

TEACH US * CONSENT

EDITION 1 - OCT 25

What if
it's not

“just
a joke?”

If you hear or see something offensive, step in.
Your voice has power.

TEACH US
* CONSENT

@teachusconsent
teachusconsent.com



Founder's Note



Young people (and all of us, really) are bombarded with messages about how we should act in relationships, what performance to put on during sex, how to “win” at dating, and what it means to be the “right” type of man or woman.

Over half of young people turn to the internet for information about sex and consent. While some of what they find may be helpful and give them a sense of belonging, much of it is shaped by algorithms designed to provoke outrage, maximise clicks, and promote an agenda that a lot of the time doesn't have the viewers best interest at heart.

This zine is our antidote. Inside, you'll find a collection of Teach Us Consent's clear, evidence-based, and expert-written resources to help you and the young people in your life navigate relationships with confidence and care.

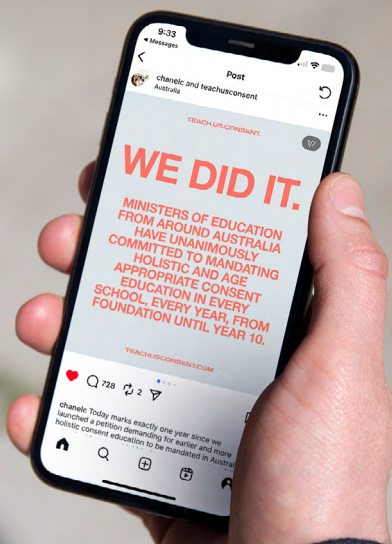
Now more than ever, it's essential that young people have access to holistic, comprehensive consent and relationships education, and safe spaces to ask questions, reflect, and find clarity.

We're committed to delivering this for young people and the parents, carers, teachers and communities who support them.

Together, we can build a culture where consent, respect and empathy are the norm.

On behalf of the Teach Us Consent team, we hope you enjoy it!

CHANEL CONTOS



We believe in a world free from sexual violence

To get there, we're putting consent, respect and empathy at the heart of sex education.

Teach Us Consent was born out of a powerful grassroots movement — a collective call for change to dismantle rape culture and create a world free from sexual violence.

It all started when our CEO & Founder, Chanel Contos posted an Instagram story in 2021.

Chanel asked: Have you or anyone you know been sexually assaulted by someone who went to an all-boys private school? After 200 “yes” responses, she launched a petition to mandate holistic consent education in the national curriculum, as well as teachusconsent.com, a platform for people to submit their anonymous testimonies of sexual assault. After almost 7000 testimonies and over 45,000 petition signatories were presented to policymakers around the country, we did it.

Since then, Teach Us Consent has continued to make genuine, meaningful change. This includes being part of significant

consultations with lawmakers about dating app regulation, spearheading the campaign to criminalise stealthing across the country, and leading a national, federally funded, digital education campaign around consent, sex and relationships.

Our work has never been more needed. New data shows the number of recorded sexual assault victim-survivors in Australia increased by 10% in 2024 to over 40,000 people — the highest number since records started. 81% of victim-survivors are women and girls, and they are alarmingly young: 40% were between 10 and 17 years old at the time of the assault.

This crisis is urgent, but not inevitable. By giving young people the tools to practice empathy, respect, and affirmative consent, Teach Us Consent is building a generation determined and equipped to end normalised sexual violence.

UNSOLICITED ADVICE



(Q)

My oldest nephew is six and recently said something really inappropriate and sexual while I was looking after him. It was quite derogatory towards women, and when I asked where he heard it, he said another boy at school had said it to him. I was pretty shocked.

My sister reported it to the school, and to their credit, they took it seriously — the other boy's parents were contacted and he's been spoken to. My sister feels a bit more reassured now, but I'm still feeling anxious about what the boys might be exposed to, especially online or from other kids. I watched *Adolescence* last week, and it really hit home how early all this starts.

As a family, we're trying to raise respectful boys who understand consent, boundaries, and treating people with respect. My sister doesn't want to make them feel ashamed or like they're "bad," but she also knows how important it is to talk about these things early.

We're just trying to figure out how to strike that balance and give them the best possible foundation. Would really appreciate any guidance you have!

WOMAN, 28

(→)



Answered by Sarah Capser,
consent educator, the founder of
Comprehensive Consent, and the
author of *The Kids and Consent
Curriculum*.

(A)

My mom raised five children. Four boys and then me – the youngest and the only girl. To this day, I hear comments like, “Wow, four boys? How did your mom do it?” and “Oh my god, she must have been so relieved to finally have you.” This orientation towards boys is what writer Ruth Whippman details in her recent book, “BoyMom.” She describes the way that we, adults in this world, can hinder boys’ development by assuming that their biology is fixed – that “boys will be boys.” While not always consciously, we often reinforce this cultural narrative.

Without even noticing, we influence caregivers’ sense of how much of an impact they can have in the development of young boys. Meanwhile, we absolutely can influence the trajectory of boys’ social-emotional capacity. In a New York Times article, Lise Eliot, a professor of neuroscience at Rosalind Franklin University and the author of “Pink Brain, Blue Brain,” comments, “brain sex differences aren’t as strong as we make them out to be.”

With this in mind, the first step in raising respectful and kind boys is to parent them (or “aunt” them) more like we do our girls. Strengthen their emotional vocabularies, build their self-regulation skills, develop their awareness of self and others, and deepen those hugs.

How do we help boys grow into respectful men? Keep doing what you’re doing, Auntie.

Talking about sex can be challenging. When a child says something sexual or asks a question about sex, I often see caregivers either abandon the comment or respond with total abandon. They either warn the child, “that’s inappropriate,” and change topics, or they over-share intimate details about sex and sexuality that the child was neither interested in nor prepared for. These responses come from both a desire to care for the child and a fear of doing wrong by them. The caretaker who avoids the question is trying to protect the child from ideas and information that won’t make sense to them. But that same avoidance is also driven by a fear of uncomfortable conversations. The caretaker who goes full-on when the child asks a simple yes or no question is trying to equip the child with all the information they might need. But that same eagerness is also driven by a fear of the child making their own mistakes.

*** When a child shares a comment that’s sexual in nature, when you find a porn website in their browser history, or when you overhear them making a misogynist comment, instead of taking the path of avoidance or, on the opposite end of the spectrum, the path of overeagerness, continue to do as you did and lead with curiosity.**

(→)

You might gently say, “I’ve never heard you say that before,” “what do you think that means?” or, “what do you know about that?”

Make space to gather more information. Not only does this approach give you more insight into what would be a situationally appropriate and developmentally appropriate response, but it also allows the child to see you take a beat and respond with curiosity. If we want our boys to be curious about their partners’ and friends’ emotions, interests, wants, and boundaries, we must model these behaviors. Show kids how to ask information-gathering questions. Help them see what being an active listener looks like.

Your sister is on to something in her fears about making her sons feel guilty or like they are a threat. We know that overwhelmingly, men are the perpetrators of sexual violence.

As a caregiver, it’s only natural to want to protect boys and men from this path. But your sister is right, without attention to how we do so, our attempts to keep boys from becoming perpetrators of harm can land us in a place that’s no better.

*** Boys are aware of their role as initiators of sex in the heterosexual cultural narrative; establishing consent is a duty that comes along with that role.**

Meanwhile, much mainstream consent education doesn’t leave room for “grey areas” of consent. Standalone slogans like “Yes means yes,” “Ask first, ask always,” and “Without consent, it’s not sex—it’s assault” are

commonplace. In many cases, young people are also learning (as they should) that because of power dynamics, people might say yes when they don’t really mean yes.

We implicitly and explicitly teach boys that the stakes are high, the responsibility falls entirely on them, and that even though “yes means yes,” sometimes, it doesn’t. This is a lot for young boys to take on, especially when their social-emotional development is often under-attended to and they don’t—according to research—feel like they have the tools to navigate their relationships in healthy ways.

When we detach ourselves from that “boys will be boys” mentality and add nuance and egalitarianism into the mix, we can better prepare our boys for what lies ahead without inducing fear, guilt, or shame. Use books, TV, and other media as jumping off points for conversations about emotional vulnerability, identity, and navigating differences. Encourage them to notice their body feelings. Help develop their language to describe what their body looks and feels like when they’re excited, sad, nervous, angry, etc. Practice perspective-taking and empathy. Ask, “How might that person be feeling right now? How do you know?”

When we believe our boys have the capacity for relational and emotional nuance, and when we treat them as such, they can become the young men we know they can be.

A photograph of a young man and woman sitting on a bed, facing each other in a close embrace. The man is on the left, wearing a white tank top, and the woman is on the right, wearing a dark top. They are positioned in front of a window with horizontal blinds, through which soft light is visible. The overall tone is intimate and educational.

**Sexual
consent
sounds
like**

Can I touch you here?

Do you want me to_____?

Are you still feeling good?

