

The Scottish  
**Intervention Initiative**

**Facilitator Handbook**  
**SESSION 2:**  
**Healthy, Positive, Social Norms**

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With thanks to Rachel Fenton and Helen Mott for the development of the original  
*Intervention Initiative* materials upon which this is based.

## Good Facilitation & Discussion Tips for Facilitators- Recap

- Confidentiality
- Appropriate language
- Attendance
- Leaving the room

## Disclosure

- Acknowledge
- Listen, Believe, Reassure
- Inform

## Session 2 (2 of 8): Healthy, Positive, Social Norms

Objectives for this session:

- Identify that gender identities are socially constructed & culturally policed
- Understand that individuals can often be mistaken about others’ beliefs and values
- Recognise links between sexist attitudes, discriminatory practices & gender based violence

There are three essential points that facilitators need to keep in mind for the duration of this session, which covers “lad culture” and introduces male violence against women. These points will be covered in later sessions and are:

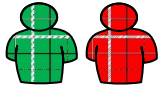
- Overwhelmingly, men are the perpetrators of sexual & domestic abuse against both female & male victims;
- The aetiology as well as the impact and harm of abusive behaviour are gendered – impact is experienced differently by victims;
- This programme is specifically to address sexual coercion and domestic abuse – it is not a general programme aimed at general antisocial behaviour. Therefore we must address problematic aspects of masculinity, sensitively.





### Session plan ONE HOUR to one and a half hours

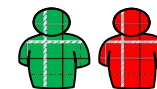
What you need to know as facilitator before the session begins	
Ensure volume is high for playing embedded video clips.	
Instructions & 5-10 mins for Empathy Exercise	

Resources you need for this session	
PowerPoint slides	
Internet connection for web links	
White board / flipchart	
Pens	
Handout: Pyramid of Sexual Violence	
Empathy Exercise: paper & pens	

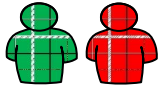





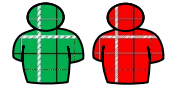
Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
Brief recap Ground rules	What we have covered in last session: bystanders, the psychology of bystanders, why domestic abuse and sexual violence is everybody’s problem. Ground rules.		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Slide 1 &amp; Slide 2</b></p> 
Understanding social norms	The first thing that we need to know is that most of us exhibit healthy and positive attitudes and behaviours around sex & relationships, most of the time. On this slide this is represented by the big green tartan person and these people represent the majority. Unfortunately there are some people – the wee red tartan person – whose behaviour is often completely unacceptable and has bad consequences. For example, an abuser. Most of these people will have views and attitudes that are negative towards women as well as behaviour that is unacceptable.	The next 7 slides are designed for visual impact rather than close scrutiny or debate. We will return to them later. Move through them quickly (1minper slide).	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Slide 3: Where we are</b></p> 
False consensus	We heard about ‘false consensus’ in the last session. This slide is a representation of how the world might look from the position of a ‘red’ person, a person who has problematic attitudes and behaviours – they are likely to believe that their behaviour is ‘normal’, majority behaviour - if nobody calls them on it & if is reinforced by cultural messages. Some might not care that their behaviour causes harm to others, but some might not even realise.		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Slide 4: False Consensus</b></p> 
Positivity	This slide shows the essence of what can be achieved when we actively set about changing harmful social norms. We need to arrive at a position where healthy, positive behaviour is recognised by everybody, including the red people, as the right behaviour. This is how successful public health campaigns work – think about drink driving for example and how socially unacceptable it is now. <b>ASK THE GROUP</b> What they would do if someone they were with tried to drive a car while drunk. Reflect on how this differs from social norms 30 years ago or in other countries or with other kinds of antisocial behaviour.		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Slide 5: Where We Need to Get to</b></p> 





