

How can I recognise sexual harassment?

KEY WORDS

harassment | consent | trust



Sexual harassment is when unwelcome and inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature occurs, creating an uncomfortable or confusing environment. This can show up in various forms, such as unwanted comments, flirting or actions that make you feel unsafe or violated.

Sexual harassment can be categorised according to verbal, non-verbal and physical behaviours:

VERBAL BEHAVIOURS

- Spreading rumours, asking questions, or discussing a person's sex life and sexual preferences.
- Making sexual comments or jokes.
- Making rude comments about someone's body or physical appearance.

- Offering or pressuring someone to go on dates or engage in unwanted activities.
- Making demands for sexual favours

NONVERBAL BEHAVIOURS

- Lewd looks towards someone's body.
- Sexual and flirty gestures, like suggestive winking.
- Use of sexually explicit graphics, cartoons, drawings, photographs, or images.
- Emails, letters, notes, or messages of an offensive sexual content usually sent by digital media.
- Recording, sharing or posting information, videos and images related to people's sex lives.

PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS

- Extreme physical closeness.
- Deliberately seeking to be alone with the person unnecessarily.
- Deliberate and unwanted physical contact (pinching, touching, unwanted massages).
- Intentionally or “accidentally” touching the sexual parts of someone's body.

The first signs of sexual harassment can start with this unwanted physical contact, simple out-of-place touches that may go unnoticed. It may even look like having conversations about sex, fantasies, or past stories that are out of place in your discussions with someone.

What we've outlined above can be more obvious signs of sexual harassment, but **sometimes this harassment can be more subtle**. An example of this is someone using their position or authority to make you uncomfortable or make demands of you, which can be at school, at work, or any other setting. Subtle harassment can also look like someone excluding you or isolating you from the group, especially in a social or work setting, so that they can better control you and the situation.

Whether the signs are subtle or more obvious, it's important to trust your instincts and recognise when something feels wrong. If you feel safe, use the opportunity to speak up against unwanted behaviour. If you are feeling uncomfortable and insecure to speak up directly, **share your experiences** with trusted friends, family, or adults, and do not hesitate to report incidents to authorities. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, and you have the right to set and enforce your boundaries.

**INCLUSION AND
STAYING SAFE**