What do you like doing?

Asking creates trust, respect
and comfort. Hot right?

TEACH US
* CONSENT

Navigating family pressures and teaching children body boundaries



Written by Sarah Capser, consent educator, the founder of Comprehensive Consent, and the author of The Kids and Consent Curriculum.

It's Christmas Eve and you're bracing yourself for the family party. You want to enjoy the holidays but between that one aunt who won't stop kissing your youngest's cheeks and your dad who keeps trying to get your oldest to "man up" and drink, even the thought of this holiday celebration is making you tense.

You want your kids to have strong boundary setting skills and understand that their bodies belong to them but you weren't raised with these values. Especially when you're around your family, it feels like an uphill battle. You're not alone in this feeling. Here is some guidance to make these parenting or caregiving challenges a little bit easier.

- * If you want your child to be competent and confident in navigating their body-boundaries and body-wants, the learning starts with the body.**

While we teach our children they always have the right to say "no", we must also teach

them how to figure out if they are a "no". Begin building their internal awareness with conversation starters like, "Someone offers you a hug. How do you know if you're a yes or a no? How might your body be telling you that you're not interested in that?" and "When I don't feel good about a touch, a hug, or a cuddle, I notice my shoulders tense up and lift towards my ears. I usually feel a pit in my stomach, too. What are some ways your body tells you that you're uncomfortable with a hug or other kind of touch?" Then, discuss body signs that tell their body they're a "yes".

This learning takes time. Continue to have conversations about the different ways they can use their body to learn about themselves. With the tools to gather evidence about how they feel, your child can feel more confident in their responses – "Sorry Grandpa, my chest is telling me that I'm not interested in taking a shot of whiskey with you."

As your child or teen learns how to notice whether they're a yes or no, and not just that they have the right to say yes or no, you can add in conversation about the space in between. When someone asks you for a hug, you might feel an enthusiastic "yes" or a somber "no." But what if you don't have a strong sense one way or the other? There's space between desires and boundaries. Upon meeting someone new, it's customary to

shake their hand. In these moments, most of us are neither eager to give a handshake nor disgusted by the prospect of doing so.

This is where the concepts of wanting, willing, and enduring come in handy.

These are definitions adapted from Betty Martin's work. Wanting describes the feeling that X is your top choice. You believe choosing X will bring you joy. Willing describes the feeling of being fully willing to choose X. Even though X isn't your top choice, saying yes feels okay. In fact, it might even bring you joy because choosing to do something for someone else can feel good. Enduring describes the feeling of tolerating or putting up with something; X is beyond what you are okay with.

As you support your child in noticing their limits, you can also help them notice their "wants", and their "willing." Just like I'm willing to shake someone's hand when I meet them (as long as their hand isn't wet or sticky), perhaps your child is willing to get that one kiss from Aunt Barbara (just not many kisses all over their face).

*** The key to teaching these nuances to kids lies in focusing on the sensations in the body. Talk about what signals tell them whether they are wanting, willing, or enduring.**

Then, model this language in your home. You might say, "I'm willing to play Minecraft with you for 15 minutes but if I play any longer, it will be beyond what I'm okay with," and "You

really wanted pizza for dinner but tonight we're having Mac and Cheese. I'm hearing that this isn't what you would choose. You can have what I'm serving or I can make you a PB&J."

Beyond teaching your kids how to notice their limits and advocate for them, if you suspect that your holiday season might include some face-time with relatives who aren't on the same page as you, talk to those relatives ahead of time and ask them for their help (you might even like to forward this to a family member to spark a conversation). This is the advice that parents tell me makes the biggest difference.

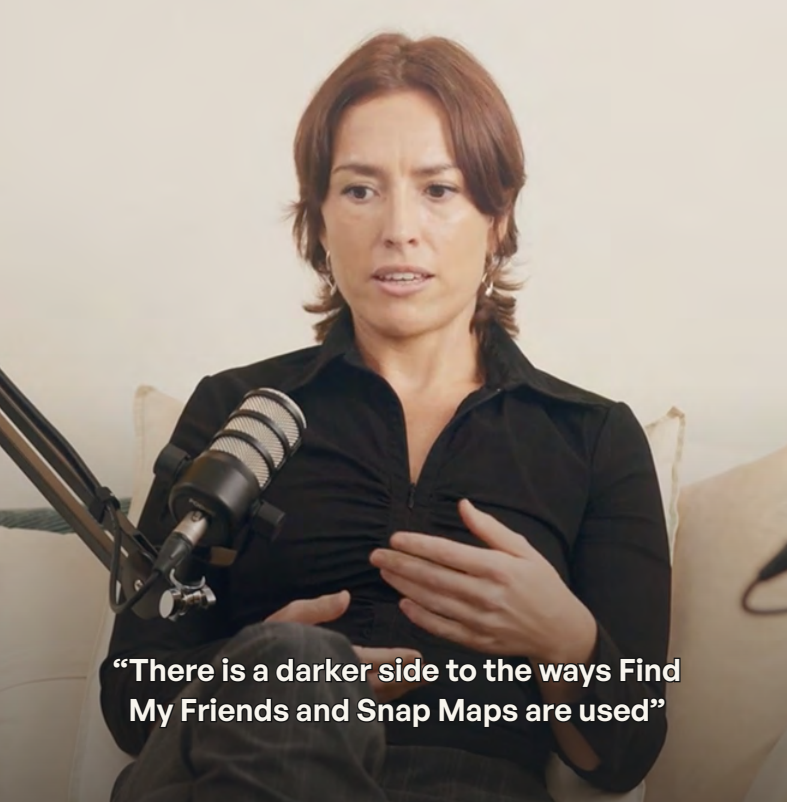
Just like kids, adults don't like being told what to do.

Instead of telling your family members that they have to ask before hugging your kids, take an approach that's less likely to awaken their defensive side. Tell them that you're trying to help your kids know their body is theirs and that you need all the help you can get. Share why this is important to you and what you've been doing so far. Then say, "I know this is different from what we're used to but if you'd be willing to make sure they're okay with a hug or kiss, first, it would go a long way in helping them internalize this value that their body is theirs." Invite your family into the process in a way that helps them be receptive.

Remember that creating new patterns takes time. If they are trying and you notice even little adjustments to their behavior, that's a win. You got this!

Happy Holidays!





“There is a darker side to the ways Find My Friends and Snap Maps are used”



“In cases like stalking or where they’ve been used to cause harm or assault”



“So it’s important we scrutinise this technology and we’re aware of it”



“While realising most of us are probably using it safely with our friends and family”

 Teach Us: How To Navigate Power Imbalances

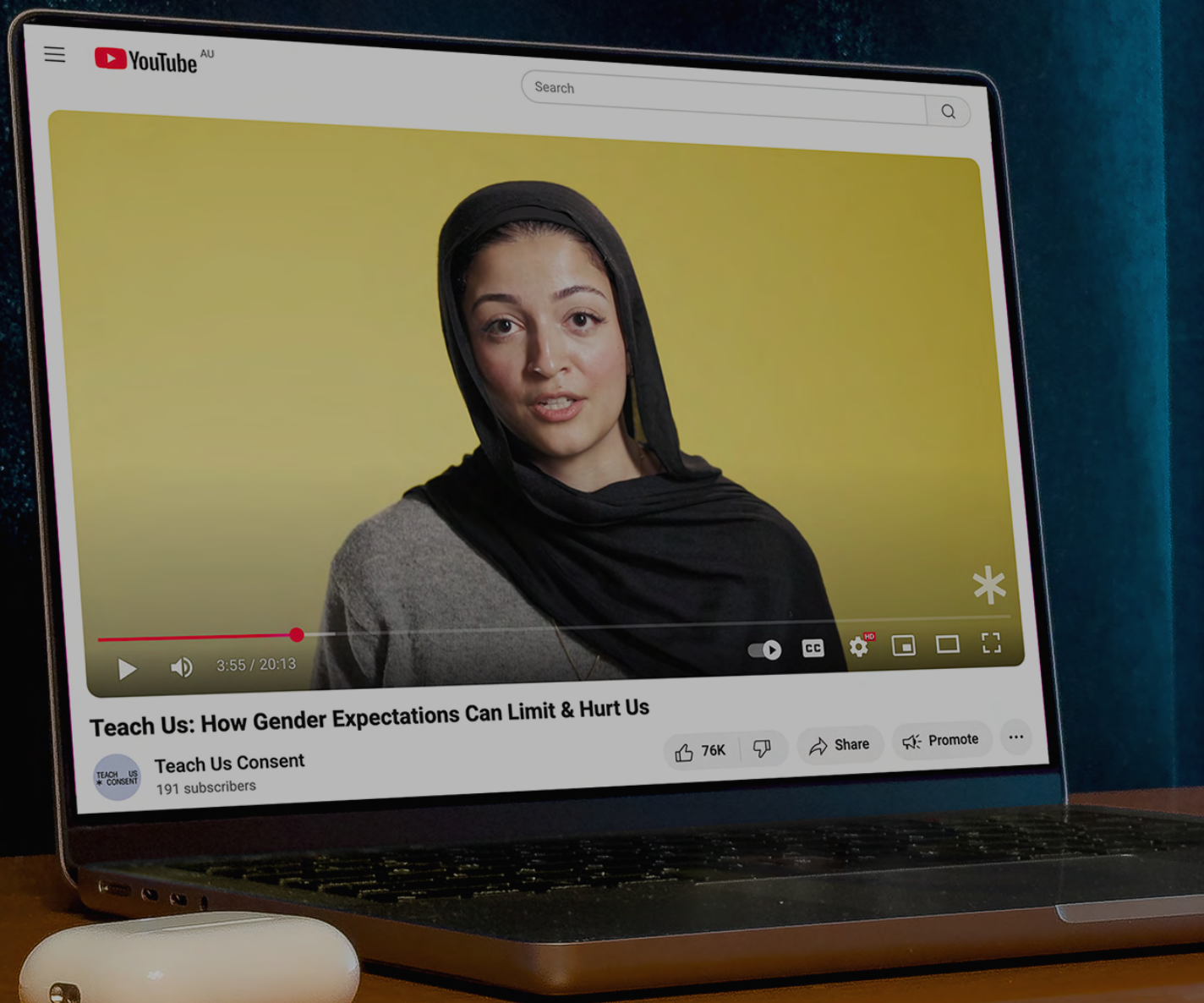
Tune in to our podcast for expert insights and honest conversations.