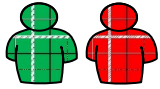
Focus/Activity	What to say	What you need to know as a facilitator –info only	Resources
Range of behaviours	This slide shows a range of behaviours, from healthy to violent and abusive. The arrow is two-sided because behaviours can move in either direction. It is possible to recognise and stop harassment before it becomes sexual assault. And if somebody is being a harasser but they stop when asked, their behaviour can become appropriate.	Ref: Joan Tabachnick’s Making A Difference NSRVC publication]	<p><b>Slide 6: Range of Behaviours</b></p> <p>The diagram shows a vertical double-headed arrow with five levels of behavior: 'Healthy, age-appropriate, mutually respectful, safe' at the top, followed by 'Mutually flirtatious, playful', 'Situation- or age-inappropriate or non-mutual', 'Harassment', and 'Sexually abusive &amp; violent' at the bottom. Logos for ECU and The Scottish Intervention Initiative are at the bottom.</p>
How do we help to change behaviour	So, the question is, how can we help to alter behaviour?		<p><b>Slide 7: How Can we Help Alter Behaviour?</b></p> <p>The diagram shows a red figure on the left and a green figure on the right, connected by a large purple question mark. A green arrow points from the red figure towards the green figure. Logos for ECU and The Scottish Intervention Initiative are at the bottom.</p>
Behaviour change	If we constantly reinforce messages about behaviour that is unacceptable, this puts considerable pressure on people to rethink their behaviour.	<i>(facilitators may want to ask for or give examples here)</i>	<p><b>Slide 8: Examples Of Green People Intervening</b></p> <p>The diagram shows several green figures surrounding a central red figure. Speech bubbles indicate interventions: 'That's not cool', 'That's not your business', 'You're making her uncomfortable', 'Don't touch her', and 'You're drunk'. Logos for ECU and The Scottish Intervention Initiative are at the bottom.</p>
	<p>We are now going to look at what is going on in student populations. Here’s an example of a personal experience from a recent report by the NUS.</p> <p><b>ASK THE GROUP</b> How would you feel if you were that woman? (Looking for: Scared, Embarrassed, Degraded, Humiliated, Angry, Upset, Powerless.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key point: frightened of escalation – see next column)</li> <li>• If someone says they would be flattered this can lead to a conversation about how responding positively could validate the behaviour – next time, the next person subjected to this could be terrified. And it is a criminal offence (sexual assault) to touch somebody in this way.</li> </ul>	Frightened of escalation e.g. escalation into gang rape. It is worth pointing this is not an unrealistic fear and it is one less likely to be felt by a male student in a similar situation if confronted by a group of female students.	<p><b>Slide 9: A student’s personal experience</b></p> <p>The text box contains a quote: "I was approached by a group of male students as I was walking out of my halls of residence and they were all shouting sexual things at me and then one of them approached me, grabbed me around the waist and then started to touch my breasts and bottom. He was saying things like 'you know you want this' and 'you know you're up for this'."</p> <p>Logos for ECU and The Scottish Intervention Initiative are at the bottom.</p>

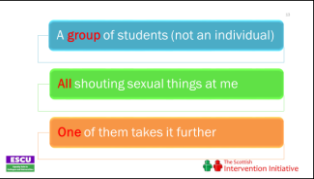



Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
Gender inequality / difference	<p><b>ASK THE GROUP</b> How do you think these men saw that woman?  <i>(Looking for: raise if not raised by the group:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>she doesn't count</i></li> <li>• <i>she's lesser – their enjoyment or bonding is at her expense</i></li> <li>• <i>degrading</i></li> <li>• <i>dehumanising</i></li> </ul> <p><i>objectified – she's not a real person)</i></p>	<p>Here, we are touching upon gender inequality – the behaviour of this group of men towards this woman is really only understandable in a cultural context where women are viewed as socially inferior or second class but this a difficult message to hear. Gauge your group's interest and resistance, remembering that the main aim of this programme is to develop bystander intervention action through fostering motivation not resistance.</p>	<p>(stay on same slide</p>
Empathy	<p><b>ASK THE GROUP</b> What might the consequences be for that woman?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>(Looking for: raise if not raised by the group:</i></li> <li>• <i>traumatised, negative impact on educational experience, not attending classes, failing course</i></li> <li>• <i>afraid of men in groups,</i></li> <li>• <i>afraid of men generally.</i></li> <li>• <i>lack of trust in men,</i></li> <li>• <i>fear of going out.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>she is a human being with feelings: not a doll, not an inanimate object!)</i></p>		<p>stay on same slide</p>
Empathy	<p>Why do we think that the group of male students behaved in this way? Were they thinking about the female student as a person? If not, why not? Would they be fine with someone behaving in the same way to a woman they care about?</p> <p>Perhaps they didn't empathise in a way that stopped them from behaving like this, because they may not have realised the impact that their behaviour was having.</p> <p>It is important for everyone to understand what the impact is of behaviour like this, because we want everyone to understand why an intervention in a situation like this can prevent so much harm.</p>		<p><b>Slide 10: Do You Empathise Slide</b></p> 

