or internal condom.
- Having your partner use a condom, dental dam, or internal condom.
- Using birth control and PrEP.
- Controlling the outcome of a pregnancy.
- Having access to any medical care that you might need.

Sexual and reproductive health coercion are not always violent or obvious, this is why it is important to learn the signs so that we can understand it. Sexual health coercion is any behavior used to pressure someone into potential STI/HIV exposure through manipulation, intimidation, or violence. Reproductive coercion, similarly, is any behavior used to pressure or manipulate someone into becoming pregnant, or into continuing or ending a pregnancy against their will.

Taking Charge of your Sexual Health

Self Quiz:

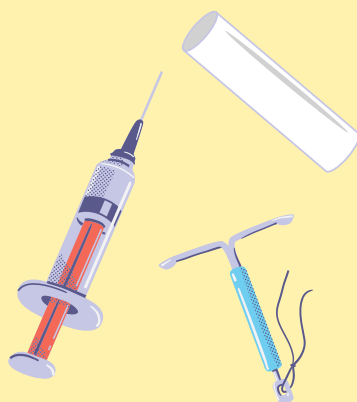
- Am I afraid to ask my partner to use condoms or birth control?
- Does my partner remove condoms during sex, or claim that condoms keep breaking during sex?
- Has my partner ever refused to use a condom when I asked them to or not let me use a condom?
- Has my partner ever made me feel ashamed or accused me of cheating because I wanted to use protection, birth control, or have an abortion?
- Have I ever had to hide my birth control, PrEP, or HIV medications from my partner?
- Has my partner ever pressured me to get pregnant when I didn't want to?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your partner may be trying to take control of your sexual health and reproductive decisions, and your health and safety may be in danger. You are not alone, and you deserve to make your own decisions about your body and your future without being made to feel ashamed or afraid.



Some birth control may be more difficult or impossible for a sexual partner to detect or tamper with including the shot, implant, and IUD.

Learn more about different types of birth control that are available to you here:



Learn more about preventing the spread of HIV with PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) here:



Online Safety and Safe Communication



Technology is often used as a tool of abuse. Safety planning around technology can look like:

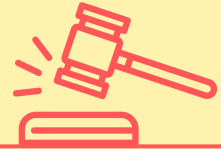
- Changing passwords.
- Creating an email that your partner does not know about.
- Clearing your browser history/cache (be aware, that if a partner is monitoring your browser history this may make them suspicious).
- Checking your location settings in your phone to make sure location sharing is turned off on all apps.
- Using a safe and secure phone and computer to avoid cyber stalking. This can be devices at the library, a friend's device, or computer labs at domestic violence service providers or LGBTQ+ centers.

Many people share sexual pictures, videos, or texts as a part of their sexual life. However, there are some people who will non-consensually share these photos or texts with others, post photos online, or threaten to do these things to control the person. No one deserves this, and it is not your fault. Some safety strategies to be aware of to protect yourself:

- Ask people with sexual images or videos of you to delete them.
- Not include your name or face in photos or videos.
- Avoid any tattoos, piercings, birth marks in photos or videos.
- Avoid identifying information like your address or location.
- Be aware of “catfishing” or people pretending to be someone else online.
- Contact websites to have photos or videos taken down.



Taking Charge of your Legal Rights and Options



Legal rights and options:

The survivor is the only person who gets to decide what legal rights are right for their safety and healing. Sometimes these options do not feel safe or accessible for LGBTQ+ survivors, particularly BIPOC and undocumented survivors. Some survivors may decide that engaging in criminal systems is not right for them and their safety and their community. But all survivors, regardless of your gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or immigration status have a right to report and file for a restraining order. Survivors should not be shamed or coerced into using or not using these options.

You can find more information about state-by-state laws around restraining orders, criminal reporting, suing for money, gun laws, divorce, and custody at <https://www.womenslaw.org/laws>

Note, that this website is available to survivors of all genders, despite its name!



Police Reports:

Everyone has a right to report domestic violence to the police.

Reporting to police can help create a record, have an intermediary,

stop violence from escalating, access

compensation for the harm you've

experienced, and pursue accountability for harm.

It's important to note that you deserve to have your safety treated seriously and be treated with respect by the police, but this doesn't always happen. It may help to bring a support person with you to make a report, which could be a sexual assault or domestic violence survivor advocate. If a police officer is refusing to take a report, you have a right to file a complaint for misconduct.



Crime Victims Compensation:



Each state has their own process of offering financial support to “victims of crime” including survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Depending on the laws of your state, you may be able to receive financial support with medical bills, therapy costs, relocation costs, safety equipment, lock changes, and more. You could also be eligible for money to cover some of the costs of the harm you experienced through small claims court or criminal restitution. You can learn more about navigating your options for compensation at compass.freefrom.org.

Restraining Orders:



Everyone has the right to file a restraining order. Restraining orders are legally binding documents that require someone to stay away from you, your home, your school, your children, your pets, your roommates, and/or your place of work. Some states may call restraining orders “civil protection orders”.



Everyone’s situation is unique and different. Deciding whether or not to report to police, file a restraining order, or utilize other legal strategies or options is the survivor’s choice.

Financial Abuse



Economic abuse is controlling a person's access to, use of, or ability to acquire or access financial resources.