  LISTEN NOW



*

“When we see one woman speak up about injustice, this really influences the next generation of young women to continue to call out systems that don’t serve us.” ZAHRA AL HILALY



We created four mini documentaries for YouTube to bring these topics to life, voiced by trusted young people.

(→) [WATCH NOW](#)

UNSOLICITED ADVICE



Answered by Gina Martin, multi-award winning gender equality activist, writer, facilitator and speaker.

(Q)

As a straight man who considers himself a feminist, I'm very aware of the male gaze and the objectification and harm that can come from it. But the fact is, I still get pleasure from looking at women's bodies, and I don't know what to do about it. I'm confident that nothing I do makes the women around me uncomfortable, but on the inside I don't like that my eyes are so drawn even just to an underwear ad on a bus, or a display in a museum about the vulva. I'm not having harmful fantasies, just getting basic visual pleasure, but it feels wrong and shameful.

Am I overthinking and falling victim to internalised shame, or is this a thing I can work on? How do I be a properly "enlightened" man, who can experience my sexuality without objectifying women in any way? Or in a broken patriarchal system is this not possible, and I need to squash something?

MAN, 29

(A)

I can feel that reflecting on this is causing you worry. Questioning ourselves is healthy but it can also be an uncomfortable place as we can find ourselves in confusing spirals. Good on you for staying with it and taking the time.

You importantly named the male gaze early on. As a societal lens, it shapes everything to be understood through a heterosexual male lens especially in media and art.

Women are depicted as sexual objects to be consumed, as you've named, and that's why when you mentioned how your "eyes are drawn" to media depictions of women's bodies I thought "of course they are". Patriarchy has told you (and all of us!) to look at and consume women and femininity; ever seen ads selling food with a picture of a naked woman? What's the relevance? There is none. Patriarchy just wants you to look at it so it can make money and it knows we're socialised to consume the female form. Similarly, your eyes are drawn to an underwear ad or vulva in a museum – this is a symptom of this socialisation. That doesn't make you a bad person, it makes you a man in patriarchy.

The discomfort you're feeling in response might be you noticing your brain doing something it's been socialised into that feels almost involuntary. Remember, a bus advert or art piece are not people that could be harmed by being objectified, but it's healthy to worry about what this signals about how you perceive women more broadly, and if you're noticing this being a constant interruption to your day then you're right to be wary of it. Be compassionate to yourself though in the process.

(→)

Let's discuss the distinction between "looking" and "objectifying".

As a man, knowing and talking about this with your mates is super important. Objectifying someone with our eyes is when the subject – in this case a woman – ceases to be understood by the viewer as a complex person with feelings and needs but instead becomes an object purely for exercising the viewers desire or impulses in that moment. There is very little connection, consideration or empathy towards them and the dehumanisation means the viewer's satisfaction becomes more important to them than the subject's humanity or safety.

Let's focus on looking at women rather than media designed to make you look: have you ever noticed an absence of consideration, empathy for women in these moments? Is there a compulsion to keep looking, to consume, or do you struggle to look away? Or when you look at a woman, do you see her as a human who is attractive to you, notice yourself looking and enjoying the experience, before becoming aware of how it might make her feel and looking away? Notice how these are different. One is consuming someone with no regard for their humanity and the other is finding looking at someone pleasurable whilst keeping their humanity central.

The guilt and shame you mentioned feeling at receiving visual pleasure is coming from somewhere, and it's important you are able to excavate where: is it because you are objectifying women with your gaze and want it to stop, or because you are defining looking respectfully as "objectifying" simply because you are a man attracted to women? Maybe journaling on this could be good for you. Reflecting on how often you spend time in spaces dedicated to engaging with women

where the male gaze is removed might also be an enlightening experience – head to some great exhibitions, theatre, watch some great feminist movies etc. I'd also recommend the documentary *The Feminist on Cellblock Y* and bell hooks' *The Will To Change* to continue your learning on patriarchy and masculinity.

Finally, you spoke about wanting to be an "enlightened man" and I sense that you might see this as a destination to get to. I want to gently offer a reframe; becoming a compassionate, safe person who embodies the type of society they want to live in is a constant practice. We live in a patriarchal system socialising us into behaviours in new ways all the time, so seeing this as a destination is a little bit like wanting to get to the point of having perfectly clean teeth one day despite always eating. We brush our teeth every day for a reason, right? This type of growth is an every day and forever thing, too.

*** You will never arrive at being the perfect feminist man, because the perfect feminist man has no room to grow.**

Be prepared to do what you're doing now: sitting in discomfort, asking questions, and bettering yourself for you and your community, all of it imperfectly. And know that you will mess up again and again, but that messing up is a chance to learn how accountability and learning repair deepens your relationships, your respect for yourself and your own humanity over the course of your life. Commit to the journey, not the destination, and keep asking yourself the hard questions. Good luck!

*

What's the deal with porn?

Porn has become one of the most accessible, but least discussed, sources of sex education for so many of us. Years before we've had the chance to get out there and explore our sexuality, we're being shown what it 'should' look like.

We know that life isn't like Hollywood films or picture-perfect TikToks with trending audio. In the same way, porn you find on Pornhub is not a reflection of what sex looks like for everyone, or what feels good for everyone. It's a performance — and only a snapshot of a certain kind of sex. And for some, watching porn without a critical lens can risk warping our understanding of sex, relationships — and even our own bodies.

So let's talk about it.

You don't tend to hear people outright admitting it, but porn has played some role in our understanding of sex — whether we sought it out or stumbled across it accidentally.

Research shows that most Australian teenagers encounter porn by their early teens, many years before our first sexual experiences. A 2023 study found that many first see it unintentionally through pop-ups, social media, or links shared by friends.

As we get older, our relationship with porn often becomes more intentional. Some find it pleasurable or even informative, especially if we haven't had access to holistic consent

and sex ed elsewhere. This is particularly true for LGBTIQ+ young people, who often don't see representations of themselves in general media, and receive significantly less relevant sex education compared to their straight peers.

The problem is, porn isn't made to depict reality or be educational. Like any form of entertainment, it takes creative license to present a fantasy. It allows you to make things more exciting, cuts key parts that aren't as graphic like consent and aftercare, and uses a cast to curate a specific look, or do specific things.

The end product of most porn rarely shows what sex looks like for most people. The realities of off-screen intimacy — with its awkwardness, laughter, communication, breaks and adjustments — often get cut in favour of a polished fantasy.

'Sexual scripts' and expectations

We all can fall into patterns of thinking around sex and pleasure, based on what we've seen or heard. Whether that's from TV, films, pornography, social media, or what our friends say. These are known as sexual scripts — they're like unspoken rules or expectations about how sex is supposed to look, feel, or happen.

However, this expectation misses something important: There is no 'standard' version of sex and intimacy. While certain acts may be shown as 'the norm,' it doesn't mean they feel good or right for everyone.

These scripts are often so ingrained we don't even realise we're following them. They lead people to make assumptions — like thinking a partner will automatically enjoy a certain act, or

even that they are meant to — without actually checking what they actually like. This could be assuming that everyone is meant to love giving and receiving oral or thinking that your partner finds rougher sex pleasurable every time... without ever actually asking if they do.

On top of that, sexual scripts can make it harder for people to explore and figure out what they personally enjoy, especially when there are so many messages around us telling us what we're supposed to like.