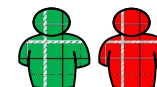




Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
Empathy	<p>These are some accounts from students’ own experiences in response to recent surveys.</p> <p><b>ASK THE GROUP</b> Are you surprised by them – or not?</p>		<p><b>Slide 11: “Impact” Slide</b></p> 
Empathy exercise	<p>We’re going to do something interactive now, to get everyone thinking and contributing to discussion.</p> <p><i>Follow the instructions in the <b>Victim Empathy Exercise</b> facilitator note</i></p>	<p>Make sure you have left time for this exercise – it is very powerful.</p>	<p>Facilitator note – Victim Empathy Exercise (one copy for facilitator only)</p> <p>Materials – 1 sheet of paper and a pen per participant (bin required afterwards for torn paper)</p>
Culture	<p>Now, let’s look again at the incident from the Hidden Marks Report. Going back to what we were learning about in terms of social influence, is there anything you notice about the incident and how it happened?</p> <p><i>(If you have time, discuss and draw out anything the group notices about the incident – but you may need to take a more directive approach depending on time)</i></p> <p><b>Looking for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A group of male students (not an individual)</li> <li>- All shouting sexual things at me</li> <li>- One of them takes it further</li> </ul>		<p><b>Slide 12: Personal Experience Slide (Again)</b></p> 

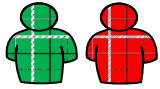




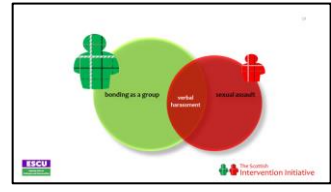
Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
	<p>Keep these three points in the back of your minds while we are looking at the next few slides.</p>	<p>We are using this as a way of introducing the concept of problematic male student behaviour in universities, sometimes described as ‘lad culture’.</p>	<p><b>Slide 13: A Group Of Students Slide</b></p> 
Lad Culture	<p>‘Lad culture’ in universities has been in the news a lot recently and the example of sexual assault we have just been thinking about might be thought about as an extreme example of ‘lad culture’ at work – we are going to have a look at what lad culture might be.</p>	<p>Be as positive as possible – recognise that this is a critical point where some men may disengage if they feel that ‘men’ are under attack in any way. Problematic masculinities are fundamental to the prevention of sexual and domestic abuse so they must be addressed but not at the expense of engagement. Most men will be horrified by the more extreme examples of lad culture.</p>	<p><b>Slide 14 &amp; 15: Lad Culture Slide</b></p> 
Exploring social identity	<p>‘Lad culture’ is group behaviour. In other words, this kind of behaviour is almost always ‘performed’ in the company of others who are members of what social psychologists call the in-group. Other kinds of in groups include supporters of a particular football team, members of a university faculty or a social club</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>(here, try to reference a social club or society in your institution that has male &amp; female members and a strong social identity).</i></li> <li>• Our social identity is very important to us and social norms are very powerful.</li> <li>• We all know it is difficult to change those gender types and it does not excuse behaviours. It is about thinking how this affects society and not just you.</li> </ul>	<p>The aim is to make it clear that we all have a number of identities (eg son, brother, male, Asian, Arsenal supporter, law student, piano player, lad) and not all of our identities are at play all the time. Being a lad is not a fixed identity – and the spectrum of ‘laddish’ behaviour encompasses a range of behaviours not all of which are by any means are problematic).</p>	