Some examples of economic abuse are:

- Preventing someone from working or maintaining work.
- Outing someone to their workplace.
- Preventing someone from saving.
- Damaging someone's credit or taking credit cards out in their name.



Survivors reported an average of \$10,120 in abuse-related costs. 31.9% of queer and trans survivors reported needing support with costs related to the DV (medical bills, healing costs, mental health care, pharmacy costs, etc.), a rate that was 1.6x that of cisgender and heterosexual survivors.¹

¹ <https://www.freefrom.org/support-every survivor>

Financial Safety

JOURNAL EXERCISE:



What memories, emotions, or experiences do you most strongly associate with money?

Building financial security and liberation during or in the aftermath of an abusive relationship looks different for everyone. Understanding your unique situation is the next step towards financial liberation.

What are your top 5 financial priorities? There is no judgment. This is unique to you and doesn't have to be the same as anyone else's financial priorities. For example, this could be: saving money, pet food, clothing, makeup, hobbies, or buying gifts for friends.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Create a Budget:

1. Figure out your average monthly income.
2. Identify your monthly expenses like rent, groceries, cell phone bills.
3. Subtract your monthly expenses from your income.
4. Take a look at your budget and figure out where you can reduce expenses or earn more money. Having a sense of your financial priorities can be really important towards figuring out what changes are most important to you.

What are three financial goals you can set for yourself? For example, can you find a side hustle to bring in more money? Save \$25 a month and put them in a savings account for an emergency fund? Get a copy of your credit report and learn your credit score?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Learn more about navigating your financial safety and taking charge of your financial future by using the National Network to End Domestic Violence's Moving Ahead workbook.

nnedv.org/resources-library/moving-ahead-curriculum



Understanding and Healing from Trauma

Trauma is our brain's response to stressful or frightening events that can have short and long-term impacts on our sense of safety and ability to regulate our emotions.

A trauma trigger is a neurobiological response to something conscious or subconscious that reminds us of a traumatic event. Some common reactions are:

- Shortness of breath or inability to breathe
- Heart racing
- Difficulty sleeping
- Migraines or muscle tensions
- Upset stomach
- Dissociation



When seeking support there are many avenues that can be beneficial.



- **Crisis Hotlines** – this can be a way to talk to a trained advocate to talk through your situation right away. One example is the Anti-Violence Project has a 24-hour hotline for LGBTQ+ survivors to call for confidential support: 212-714-1141
- **Breathing exercises** – breath work is incredibly important in trauma healing and can be used to mitigate emotionally intense reactions to situations that trigger a trauma response.
- **Therapy**– finding the right therapist that is trauma informed & trans-knowledgeable can be difficult. Exploring what your focus areas/priorities are can help.
- **Body & energy work**– Reiki, massage, acupuncture.
- **Self help**– reading books on healing, journaling, art.
- **Peer to peer**– one on one discussions or support groups.
- **Movement**– yoga, Pilates, self-defense, aerobics, etc.
- **Medication**– must be prescribed by a doctor but can help reduce symptoms of trauma, depression, anxiety, etc.

Resources



You are not alone. There are several options to begin your healing journey:

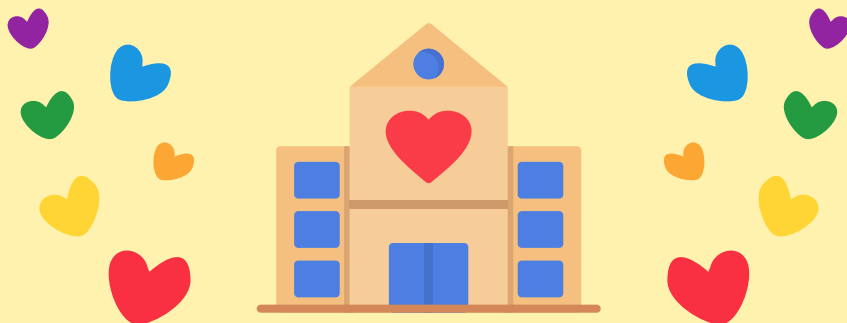
- **Anti-Violence Project** has a 24-hour hotline for LGBTQ+ survivors to call for confidential support: 212-714-1141
- **Love is Respect** offers confidential support for teens, young adults, and their loved ones seeking help, resources, or information related to healthy relationships and dating abuse. They are available by text (“LOVEIS” to 22522), call (866.331.9474).
- **Trevor Project** has trained counselors who understand the challenges LGBTQ+ young people face and are available for support 24/7. They will listen without judgment. You can call at 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678-678.

Domestic violence service providers and shelters – There is a misconception that domestic violence organizations are only for cisgender women, but it is actually the law that federally funded domestic violence organizations provide support services & shelter to everyone regardless of gender identity. You can find your local domestic violence program by going to: <https://www.domesticshelters.org/>



LGBTQ+ Centers

Many communities have local LGBTQ+ centers that offer a range of services including support groups, case management, therapeutic support, financial assistance, medical care, and more. You can find your local domestic violence program by going to: <https://www.lgbtqcenters.org/LGBTCenters>





**Get connected with more
supportive resources at:**

lgbtqipvinstitute.org/resources-for-survivors

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