When we bring those kinds of expectations into sex, it puts pressure on everyone, and that pressure can make things way less fun for everyone involved.

Consent? What Consent?

In mainstream porn:

- Consent is rarely explicitly shown or discussed
- Reluctance is often framed as something to be 'overcome' rather than respected
- Non-consensual or coercive encounters can be romanticised

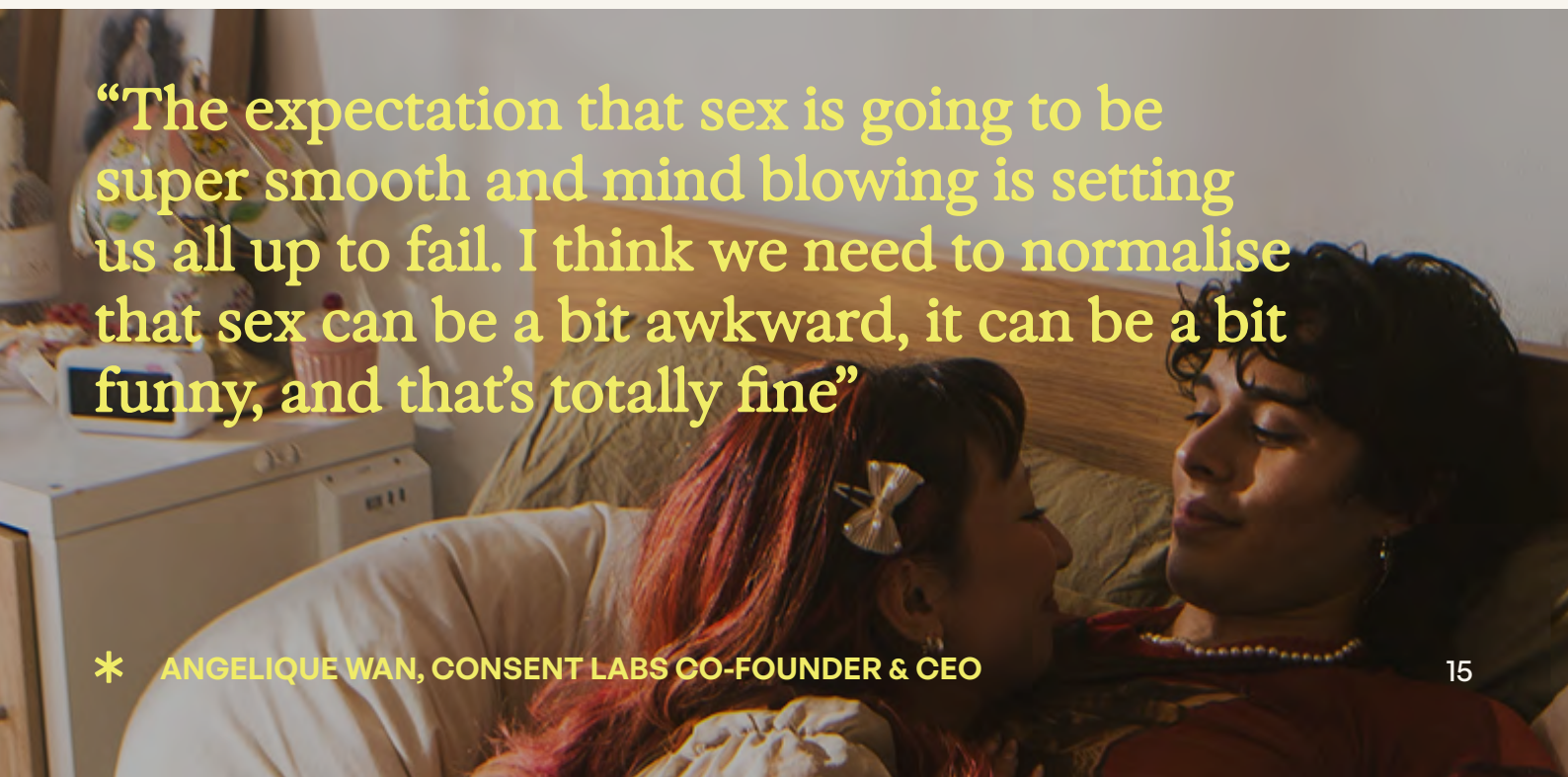
- Safe sex practices like using a condom or other forms of contraception are largely absent
- This creates a dangerous narrative that persistence pays off, or that consent isn't necessary.

Performance vs. reality

The sex depicted in porn is choreographed for the camera.


- Penetrative sex in pornography lasts much longer than the real-world average (which is about 5 and a half minutes).
- There's minimal focus on foreplay.
- Men apparently never lose erections or finish within the first few minutes (which is totally normal).
- Women reach orgasm quickly and reliably through penetration alone — despite research showing only about 18% of women regularly orgasm this way.
- This disconnect between fantasy and reality can have real consequences.

(→)

A photograph of a young couple lying in bed, looking at each other. The woman has long red hair and is wearing a white top. The man has dark hair and is wearing a red shirt. They are in a dimly lit room, and the text is overlaid on the image.

“The expectation that sex is going to be super smooth and mind blowing is setting us all up to fail. I think we need to normalise that sex can be a bit awkward, it can be a bit funny, and that’s totally fine”



 Teach Us: How Porn & Algorithms Influence Us

Impossible standards

The way bodies are shown in usually more mainstream porn reflects a narrow and hard-to-reach ideal, one that doesn't match the reality for most of us. These standards are pretty common in many films, TV shows and on social media, too:

- Men usually have large penises and defined abs.
- Most are circumcised (even though only around 20% of Australian men are).
- Women often have fake boobs, minimal labia, and no body hair.
- Everyone seems to have endless stamina and perform at an intense, non-stop pace.

Meanwhile, in the real world, most of us need a break to grab some water, have a breather, or to Google "why does my leg always cramp during sex?"

A lot of mainstream porn doesn't reflect the wide range of bodies, experiences, and pleasure out there. When this is the main reference point, it can set up unrealistic expectations — and make us feel like there's something wrong with ourselves or our sex lives, when there absolutely isn't.

Diversity becomes fetishisation

When porn does show diversity, it often does so through fetishisation. These portrayals frequently:

- Dehumanise people from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Objectify people with disabilities.
- Present diversity as 'exotic' or 'other' rather than normal.

This kind of representation doesn't celebrate diversity — it exploits it.

(→)

Power imbalances

Many porn scenarios involve problematic power dynamics:

- Characters in vulnerable positions (needing help, struggling financially) pressured into having sex.
- The rise of ‘step-relative’ content that sexualises inappropriate and sometimes illegal relationships between family members.
- Teacher/student relationships or school girl content that romanticises child sexual abuse

What healthy intimacy actually looks like

Healthy sexual experiences are built on several fundamental principles that rarely make it into more mainstream pornography.

Real intimacy involves ongoing communication. Unlike the silent or performative interactions in most porn, healthy sexual encounters involve checking in continually with your partner and adjusting based on both verbal and non-verbal cues. Some examples of what this communication might sound like:

“Does this feel good?”

“I’d like to try this — what do you think?”

“Can I touch you here?”

“Have you tried x? I’m keen to try it if you are”

“I really enjoy when you...”

“I’m not comfortable with that right now.”

A lot of the bodies we see in mainstream porn can represent an incredibly narrow slice of human diversity.

When you’re with someone in real life, you

realise that bodies come in endless variations — different sizes, shapes, colours, abilities, and features. They have stretch marks, body hair, asymmetrical features, and countless other characteristics that make them uniquely human.

Healthy sexuality acknowledges that everyone deserves pleasure and attention to their needs and desires. This means taking time to understand what feels good for each person and recognising that the goal isn’t performance but mutual enjoyment.

Consuming porn critically & defining our own sexuality

So where does this leave us? The answer isn’t necessarily avoiding porn altogether — it’s developing critical thinking skills, and engaging with it more mindfully:

Porn is just another form of media. It’s entertainment. Which means, like with any form of media, we have to be considerate of what it may be teaching us. The reality is that porn isn’t going anywhere. What can change is how we approach it.

It’s up to us to define our own sexuality based on real connections and consent, not scripted performances.

So next time you come across porn, take a second to think about what you’re seeing. What parts seem unrealistic? What’s being left out? Is everyone being valued?

By chatting openly about porn — its limitations, distortions, and how it affects us — we can make better choices about how we engage with it. This helps stop it from messing with our expectations while fostering healthy attitudes toward sex, relationships, and our bodies.