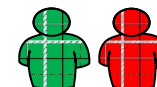




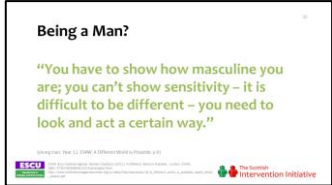


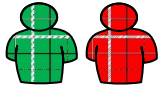
Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
	<p>Being a lad is not something that every man would identify with. For some men it’s a hat they might wear only on an occasional night out with certain friends, and for others they might build their friendship groups around the identity of being a lad. Most lads probably don’t behave laddishly in front of their gran. And what has given “lad culture” a particularly bad name is the subset of laddish behaviours that are perceived as threatening, aggressive or disrespectful of women.</p>	<p>The aim is to emphasise that there are plenty of positive aspects to masculinity. The Good Lad Clip explains this from the point of view of a student.</p> <p>Good Lad clip is at bottom of slide , click words “Oxford Good Lads Project)</p>	<p><b>Slide 16:Being a Lad slide and clip – (1:44 to 2:05 from the Good Lad video)</b></p> 
	<p>This visual aid is a reminder again that most male group behaviour (lad) is absolutely fine.</p>	<p>It is important that we continue to reinforce this point so as not to alienate or disengage men in the group – the aim is not to cause defensiveness in this group.</p> <p>Members of the group may raise the issue that there are problems with the ways young women behave in groups too when they go out drinking for example, &amp; this is true, but our focus for this programme is specifically sexual coercion &amp; domestic abuse which are related to problematic behaviour that is commonly associated with lad culture.</p> <p>In short, women might be violent but they are not commonly sexually violent or abusive – and if they are, the effects are different – relate back to the example of the fear of rape experienced by a young woman when groped. Remember the two fundamental differences – men are overwhelmingly perpetrators &amp; when women are perpetrators of low level abuse the impact is experienced differently by victims.</p>	<p><b>Slide 17: Green and Red</b></p> 

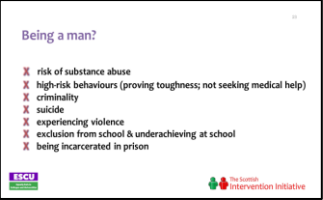



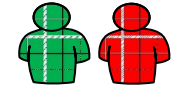
Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
	<p>Let’s watch this clip.</p> <p>Ask them – what is the point being made here?            (Looking for: majority of behaviour could be described as ‘harmless’ fun but some things are inappropriate. The message is sent by an intervention (not laughing) that rape is not a joke.</p>	<p>Make sure that you have the volume turned up enough so that the audience can hear the dialogue at the end of this clip</p>	<p><b>Slide 18: “We are Man” clip</b></p> 
<p>Attitude/behaviour links</p>	<p>Some of you will definitely be thinking now, “But a bit of banter never hurt anyone”, “making a rape joke doesn’t mean I am a rapist”.</p> <p>Let’s have a look at why we can’t ignore low level sexist humour. Something that is harmless as far as you are concerned may be more likely than you think to affect people’s behaviour in other situations.</p>	<p>This clip is from a documentary made by Kirsty Wark in 2013 and called “Blurred Lines” after the Robin Thicke song containing what are widely regarded as ‘rapey’ lyrics.</p>	
<p>Social influence</p>	<p>Let’s go back to our example of the student sexual harassment experience. In that example, a group of lads were all shouting “sexual things” at the woman student. In itself, this behaviour is wrong and potentially very traumatic for her. But from that context, one student went on to approach her and sexually assault her – which is a serious criminal offence. We need to ask whether we think the group behaviour validated the individual’s sense of entitlement and empowered him to sexually assault the woman student. Psychological research would suggest that it probably did. In this situation, it was a group of men who were using sexist and humiliating language. But we should note that women use this kind of language too, and are also responsible for perpetuating sexism.</p>		<p><b>Slide 19: Bonding as a Group</b></p> 

