RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND CONSENT

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR FAMILY AND OTHER ADULTS

The adults in your life, especially your family members, will probably be with you for a long time.

Who are the safe adults in your life?

Sometimes it can feel like the adults in your life are hovering over you all the time. Sometimes you can feel left out and like they don't care. Sometimes you might enjoy your relationship with the adults in your life.

What do you enjoy about the adults in your life?

What do you not enjoy about the adults in your life?

Whoever it is you communicate best with, finding a way to share what you're thinking and how you are feeling is important. Sharing these feelings and thoughts with a safe, trusted adult can help you cope and work out the thoughts and feelings.

No one is a mind reader. One of the best ways to sort out conflict and emotions is talking it out: share your perspective, and listen to the other views involved!



Writing a letter can help you get your feelings out. Write a letter to your best friend, yourself, or an adult in your life. Sometimes it can help to put your thoughts and perspective down onto paper.

BUT WAIT! DON'T GIVE THEM THE LETTER YET!

Keep it to yourself for a few days, and reread it. Then decide if you want to share it with them. If you believe it's better to not share it with them - then destroy the letter!



If you think that they still need to know how you feel, then you might want to share the note or wait a few more days!

Families

Families go through challenging times. It's normal to feel lost, confused, angry, or frightened. It's normal to feel distant, and it's normal to think you're in the middle of it.

Talk with a safe and trusted adult, like your parents, guardian, or guidance counsellor. Ask questions to help you better understand the situation and allow you to just let it out.

Some families might experience times of violence. If you know or feel like someone is getting hurt, it's important to tell someone safe and that you trust.

REMEMBER: the safety of yourself and your family is important! Ask for help!

Kids Help Phone **You can always call the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868**

Friends

Friends are great to have around. You may be the kind of person who has a lot of friends, or you might enjoy the company of a few close ones. Whatever you prefer, we all want to live and share life with other people we get along with.



Hobbies might help you meet people. Knowing what you're passionate about and participating in those activities—be it music, reading, or sports—helps broaden your social networks.

Problems with friends

Relationships and friendships change over time, and sometimes problems come up between friends. Arguments can happen, and so can misunderstandings.



It's OK and normal to be angry or upset. Don't forget to communicate respectfully and disagree respectfully, with honesty.

You'd be surprised how kind words or an apology can mend broken relationships.



Despite your honest efforts, some arguments can't be sorted out. Even though it might be difficult, the best thing to do at that point is to let things go.

Love

Crushing on someone is special - falling in love can be a wonderful experience! There is a special bond and trust between people who are in love. As long as it's healthy, and boundaries are respected, dating can be wonderful!

READY FOR LOVE?

Answer some of these questions:

Do I feel comfortable making big decisions?

Am I able to ask questions that need to be asked and answered?

Am I a good listener? What makes me a good listener?

Can I communicate freely with people I trust? When was the last time I shared my feelings, and what happened?

Am I able to say 'no' when I need to say it?

Can I ask for what I really want? What are strategies that I can use if I feel anxious when asking?

Boundaries are important to develop a caring, healthy relationship. Before you start dating - have the confidence to say 'no,' or feel like you can ask for what you need. These boundaries and strengths are necessary to grow a loving, healthy relationship.

IN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP:

- You like and respect each other. You accept each other as you are.
- You trust each other. You are not jealous when you spend time apart. You don't control one another.
- You're there for each other. You support each other through good times and bad.
- You feel good when you're together. You're relaxed and comfortable. You can laugh and have fun. You're not worried about saying or doing the wrong thing.
- You can talk about anything, discuss your problems, concerns and secrets. You feel comfortable and listen to each other. You can be honest and say what you think, without each other getting mad.
- You can fight, but you can make up. You don't hurt each other, call names or flaws. You are respectful and can respectfully make up.