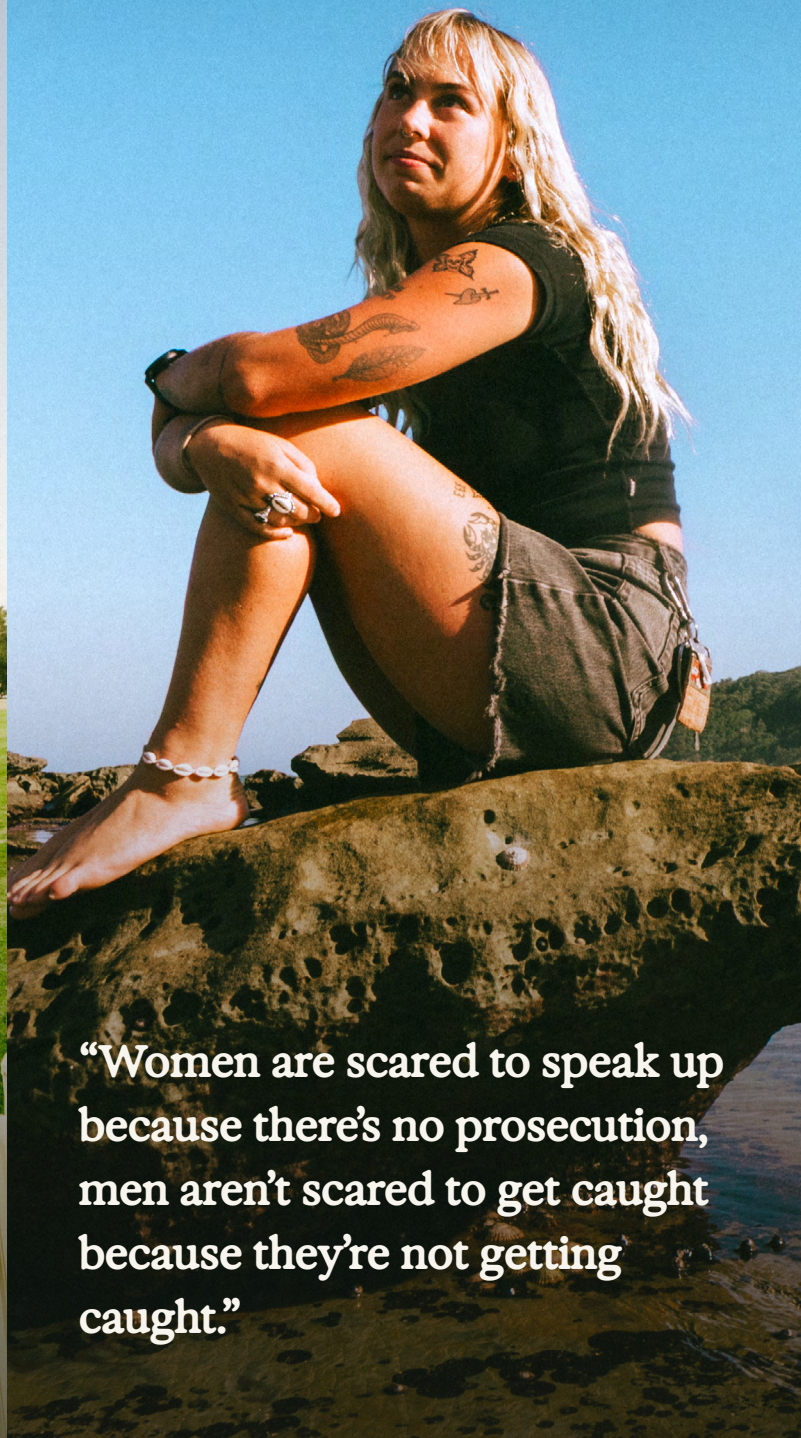
VOICES FROM THE ROAD

CAEL FROM CONDOBOLIN



"If people don't get pulled up [on sexist banter], it just gets worse and worse."

FREJA FROM THE CENTRAL COAST



"Women are scared to speak up because there's no prosecution, men aren't scared to get caught because they're not getting caught."



We spoke to dozens of incredible young people across regional NSW this year about consent, gender and relationships. Here's what they're experiencing and musing on:

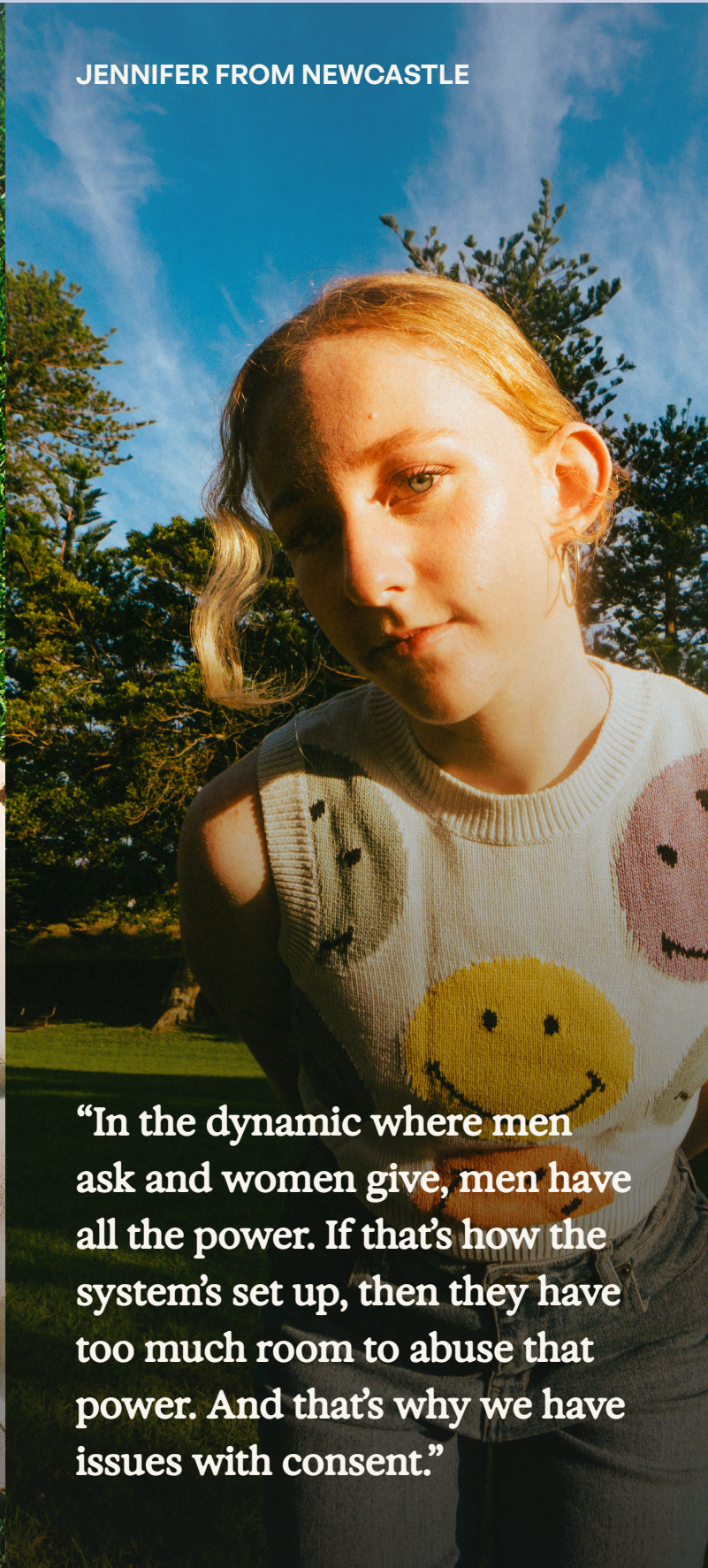
Read: the kids are alright.

ALEX FROM SYDNEY



"I'm not allowed to be vulnerable, because I'm a male. If I can't express myself, I feel alone."

JENNIFER FROM NEWCASTLE



"In the dynamic where men ask and women give, men have all the power. If that's how the system's set up, then they have too much room to abuse that power. And that's why we have issues with consent."

Why a specific type of sexism attracts women



Written by Macken Murphy, Oxford graduate and science student studying human mating.

Ben thinks women are wonderful. He thinks they are, on average, more cultured and ethical than their male counterparts. And he believes the best thing a man can do for himself is find a woman to love and treat her right. Ben never lets his girlfriend touch a door handle, and at the end of dates he almost always pays the bill. Whenever the couple faces a hassle—navigating the airport, sorting out taxes—Ben takes the lead. He adores her, and in a crisis, he'd lay his life on the line to protect her.

Some psychologists would label Ben as sexist. Not in a chastizing, let's-problematize-everything sort of way, but in a technical sense: Ben is a benevolent sexist, a man who idealizes women, but in a way that positions them as dependent on men. This is the unstated subtext of many chivalrous attitudes. "Women shouldn't have to pay the bill (because men are better at that sort of thing)." Benevolent sexists like women the way most people like puppies and toddlers—adorable, fragile, not equal.

Sexist or not, research indicates women - on average - find men like Ben quite sexy.