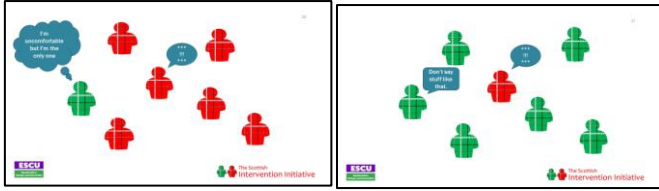



Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
	<p>This pyramid demonstrates how attitudes and beliefs can be the starting point for discriminatory behaviour and ultimately violence for some people. If we challenge people when they express problematic views, we can help change the culture that fosters violence and abuse. There is a handout describing this in more detail.</p>	<p>Familiarise yourself with the handout</p>	<p><b>Slide 20: Pyramid slide &amp; handout.</b></p> 
	<p>The attitudes and beliefs that are all around us in our culture about gender, sex differences and sex roles, are very strong. So are the expectations that are put on people to conform. Study after study has shown that in terms of our personalities as well as our intellectual abilities and the biology of our brains, there is much more variation <b>among</b> any group of men and <b>among any group</b> of women than there is between men and women. But traditional ideas about gender roles, as well as about sex and sexuality, are passed down in our culture and take effect from the minute we are born, resulting in pressure to identify with and behave as either a masculine or a feminine person.</p>	<p>Background reading for interested facilitators:                      Fine, C. (2010). <i>Delusions of Gender: How our minds, society and neurosexism create difference</i>. New York: WW Norton.                      Bem, S. L. (1993). <i>The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality</i>. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.</p>	<p><b>Slide 21: Men’s Health / Duchess of Cambridge</b></p> 
	<p>Research shows that norms are policed quite heavily in our society, literally from birth. For example, a classic study in the 1970s showed that if people were given babies to play with, they would play differently with them, offering different toys and responding differently to how the babies played, depending on whether they were told they were with a boy or girl baby.</p>	<p>E.g. Smith, C., &amp; Lloyd, B. (1978). Maternal behavior and perceived sex of infant: Revisited. <i>Child Development</i> 49(4), 1263-1265.</p>	<p><b>Slide 22: Being a Man EVAW quote</b></p> 



Focus/Activity	What to say	Facillitator –info only	Resources
	<p>While it is widely acknowledged that “ideal femininity” is a problem for women in many ways, the pressures of masculinity give boys and men a different set of problems and issues to contend with, here are a few of the ways that men are likely to have experiences what we are showing few of the ways in which men suffer disproportionately in our society. Taking on and internalising rigid ideas and gender role expectations can be harmful for men and for women alike.</p> <p>Remember that sometimes we think that the people around us have concerns or preoccupations that they don’t really have. Misperceptions about other people’s belief systems are common. Let’s look at women for a moment. Studies of college students have found that women students overestimate the percentage of their female peers who prefer thinness and who engage in unhealthy eating and/or dieting. Looking at this slide, women in the green circle don’t realise that most other women are in the green circle too, like them. Meanwhile women in the red circle believe that most people are as worried about being thin as they are.</p>		<p><b>Slide 23: Being a Man - Masculinity</b></p> 
	<p>Moving back into the realm of violence and abuse, let’s look at men’s misperceptions about other people’s beliefs. Most men don’t buy into myths about masculinity – but they are likely to believe that others do. This is important because these beliefs can stop people from stepping up and speaking out.</p>	<p>This is a very important point. Most men, who are upset by the extreme examples of ‘lad’ behaviour that we have shown, may think that they are alone. It is crucial to get across the very positive and empowering fact that they are likely to be in a majority.</p>	<p><b>Slide 24: Research shows</b></p> 