IN AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP:

- You feel scared, confused and insecure.
- Your partner constantly criticizes you and puts you down. They make you feel like you are not good enough; they put you down or make fun of you.
- Your partner is jealous and controlling. They do not want you to spend time with your friends or family. There is no trust, and you feel like you cannot make your own decisions.
- You never know where you stand. Your partner may be excellent one minute, then ignore you the next. They may lie or tell you one thing but do another. Your partner plays mind games.
- They pressure you into things you don't want. You're afraid your partner will get angry and leave you if you don't do what they say.
- There is a lot of yelling in your relationship. They may freak out when they disagree with you. You're scared of what they might do.

REMEMBER, RELATIONSHIPS START WITH YOU!

Suppose you find yourself in an unhealthy relationship. In that case, you still have the right and ability to make the best choices for yourself, even if it means letting them go. Always stay true to yourself.

Ready or not... for sex?

Sexuality is a normal and healthy part of life.

Sexuality is about your feelings and desires. It's about finding your own way to juggle feelings that are both confusing and exciting. Sexuality includes sexual feelings and the decisions you make about how you act on those feelings.

- Respect yourself
- Respect others

Protect yourself from emotional and physical harm like:

- ***Pressures to have sex***
- ***Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)***
- ***Unintended pregnancies***

IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT SEX, REMEMBER: YOUR CHOICES ARE YOUR OWN!

When you're ready to have sex, it's important to have learned how to practice safe sex. Learn more about birth control, sexually transmitted infections, and consent at: **breakthesilencens.ca/consent**. To get more information, you can check out Teen Talk - **teentalk.ca**.

- The Red Door: Youth Health and Support Centre - **www.thereddoor.ca**
- Find your local Sexual Health Centre: Sexual Health Nova Scotia - **www.shns.ca**
- Scarlet Teen - **www.scarleteen.com**

Sex can look different for different people. Everyone's desires and feelings are different. It's important to feel comfortable to have a conversation about your feelings and desires and discuss each other's boundaries respectfully.

South Shore Sexual Health has developed an amazing, truthful, factual guide for all the questions that you need answered. Check out Uncensored: The Gender Diverse Sexuality Handbook for Every Body here: **southshoresexualhealth.com/resources/uncensored**

If something happens 'against your will,' it means you did not agree to it - or you do not give consent. Consent means you are giving permission for something to happen.

REMEMBER: WHEN YOU OR SOMEONE SAYS 'NO,' IT MEANS NO, NO MATTER WHEN THEY SAY IT.

Consenting to one thing does not mean you consent to everything. It's important to respect boundaries.

You cannot consent to sex if you are:

- ***Drunk or high***
- ***Threatened or bullied***
- ***The other person is someone in a position of trust (like a teacher, coach, or babysitter)***
- ***The other person is a family member (like a relative, extended family, or foster family)***

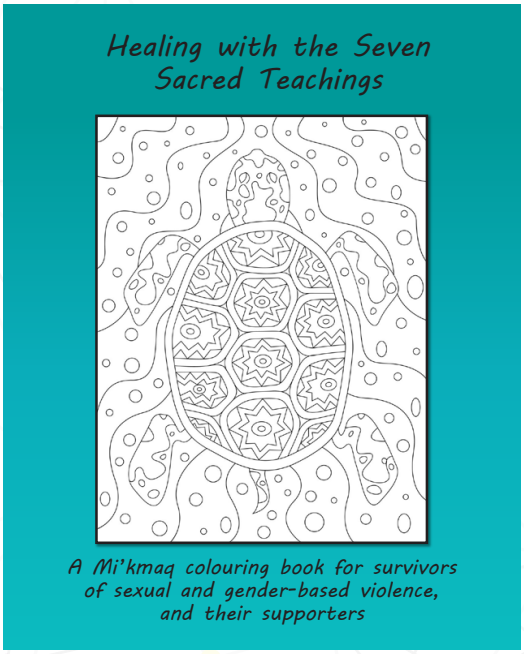
It doesn't matter if the person who assaulted you is your partner, someone you want to have sex with, someone you have had sex with before, or if they have attacked you before. If you do not or cannot give consent, it means that you may have been assaulted.

SEXUAL ASSAULT IS A CRIME.