For instance, a study of 156 young women had them rate the attractiveness of a hypothetical benevolent sexist profile against a non-sexist

profile; the benevolent sexist profile was scored 3.9 out of 5, and the non-sexist profile got 2.4 out of 5. Two similar studies of students found the same pattern: women rated benevolent sexist men as more likeable and more sexually attractive than non-sexist men. Sure, his schtick is a bit patronizing, but who doesn't like free dinner?

Carrot, meet stick: in the real world, benevolent sexists are usually also, often quietly, hostile sexists. Hostile sexism is the blatant variety we'd all recognize—these are the guys who think women are uniquely manipulative, or likely to lead men on for amusement. While associating such beliefs with guys like Ben may seem paradoxical at first—how could loving and hating women come in one package?—research indicates that, for instance, men who believe women should be provided for are also likely to believe that women are too easily offended (see the table below). And perhaps the association between hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs isn't surprising, as it has a shared foundation: that women are lesser than men. And so, when dating as a woman, the man who wants to pay the bill and hold the door is often also the man who will control you.

Many scholars believe that the correlation between BS and HS is part of how misogyny keeps itself upright, and some argue BS may, in fact, be more hazardous. It is benevolent sexism, not hostile sexism, that coaxes a woman into being an accomplice to a man's control of her life. She lets him pay for most things, sort out the taxes, the bills, and the budgeting, and, now, he's in charge of their finances. She lets him navigate all the tricky situations they face together until she's entirely

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Benevolent Sexism (BS)

“Women should be cherished and protected by men”

“Men should be willing to sacrifice to provide financially for the women in their lives”

“Many women have a special kind of purity that most men don’t”

“Every man should have a woman he adores”

Hostile Sexism (HS)

“Women are too easily offended”

“Most women interpret innocent remarks as being sexist”

“Many women get a kick out of teasing men sexually and then refusing their advances”

“Many women are actually seeking special favours, such as hiring policies that favour them over men, under the guise of asking for equality”

reliant on him for anything challenging. While it’s easy to think of hostile sexism as the “bad sexism” and benevolent sexism as the “good sexism,” benevolent sexism may pose the greater threat to women’s social mobility, as while the former is recognized and rejected, the latter is, typically, attractive and unnoticed. The treat in the mousetrap is what makes it dangerous to mice.

Further, while hostile sexism is fueled by a minority of men and met by the resistance of most women, benevolent sexism is often encouraged by women and resisted by men.

When I posted a video earlier this year describing benevolent sexism, many men critiqued the beliefs (one called the BS beliefs “simping”) whereas many women defended them. One woman commented, “That’s not benevolent sexism, that’s called being a real man.”

A small, common, real-world example of women endorsing benevolent sexism would be believing men should pay for dates. While we shouldn’t make mountains out of molehills—really, I don’t think this is such a big deal—expecting someone else to pay

your way is a small endorsement of one’s own inferiority. An extreme example of this can be seen in viral videos offering tutorials on how to get men to pay for more things, i.e., how to get the “princess treatment.” The irony is that while these women attempt to take advantage of men, they unwittingly support a dynamic that renders themselves liable to be taken advantage of. Many seek the princess treatment, and find themselves Rapunzel.

This isn’t an advice column (keep scrolling for that). Really, I wouldn’t consider writing it as one. How does one ask men not to pay the tab, when trying to go Dutch often means getting passed over? Or tell women to say no to chivalry, even if that’s what they find romantic? At Teach Us Consent, our goal is to arm individuals with information that enhances their agency. In this case, that means helping men be aware of the undermining effects “gentlemanly” behavior could have on women in their lives, and helping women make fully-informed decisions about who they partner up with. Indeed, many women are already aware that benevolent sexism and hostile sexism go together; it’s just that some think the carrot is worth the stick.



UNSOLICITED ADVICE



Written by Gemma Katsalidis,
public policy specialist and Teach
Us Consent team member based in
New York.

(Q)

The other day, a guy from my uni tute (who I'm somewhat friends with) showed me and a friend some AI-generated naked images he had made of a few girls in our year. He obviously found it so amusing but my mate and I were uncomfortable and told him it was cooked.

I believe he sourced the original photos from their Instagrams—he mentioned choosing the “hottest” girls in our year when creating them. I'm pretty sure the girls have no idea these images exist, and I don't know whether it's best to tell them or just try and shut it down privately? Some of my friends think it would be better if they didn't know, but I can't stop thinking about it. Also, is this even legal?

MAN, 29

(A)

Firstly, good on you for immediately recognising how wrong this is and calling it out. It's not always easy to do, even—or especially—when it's to a friend. Being exposed to graphic images and objectifying content without consent is incredibly confronting and distressing—importantly, it is also illegal. I would like to encourage you to trust your instincts in moments like this and it sounds to me that they're guiding you in the right direction.

Before we continue, I want to emphasize that what has happened here is not ok. What this person has done is a serious violation of the right to autonomy, privacy and consent of the girls involved.

It sounds like what you're dealing with is a form of non-consensual, sexualized deepfakes.

You've probably heard of deepfakes before—altered videos or images where someone's face is swapped onto another person's body, often using AI. While deepfakes aren't inherently harmful and were originally created for positive applications across medicine, education and architecture, they become dangerous when people use them to target and abuse others.

These days, “deepfake pornography” actually makes up 98% of all deepfake videos and 99% of people targeted by them are women.

Unfortunately, as digital technology evolves, this type of image-based abuse is becoming more common and widely shared. We've already seen a 550% increase in the number of sexualized deepfakes between the years 2019 and 2023.

While your friends may feel it's better not to tell the girls, staying silent enables this behavior. It's crucial to act quickly before these images are shared online—if they haven't been already. Their creation alone is harmful, but wider circulation would be even worse. Speaking up can help prevent further harm, as once something is online, it's very difficult, if not impossible, to completely erase them.

Now, to address your question more directly, here are some concrete steps you can take:

1) Prioritize the girls involved.

Even if these images aren't “real”, they are still incredibly harmful and fundamentally

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disrespectful. I ask you to consider how the girls might feel if they knew that these images were being shared behind their back. It might help to think of it like this— if the roles were reversed, it's very likely that you'd want someone to step in and help protect you.

2) Speak with an older friend with good morals.

A lot of the time it is most helpful to speak with another adult, or even a teacher, that you trust. I know this might feel a little intimidating at first, but they are likely better equipped to help guide you through the situation and to take the steps necessary to protect the girls involved going forward.

3) Talk to the guy who created the photos.

If you feel comfortable enough to do so, it might be worth speaking to him privately as well. I would recommend approaching it by explaining to him from your point of view why you feel that this is a serious issue and also how harmful it is to the girls involved. You'd be surprised by how often people don't realize the full extent of the damage they're causing until it's pointed out to them.

You might consider starting the conversation by saying something like: "Hey, the other day when you showed us those photos of [name the girls specifically to remind him of the real people involved] was really upsetting. I don't think you realize how confronting it was to see them and also how much damage it could do to the girls."

You could also ask open-ended questions like: "Have you thought about how this could affect the girls if they found out?". This type of question might help him reflect on his actions without making it feel like an attack.

4) Recognize that there might be legal implications.

Depending on where you live, creating non-consensual explicit deepfake images or videos of someone might be illegal, particularly if the people targeted are minors. Australia, the UK and several US States, for example, have all implemented various legal measures to tackle the issue.

5) Start (or continue) to have open conversations.

Talking about non-consensual sexualized deepfakes more openly can help foster conversations about consent, privacy and respect with the people around you. Now that you know the harms, and given it's an emerging form of digital abuse, you can help instigate these important conversations.

Thank you again for reaching out. Your situation shows that harm isn't just caused by anonymous people behind screens but often by those we know—classmates, colleagues, and peers. This pattern extends beyond deepfakes to most forms of sexual violence, where perpetrators are more likely to be known to victim-survivors than not. This is why it's especially critical to call out the people around us when they engage in abuse and other harmful behaviors.

Speaking up not only supports the girls affected but also challenges the culture that enables this behavior. The man who made these images saw them as a joke, and often the most insidious harms do begin as merely 'jokes.' It's our responsibility not to dismiss them.

By calling it out, we take a step toward preventing this harm in the first place and building a culture of accountability and respect.



From leaked nudes to explicit deepfakes: Dealing with image-based abuse.



This article was written by Julie Inman Grant, Australia's eSafety Commissioner.

Your generation is the first to truly experience love online. From connection and intimacy to heartbreak and loss, your love lives are playing out in spaces once only known by sci-fi fans. As you push through and shape this new romantic frontier, you're making up the rules of the (love) game that myself and most people over 30 find completely perplexing.

At the same time, you're also dealing with paradoxes as old as time. Like the fact that love, while powerful and magical, can also be frail and volatile. It can be resilient but also fickle. Hopeful and fearful. Generous and punitive.

So, let's admit you're up against forces most adults simply cannot fathom.

But there is something I do understand, and I do want to help you with: image-based abuse. It's also known as 'revenge porn' (more on that limiting, harmful label later) and it shows up in relationships when love tips from care into jealousy and 'retribution.'