Focus/Activity	What to say	Facilitator –info only	Resources
	<p>Let's say the red person has made a comment that is not ok – maybe it's a sexist comment, maybe it's racist or homophobic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If nobody says anything, the red person is likely to believe that their behaviour is 'normal' and that others endorse it. Other people in the group might be worrying that they are unusual for not sharing the red person's beliefs. But if someone speaks up...</li> <li><i>(click to animate)</i></li> <li>We start to change the culture.</li> </ul>	<p>This is an animated slide – clicking to move on will replace the red group with predominantly green people.</p>	<p><b>Slide 25&amp;26: the only one</b> <b>Click to animate</b></p> 
	<p>Here are some examples of posters from campaigns in American colleges.</p>		<p><b>Slide 27</b></p> 
<p>Next time</p>	<p>In the next session we'll be looking more closely at some definitions and law around sexual offences.</p>		

<sup>1</sup> This exercise was adapted by the Intervention Initiative Team from Plante 2002 (reproduced in Banyard, V. L., Plante, E.G., & Moynihan, M. M. (2005) *Rape Prevention Through Bystander Education: Bringing a Broader Community Perspective to Sexual Violence Prevention*. University of New Hampshire). Downloaded 12/6/2014 from <http://cola.unh.edu/sites/cola.unh.edu/files/departments/Prevention%20Innovations/bystander/Rapepreventionthroughbystandereducation.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Myhill, A. & Allen, J. (2002). *Rape and sexual assault of women: the extent and nature of the problem. Findings from the British Crime Survey*. Home Office Research Study 237. London: Home Office. (p.37)

<sup>1</sup> Nina Burrowes' excellent guide for rape prosecutors describes some of the ways in which jury members, for example, may react to victims in court (pp.13-15). Burrowes, N. (2013). *Responding to the challenge of rape myths in court*. London: NB Research. [Online – last downloaded 8/10/2014] <http://www.nb-research.co.uk/index.php/projects-2>

## Victim/Survivor Empathy Exercise

Materials: Pens and Paper – one sheet per participant

### Instructions:

Ask each participant to tear a piece of paper into 4 strips & number them 1 to 4. Explain they will not have to share the info that they will be writing on the paper. On each strip ask them to write the following:

- 1. the person you trust the most**
- 2. a place where you feel the safest**
- 3. your favourite group activity, sport, club or similar**
- 4. a secret – something you have told nobody or only one or two others.** [If no secret, ask them to imagine one and write it down].

**1a)** Ask the participants to look at the first piece of paper. Ask them to share with you what they like about this person, what they enjoy, why they feel close to them. Write what they indicate on the board.

**1b)** Now ask them to tear up the piece of paper with the person's name written on it and throw the pieces away. Say: You can no longer talk or be with that person – she/he either blames you for your assault or you were assaulted by him/her. How do they feel now? Write their reactions on the board.

**2a)** Ask the participants to look at the second piece of paper. Ask them to share with you what they like about this place and why they feel safe there. Write what they indicate on the board.

**2b)** Now ask them to tear up the piece of paper with the place written on it and throw the pieces away. You no longer feel comfortable going to that place, you were assaulted there. (Cite statistics: 55% of rapes happen in victim/survivors' homes – rising to 75% of those raped by a current or previous partner<sup>1</sup>). How do they feel now? Write their reactions on the board.

**3a)** Ask the participants to look at the third piece of paper. Ask them to share with you what they like about this activity (or club, sport or similar); what they enjoy about it, etc. Write what they indicate on the board.

**3b)** Now ask them to tear up the piece of paper with the activity or club written on it and throw the pieces away. You can no longer take part in this activity; you might see your perpetrator there. How do they feel now? Write their reactions on the board.

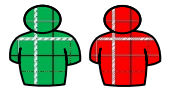
**4a)** Now ask the participants to look at the piece of paper with their secret. Why is it a secret? Why don't you want many people to know? Write their reactions on the board.