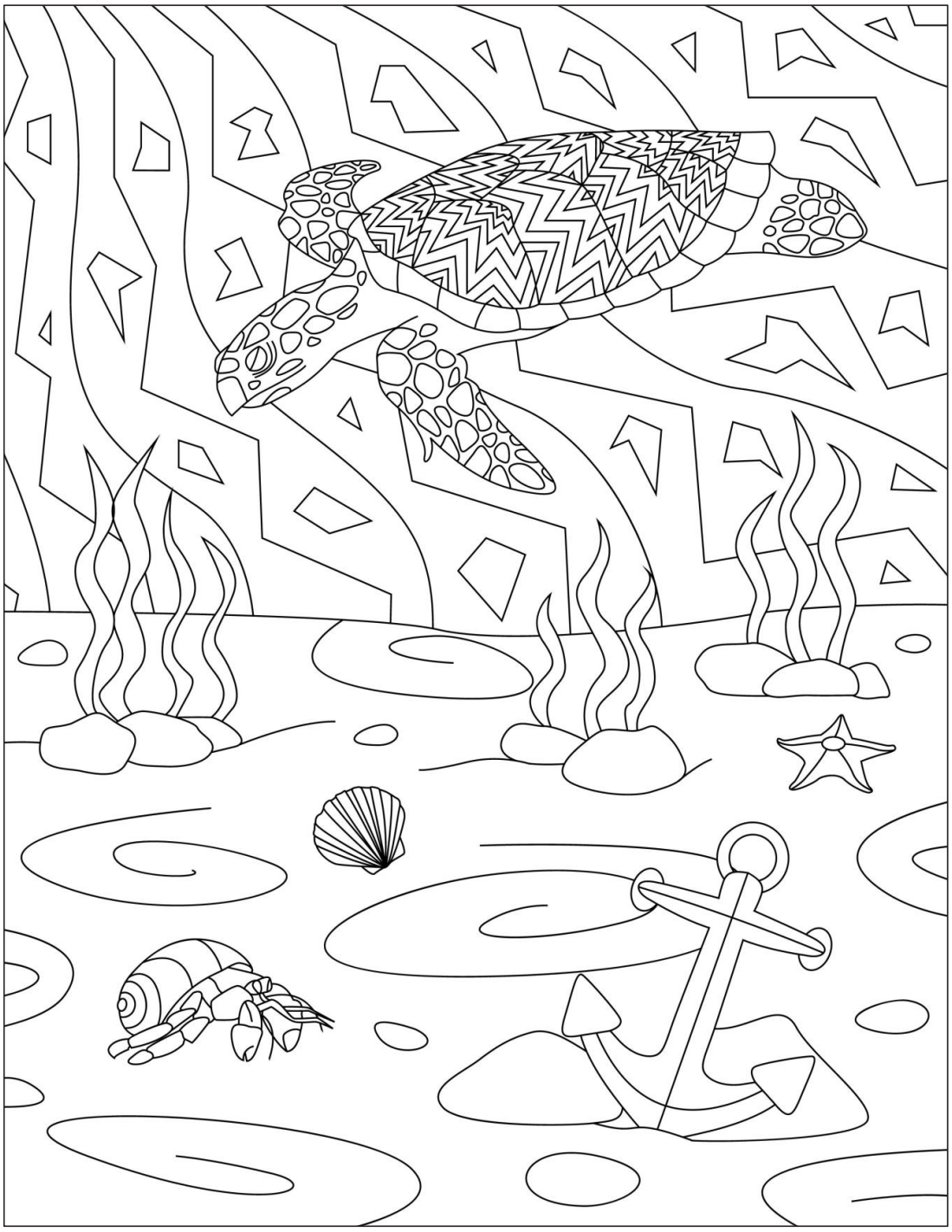
If you have been assaulted, there are people there to help:

- Avalon Sexual Assault Centre - **avaloncentre.ca**
- Colchester Sexual Assault Centre - **colchestersac.ca**
- Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association - **awrcsasa.ca**
- Kids Help Phone - **kidshelpphone.ca**
- Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia - **legalinfo.org**

Healing with the Seven Sacred Teachings is a Mi'kmaq colouring book for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and their supporters developed by the research team at **Break the Silence: Be the Change**. The seven sacred teachings form the focus of the book because of their value in teaching us how to respect ourselves and honour ourselves, as well as others.



