



CREATING SAFE SPACES

# Sexual Violence against adults from stigma, shame and blame to healing and accountability

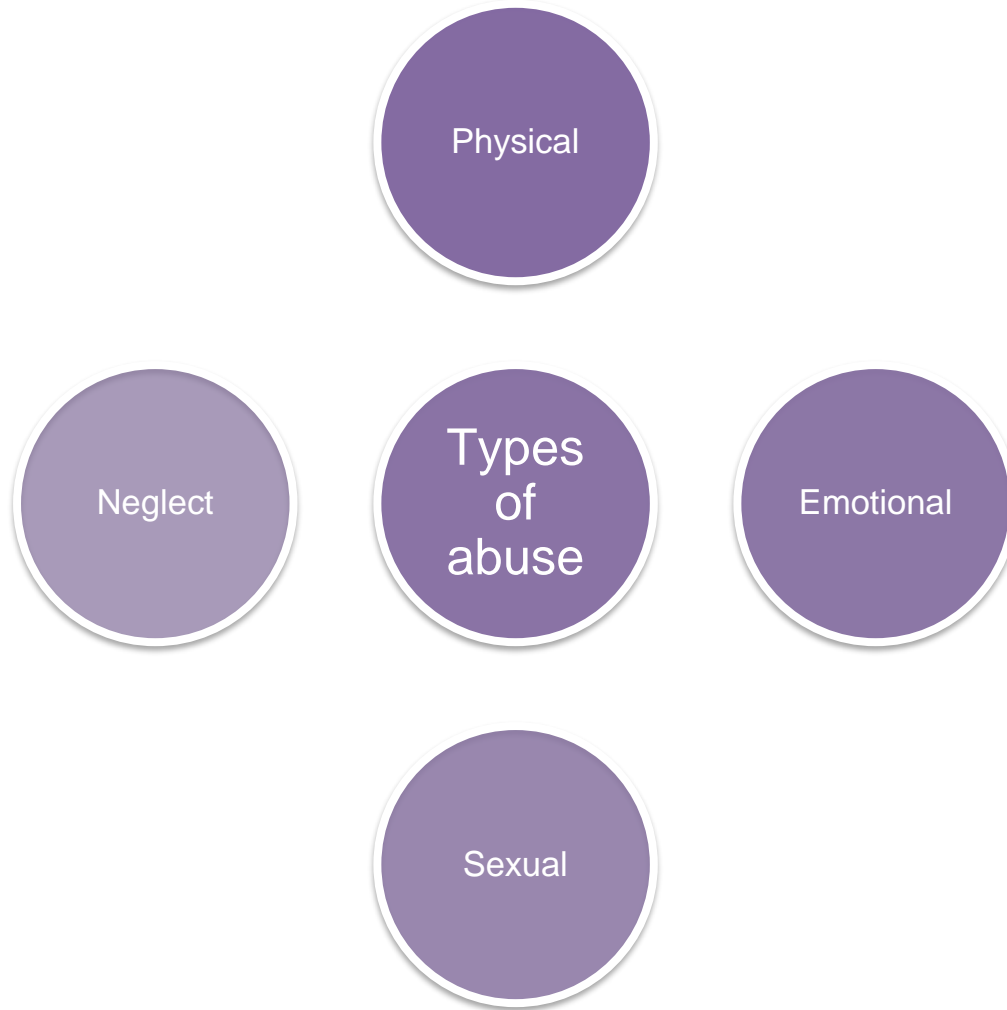


# Establish class values



- We will be talking about sexuality, gender, pleasure, abuse and safety in these sessions. What will make this class a safe space for everyone to share, express their views and discuss freely?
- How do we want others to behave?
- How will we behave?

# Types of Abuse



# What is Sexual Violence?



- At homes, public spaces, professional spaces, digital spaces
- Includes marital rape, intimate partner violence, sexual violence by non-partners, violence used as a weapon of war, forced or early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced sex trafficking etc.
- Many cases still go unreported.
- But no clarity on any formal definition of Sexual Violence due to its complexity – legal, medical, forensic, social, concept of consent

# Causes of Sexual Violence



- Association with moral ideas like honor, virtue, character and purity, the loss or violation of which would be 'dehumanizing'.
  - For example, in case of Dalit women, sexual humiliation is used as a tool by upper caste perpetrators to affirm dominance and control.
- Institutionalized power (privilege, marginalization) and patriarchy
- Lack of awareness around the concept of consent.
- Enforced culture of silence due to feelings of stigma and shame, justifying a 'compromising' approach.
- Crippled justice system : Under-reportage of cases; Revictimization by socio-medico-legal systems;

# Consent



- There exists many misconceptions and a lack of awareness around the idea of consent.
- Consent is a voluntary agreement by the person to participate in a specific sexual act.
- Consent once given can be taken back at any time if the person feels uncomfortable.
- It has been portrayed wrongly in movies and films, where a woman's 'no' is perceived as her being coy and actually meaning yes.

# Impact on Victims



- Social ostracization
- Loss of employment
- Mental health issues (trauma, depression, self-hatred, perpetual fear)
- At times, death

- Journey to Justice : Much more than effective redressal mechanisms. Focus on survivors' voices to replace narratives – shame-based with ameliorative; 'harm to survivor' with 'crime by perpetrator'
- Rehabilitative services : Accessible care, counselling, holistic therapy, support group initiatives, community involvement



- Demonstrate empathetic communication
  - Believe and support the survivor's description of the assault and ask questions at an appropriate time without appearing to doubt narrative
  - Establish trust and rapport over time and multiple interactions
  - Make eye contact in a non-judgmental caring manner
  - Use active, empathetic and reflective listening without rushing through conversations
  - Express concern and not curiosity
- WHO's 'Guidelines for medico-legal care for victims of sexual violence' contain responses by counsellors to specific 'feelings' expressed by survivors.

# Supporting Survivors (Contd)



- Maintenance of protocol and ethical practices
  - Maintain confidentiality, dignity and privacy
  - Ensure the survivor does not have to re-narrate and hence re-experience the trauma unless absolutely required, such as in legal processes
  - Refer the survivor to a sensitive mental health professional

# Eradicating Sexual Violence



- Focus on cultivating culture of responsibility and accountability
  - Learning the necessary skills to respond to violence
  - Community's recognition of its role in perpetuating a culture of violence
- Restorative and Transformative Justice over Punitive and Retributive Justice
  - Provides perpetrators the opportunity to recognize impact of their actions and harm caused rather than go through punishment with grudge and vengeance
- Structural changes in the legal system
  - Setting up effective survivor and witness protection programs
  - Increasing police accountability

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**Thank You!**

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