**4b)** Now take the piece of paper with the secret written on it. You can't tear it up or throw it away. You must keep it forever. Think about what people might say to you, or do, if they knew. Now think about telling a stranger, maybe a tutor, your family, your friends, a union representative. How do you feel now? What might you worry about if you were going to tell someone? Are there possible reactions you would be dreading? (*looking for blame; disbelief; dismissal*). Write their reactions on the board. Why might you worry that people could respond like this? (*looking for – people use denial or blame as a way of coping or not facing up to painful facts*<sup>ii</sup>) was their friend, partner, relative? What if it happened where they felt safe? What if they can no longer take part in social activities they used to enjoy?

**5)** Think about how a survivor might react after being assaulted. What if the person who assaulted them.

**6)** Consider the negative emotions; ask what might some of the consequences be for them socially, physically, academically, psychologically? What about taking the decision to share a secret – can we see how important it is to respond sensitively if someone tells us a secret? If a victim is a person of colour or a non-native speaker or gay/lesbian for example, how might these facts change the way they approach a police officer, rape crisis worker, or other service providers? What if the victim/survivor was assaulted by a member of the same sex – what issues might come up for them in reporting or disclosing to anyone?

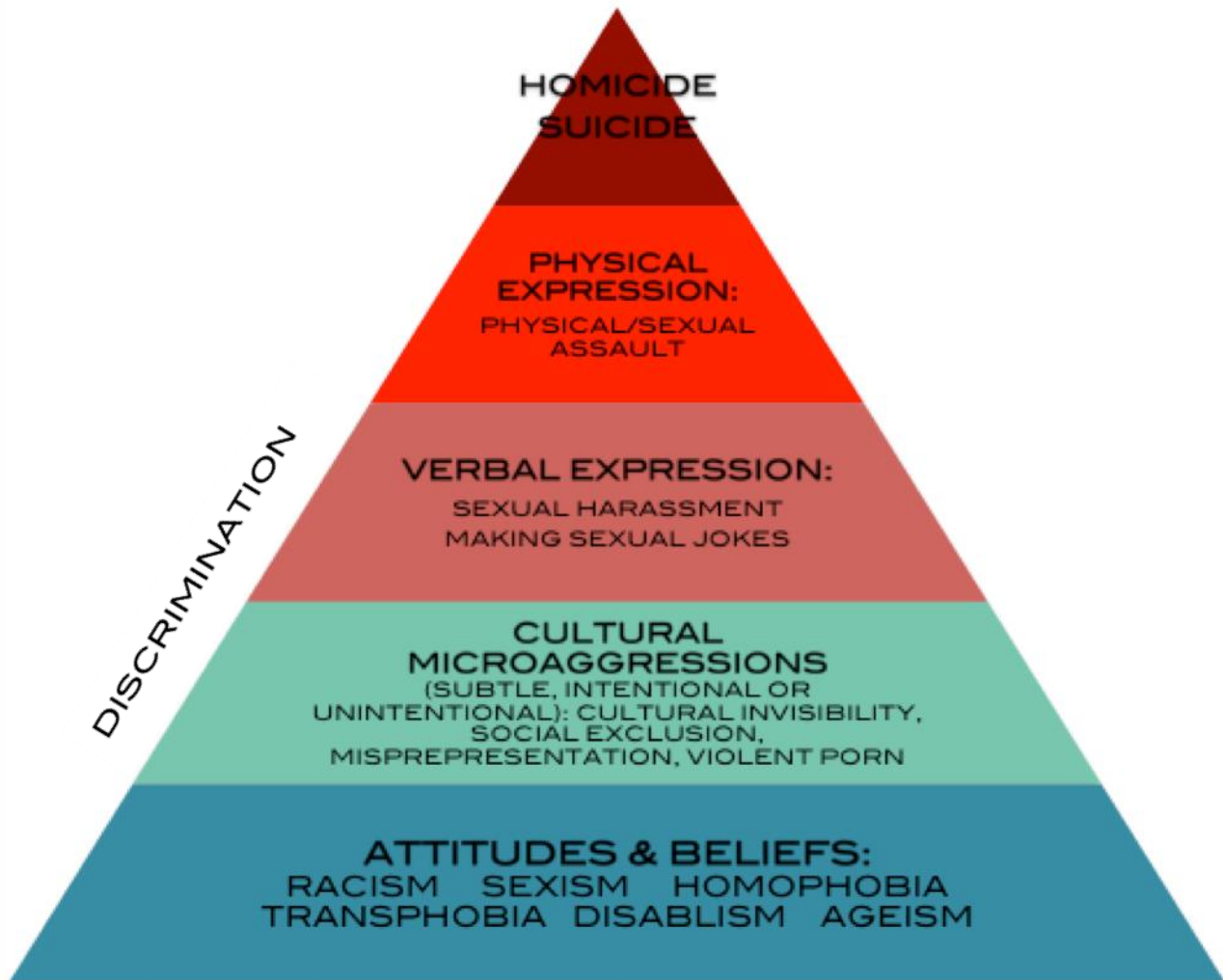
**7)** Debrief: this has been an exercise in putting ourselves in other people's shoes, reflecting on the significant changes that might happen in a person's life as they cope with the aftermath of being assaulted or abused. It has also been an exercise in thinking about how important it is to respond in a serious and supportive way if someone discloses a traumatic experience to us.