For more info - **changethesilence.org**



TELIAQEWE'L - TRUTH

Kepme'kl Kina'maqn: Kaqis wesku'tes teliaqewe'l. Muk na'qatpeiasu ki'l aq ktikik.

Sacred teaching: Always speak the truth. Do not deceive yourself or others.

The truth I want others to hear is...

What is sexual identity/ sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation is who we are romantically, emotionally, or physically attracted to.

Sexual identity is a spectrum.

The following definitions are just broad descriptions of what these identities can be to people - but they may not fully describe you or your friends' identities.

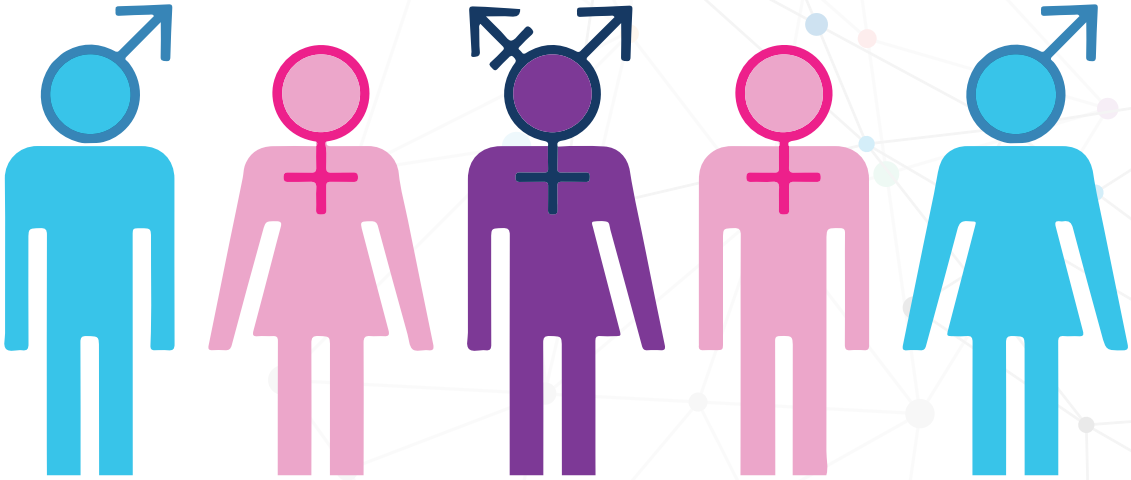
- **Asexual:** not experiencing sexual attraction. Asexual people can experience emotional attraction.
- **Aromantic**: does not desire stereotypical romantic actions.
- **Bisexual:** a person can be emotionally and physically attracted to both binary genders - man and woman. It is not always an even, 50/50 split. The attraction can also be experienced on a spectrum.
- **Gay:** gay has come to be considered as an interchangeable term for both lesbian and homosexual men. But generally, gay can mean that a person who identifies as a man is attracted to other self-identified men.
- **Lesbian**: identifies as a woman, and they are attracted to other self-identified women.

- **Pansexual:** attraction to all peoples - no matter the gender.
- **Polyamorous:** attracted to more than one person and may engage in a committed relationship with more than one person.
- **Queer**: someone is not straight - but feels that the terms lesbian, gay, or bisexual don't quite fit either.
- **Straight/Heterosexual:** attracted to the opposite gender.

....and there is more! Sexuality and romantic identities do not just stop there.

The Youth Project is a youth-led organization dedicated to supporting youth and their families around sexual orientation and gender identity issues throughout Nova Scotia. They provide a variety of programs and services designed to ensure that you feel supported in your identity. For more info, go to **www.youthproject.ns.ca**.

Remember, your identity and emotions can be fluid and may change as you grow!



NOTES