Down to definitions: What's image-based abuse?

Image-based abuse is when intimate images or videos of you are shared without your consent.

It also includes threats to share this content. It not only covers sexual images and videos but content where you're partly naked, using the toilet or showering, or aren't wearing any religious clothing you'd normally be wearing when in public. It also includes intimate or explicit content that has been artificially generated (commonly known as 'deepfakes').

The person perpetrating the abuse might be motivated by several things. They might:

- Want to embarrass or upset you
- Boast and show off to friends.
- Not realise that they don't have the right to share your images without asking for your explicit consent first.

Another type of image-based abuse is financial sexual extortion. This is when someone tries to blackmail you over a nude or sexual image or video of you. They may demand money, cryptocurrency, gift cards, gaming credits, or more nudes or sexual content. This is usually done by criminals for financial gain.

Under Australian law, image-based abuse is illegal.

eSafety, as the online safety regulator, has powers to compel online companies to remove this content when it's reported to us. In 2023-2024, we requested removal from more than 947 locations across 191 platforms and services and successfully had 98% of material removed.

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Why ‘image-based abuse’ and not ‘revenge porn’?

Because the term is misleading and very harmful to the victim-survivor. It implies that the victim did something to deserve punishment, that the abuse is somehow justified, and that it’s about ‘porn’ rather than a violation of trust and consent.

Language shapes understanding and understanding shapes action. By using clear words, we can more accurately reflect the harm being done and the seriousness with which it must be addressed. We need to stop trivialising and victim-blaming.

How common is image-based abuse?

Between August 2018 and June 2023, we received almost 20,000 reports to our image-based abuse scheme, and every year we see a growing number of reports. But we know the number of Australians impacted is much greater. Shame and humiliation (even though misplaced!) are huge barriers to reporting and seeking help. Unfortunately, these feelings can be exacerbated by friends and peers who unfairly and wrongly blame the victim for allowing the abuse to happen by sharing the images in the first place.

We’re also seeing a rapid rise in sexual extortion. As part of our joint investigation with the Australian Institute of Criminology, we found more than 1 in 10 Australian adolescents had experienced sexual extortion. This abuse has largely been driven by offshore criminal networks who are targeting hundreds, if not thousands, of young people simultaneously, using well-worn scripts and finely-tuned tactics to lure their victims into sharing intimate material. Their MO is to pose as very sexual, attractive characters to manipulate their targets into sharing compromising

content that they can use against them, most commonly for money.

What do I do if an ex threatens to share or shares my nudes?

Before you do anything else, it’s a good idea to get emotional support from someone who really knows you and cares for you. Your trust has been violated, so it’s natural to be feeling distressed and vulnerable — and you shouldn’t go through this alone.

Next, work through these steps with your support person:

1. Collect evidence

It’s important to get proof of what’s happened so the intimate image or video can be removed. Take screenshots or recordings showing when and where it was shared. If it was shared on an app or in a game, which one? If it was on a site, what was the URL? What account usernames were involved?

2. Report it to us

You can make an image-based abuse report to us straight away. Our team is here to help you have the intimate images or videos removed quickly. If you’re concerned about your physical safety, contact your local police or call 000 if it’s an emergency.

3. Stop further contact, tighten security and prevent sharing

Stop all contact with the person who shared the intimate image or video. You can use in-app functions to ignore or mute them, but don’t block them until you’re advised to do so by eSafety or the police. You may need to collect more evidence first. It’s also a good idea to check your privacy settings to limit who can see your online information and contact you.

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4. Get more help

This is a distressing experience. Don't minimise what you're feeling and consider talking to a counsellor or support service that's right for you. There are also free, 24/7 helplines you can turn to for support. If you're 25 or younger, reach out to Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800. If you're 18 or older, you can call, text or chat with Lifeline.

What do I do if I'm being blackmailed by a criminal?

Again, it's important you don't face this alone. Always disclose and seek support from trusted friends or family.

Next, follow these steps:

1. Capture the evidence
2. Do stop all contact with the person blackmailing you.
3. Do not pay the blackmailer or give them more money or intimate content.
4. If you are under the age of 18, you are a victim of online child sexual exploitation and you can get help from accce.gov.au/report
5. If they share your intimate content, report it to eSafety.
6. Get more help: If you need additional emotional or mental health support, don't hesitate to reach out to Kids Helpline or Lifeline.

What can I do to protect myself from this abuse?

I want to reinforce that the abuse and the person doing the abuse are the problem. Not the act of sharing intimate images.

I also want to stress that it's never okay for anyone to pressure you into sharing a nude, even if you've sent them one before or they

sent you one (noting it's also never okay to send someone as un-asked for nude).

Notwithstanding that blame squarely sits with the perpetrator, it's important to understand that once you send a person intimate imagery - even if the trust is high today - it could end up in circulation or shared forever down the line. While we have the most comprehensive powers to support people affected by image-based abuse, the nature of the online world means no content is ever truly and completely erased.

I also strongly recommend only sending intimate images to people you've built a trusted relationship with and have met in person. Criminals are among the most adept at exploiting technology and all forms of sexual extortion will become more manipulative and sinister with deepfake technology.

It's also helpful to know what your boundaries are when it comes to being intimate online. Try to separate what you think you should be comfortable doing and what you actually want to do. You don't have to do anything that makes you uncomfortable, and neither do they.

These questions can help you set your relationship boundaries:

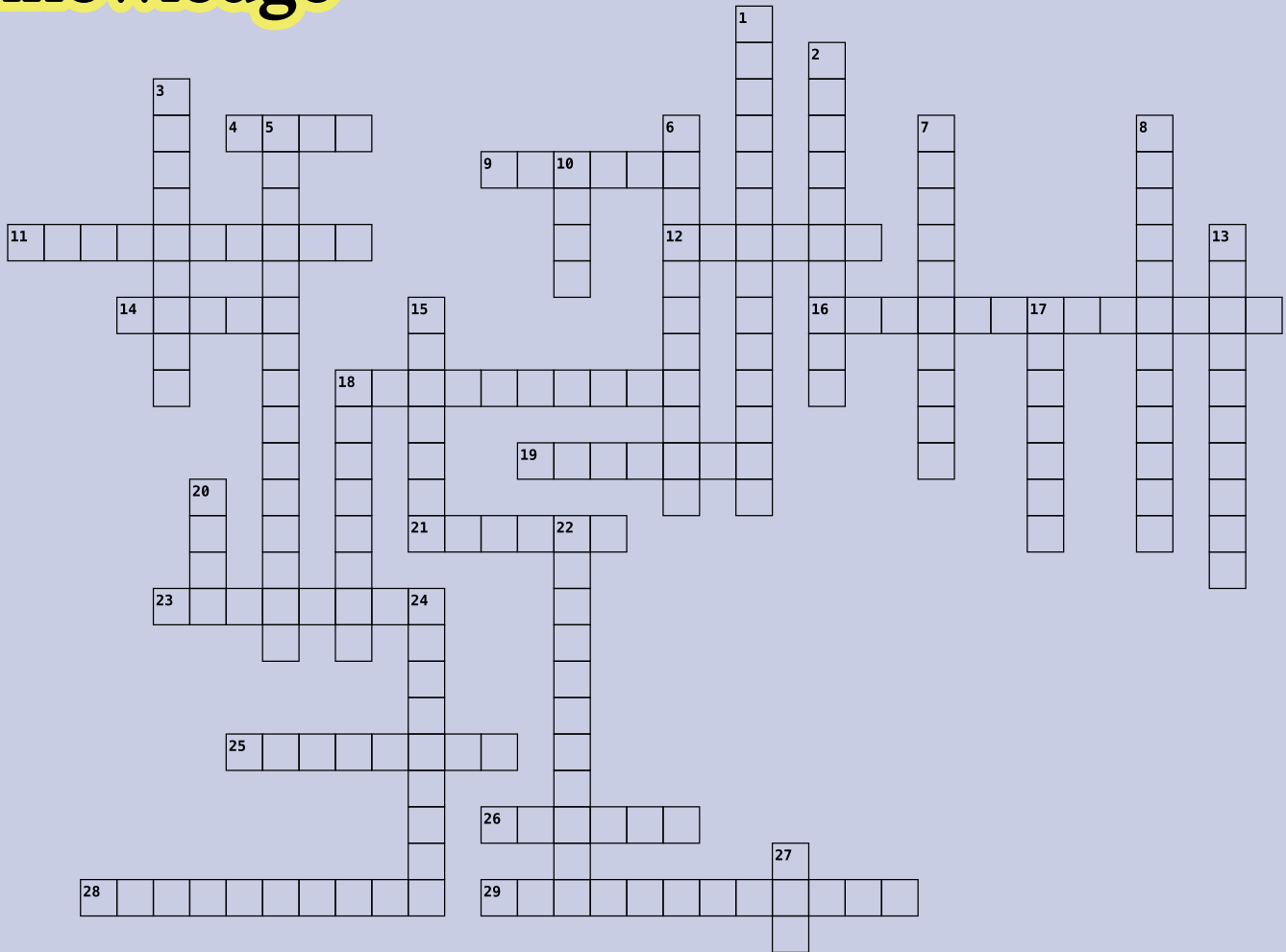
- What feels right for me?
- What do I feel comfortable doing?
- What do I feel comfortable sharing?
- What do I feel comfortable recording?
- Would I be comfortable with others seeing this imagery at a later date?