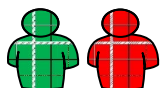


## Pyramid of Discrimination and Violence

In our culture sometimes both men and women can assume that sexual harassment or even sexual violence are a fact of life, inevitable as death or taxes. However, much of what we accept as inevitable is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can evolve.

This pyramid represents a continuum of abuse – the further up we go, the less socially acceptable the behaviours are. But we can't measure harm to a victim by what 'category' it falls into – apart from death, right at the top. Everyone's experience is different.





### Stage 1: Beliefs and attitudes

Sexual violence is not usually something that an offender simply chooses to commit impulsively out of the blue. Sexual violence, like other forms of violence directed at someone because of their identity, starts with established attitudes and beliefs about other people, whether or not those attitudes or beliefs make sense. These include prejudices such as racism, sexism, transphobia. As offenders cultivate these beliefs through exposure and repeated reinforcement by those around them, they strengthen their dogmatic belief that certain types of people are simply not equal to them, moving them up the pyramid.

### Stage 2: Microaggressions

Called 'microaggressions' not because they are insignificant (they aren't!) but because they are all around and normalised as part of our culture, these things represent the daily indignities experienced by people who have less power in society. For example a workplace that only has pictures of Caucasians – white people – on the walls, or a social situation where a group of able-bodied students have arranged to have a party at a place that is inaccessible to their friend who uses a wheelchair. In terms of sexist culture, in the UK people have been collecting and sharing their experiences via the [@everydaysexism](#) twitter feed and [site](#).

### Stage 3: Verbal expression

Soon, people with prejudiced attitudes begin verbally expressing these feelings of difference and superiority, testing the waters with jokes or stereotypical statements about others; even beginning to harass others, or boast about times they verbally or physically marginalised others.

Once this type of behaviour begins, it may remain at this level or there may be an internalisation of a grossly invalid sense of entitlement and offenders begin to normalise the dehumanisation of others – they actually begin to treat others as less than human.

### Stage 4: Physical expression

This is where sexual violence happens. As offenders move up through the pyramid, they feed off the power they have gained. This is where a sense of sexual entitlement can begin to manifest itself as sexual violence.

Offenders believe that it is their right and within their power to use sex as a means to control the individuals they do not see as equals. They can often justify the pain they inflict on others because they believe the victim/survivor has done something to deserve the assault. They do not feel responsible for the crime they've committed, and they may not even recognise their actions as an assault.

### Making a Change

Unless the beliefs and attitudes of offenders are challenged early on (it is most effective to address them at the initial stages), it is very difficult to change this type of patterned behaviour. Still, it's extremely important to take a stand against the behaviours at any level of the pyramid.

It all starts with [challenging the attitudes and beliefs of our peers and social groups](#).

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