Remember, you can always adjust or change your boundaries depending on the person you are with, the circumstances and the type of intimate relationship you want.

And if you ever experience image-based abuse, our investigators are here to help you when you report it to [eSafety.gov.au/report](https://esafety.gov.au/report)



Test your consent knowledge



ACROSS

4. A \$97 billion global industry that shapes how many people learn about sex
9. You should never ____ consent
11. Persistent unwanted contact, messages, or comments online
12. Consent should always be ____
14. What we build when we respect boundaries and get consent
16. Consent can't be given if someone is ____
18. These decide what content we see online, often rewarding outrage over nuance
19. The foundation of all healthy relationships is ____
21. Ideas or rules that tell us how society expects us to behave and look, based on our sex
23. True consent is when everyone fully understands what they're agreeing to
25. Consent needs to be ____
26. Consent must be given ____
28. We need to be aware of power ____ in relationships
29. Consent should sound and feel ____

DOWN

1. Taking responsibility when harm has happened
2. These protect me and my needs
3. Consent can't be given if someone is feeling ____
5. When someone's value is reduced to their appearance or body parts
6. Modern consent culture focuses on ____, not "no means no"
7. This is a sign to pause and check in
8. We should pay attention to people's ____
10. You have the right to ____ at any time
13. Removing a condom without consent and a criminal offence in many states & territories
15. Consent is not a one time thing, it is ____
17. Still required, even in online spaces
18. Everyone deserves bodily ____
20. Fight, flight, freeze or ____
22. The opposite of consent is often rooted in ____
24. AI-generated videos that can violate consent by faking someone's likeness
27. The easiest way to know if someone's into it? Just ____



1 FEB 2023

Purity culture is dehumanising — it's consent that should be at the centre of sex education.

“If we are educating young people for the purpose of safety, our concern should not be if they are having sex but if they are doing so consensually”

By Chanel Contos, Teach Us Consent
Founder & CEO, for The Guardian

Many would have been surprised when an ABC Four Corners episode reported that for some schools in Australia, their form of sex education included placing a piece of sticky tape on different surfaces around the classroom. An inspection of the tape after the experiment concluded that it had picked up dirt along the way; and it was no longer able to “stick” or “bond” with anything (anyone) any more. The schools have denied teaching misinformation and said they complied with the New South Wales curriculum.

Unfortunately, I was not surprised hearing these allegations as I’ve heard the same before. It would be nice to believe these lessons were limited to the four schools under investigation, but also seriously ignorant.

On Tuesday someone shared with me another disturbing teaching method they had witnessed when they were volunteering at a retreat day. The “sex educator” glued a pink and a blue piece of paper together and then ripped the pink away from the blue. The pink paper was left with holes in it; and small pink pieces were stuck to the blue paper. With enough gluing and ripping, explained the instructor, the pink paper would shred entirely.

When we consider that these lessons are being taught to children in schools, how can we be surprised that teens see sex as something that is an accomplishment for a boy, and is an embarrassment for a girl? How can we be surprised that young boys rape their peers for the social status?

We may as well replace the term “notch on your belt” with “pink paper on your blue paper”. These harmful constructs frame sex as a shameful act for women and girls and places boys and men in the role of having to convince or hoodwink them.

This framework, endemic across cultures

and religions for thousands of years, is called purity culture. There may not be arts and crafts involved, but this discourse tends to permeate many Australian households, as we chant that “boys only want one thing” and that it’s a girl’s responsibility to not “give in”.

By positioning sex as a shameful act, purity culture ignores teenage girls’ own sexual desires and instead makes them pawns in a system seeking to “corrupt” them. It’s hard to shake this taught shame, and it often stays with a person throughout womanhood.

This is deeply problematic, and dangerous for women. On a basic level, it propagates the idea that a male’s pleasure should be centred during sex. On a deeper and more insidious level, it leaves girls exceptionally vulnerable to sexual assault.

*** By teaching girls that sex is always meant to be unpleasant and an act of capitulation, we make it harder for them to distinguish between consensual and non-consensual situations.**

Indeed, this idea of sex as capitulation is a fundamental of rape culture, in which sex is something that a man takes from a woman. This narrative was clear from the pink and blue paper exercise: if a boy can convince a girl to have sex with him, he is left with more, and she with less. All ideas of healthy intimacy and mutual respect are disregarded when we view sex in this way, and it dehumanises girls and women as we place the value on their existence by a measure of their “purity”.

Instead, consent should be at the centre of

teachings on sex. A recent survey in Australia found that 60% of students aged 14 to 18 are sexually active (defined by engaging in oral, vaginal or anal sex). If we are educating for the purpose of safety, then the central concern should not be whether students are engaging with sex at all, but rather whether they are practising consensual sex.

The current state of sexuality and consent education in Australia has meant that 40% of students aged 14-18 have experienced “unwanted sex”. This statistic is worthy of declaring a national crisis.

Ironically, not only is our current method of sex education unhelpful, but it is also actively making the problem worse. Regardless of an updated national curriculum on consent and respectful relationships, the reality of Australia’s sex education practices in classrooms uphold harmful ideas about sex. They too often promote a culture of shame that makes it even harder for affected students to come forward or seek help.

Countless people told me that the Teach Us Consent campaign, where I called for testimonies of sexual assault in Australian high schools, was the first time they had ever spoken about their experience of rape due to the embarrassment surrounding the experience.

If we are to fix the problem, we have to understand the truth at the centre of purity culture: In any community where sexual purity is an ideal, there will be fewer social repercussions for teenage boys who rape than for teenage girls who have consensual sexual interactions with different people.

Sex cannot continue to be a source of shame. Violations of consent should be.



Teach Us Consent was funded by the government to produce over 100 youth-led, evidence-based resources designed to get young people confident with consent, sex and respectful relationships.

In just four months, this engaging library reached over 6 million individuals and garnered 50 million impressions on social media. Explore vodcasts, articles, documentaries, short videos, posters & more printable resources at teachusconsent.com/resources.



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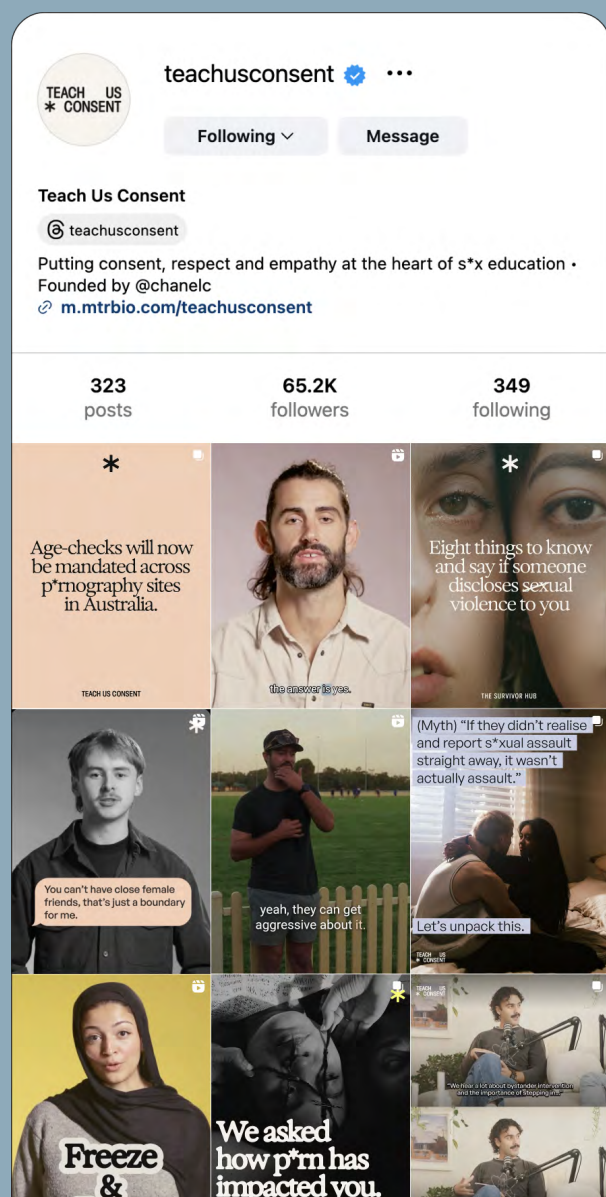
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