



**Australian
Human Rights
Commission**

everyone, everywhere, everyday



**Human rights
education resources
for teachers**



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Tackling sexual harassment

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Human rights
education resources
for teachers

Subjects: Civics and Citizenship,
Personal Development/Health/Physical Education

Level: Year 9 and up (14 years and up)

Time needed: 1–4 lessons

Introduction

Sexual harassment is a significant issue in the Australian community. Despite there being laws against it for the past 25 years, it continues to occur in workplaces and schools.

Sexual harassment in the workplace often includes a significant physical element, such as unwanted touching. In schools, a lot of sexual harassment is based on verbal taunts and teasing.

Addressing sexual harassment is, therefore, an important human rights issue. Each person has basic human rights, including the right to be free from harassment. If these rights are not respected then a person can feel degraded.

While everyone has the right to be free from harassment and intimidation, we also have a responsibility to ensure that we treat others in a way that we would expect to be treated. This idea of mutual respect is central to maintaining strong, healthy communities.

Each state and territory education department has strong policies on sexual harassment, as well as other forms of harassment and bullying.

This resource is designed to support these policies and to engage students in an active examination of sexual harassment; its causes, effects and strategies to address it.

By understanding their rights and responsibilities, students can work together to identify and address sexual harassment in their school – whether it happens to them or if they see it happening to another student.

Aim

The activities in this resource will help students to:

- raise their awareness of human rights issues
- develop their decision making skills
- enable them to find informed and practicable solutions to the issues raised
- apply their knowledge and understanding of this issue to their school community.

They can be photocopied for class use and used individually or as an entire resource.

Learning outcomes

Through this resource, it is hoped that students will:

- discuss issues of gender and stereotypes and how this can lead to harassment
- understand key aspects of the law about sexual harassment
- identify a range of rights and responsibilities within a school setting
- apply human rights principles to their own life experiences
- develop cooperative learning skills and decision-making skills.

Activities/resources

- Activity sheet: Sexual harassment – true or false?
- Activity sheet: Comments in the schoolyard
- Resource sheet: What is sexual harassment?
- Activity sheet: What is sexual harassment?
- Resource sheet: What's so wrong about sexual harassment?
- Script: Tackling sexual harassment
- DVD: Tackling sexual harassment (8 minutes)
- Activity sheet: DVD discussion guide
- Activity sheet: Character cards
- Activity sheet: Thinking about your own school
- Resource sheet: Developing a sexual harassment policy for your school

Teaching strategies

1. Introducing the concept

- Activity sheet: Sexual harassment – true or false?

Ask students to work individually and complete the quiz included on the activity sheet *Sexual harassment – true or false?* Teachers may also wish to ask students to work in small groups to brainstorm what sexual harassment means. Note that answers are available on the following page – teachers may wish to wait until later in the lesson to discuss the answers.

A classroom discussion should be used to follow-up on the issues raised in the quiz. The discussion should focus around the following four key questions:

- What is sexual harassment?
- Why do some people behave in this way?
- Why is it a problem?
- How can it be addressed?

2. Hypothesising about sexual harassment

- Activity sheet: Comments in the schoolyard

Students are given a series of hypothetical scenarios to examine, which could occur at their school. Students have to decide whether each of the scenarios is an example of sexual harassment and why/why not. In answering each question, ensure that students discuss further the concept of sexual harassment and begin to develop a more detailed definition. Discussion should also continue to focus on why some people behave the way they do.

3. Defining and understanding sexual harassment

- Resource sheet: What is sexual harassment?
- Activity sheet: What is sexual harassment?
- Resource sheet: What's so wrong about sexual harassment?

Students now look at the legal definition of sexual harassment using resource and *activity sheet What is sexual harassment?* to examine the scenarios.

Organise the class into small groups and then ask each group to apply the sexual harassment definition and flow chart to one of the scenarios in the activity sheet. Each small group reports back to the class about why their scenario was/was not an example of sexual harassment.

Ask students to re-consider the answers to the *activity sheet Sexual harassment – true or false?* after reading through the legal definition of sexual harassment.

In order to clarify why sexual harassment is an important issue, students work in groups to examine the *resource sheet What's so wrong about sexual harassment?*, which includes useful information on how sexual harassment and bullying can affect individuals.

To conclude this activity, ask each group to report back to the class on their discussion, identifying one main idea statement that summarises their conclusions about 'what is so wrong about sexual harassment'.

4. Applying knowledge and understanding

- Script: Tackling sexual harassment
- Activity sheet: DVD discussion guide
- Multimedia resource: DVD (8 minutes)

The DVD, *Tackling sexual harassment*, is set in a 'typical' high school and follows a student making a video project about whether or not sexual harassment exists in her school. She records a range of different scenarios. The final scenario features a variety of possible strategies to respond to an incident of sexual harassment.

A text version of the script may be used as an additional resource, or where the *Tackling sexual harassment* DVD is unavailable. Teachers may also wish to use this resource as a starting point for some role-playing activities.

As students watch the DVD, they complete the activity sheet *DVD discussion guide*, which helps them to identify and explore the issues being raised.

5. Evaluating strategies to address sexual harassment

- Activity sheet: DVD discussion guide
- Activity sheet: Character cards
- Script: Tackling sexual harassment

Organise students into small groups. The task of each group is to select one of the situations that they have seen in the *Tackling sexual harassment* DVD and agree on the best strategies to deal with that situation.

Provide each group with a set of character cards, cut so they can be shuffled like a deck of cards. The script may also be useful here to assist students to clearly identify the issues in each of the scenes they have watched.

Students consider each of the scenes they watched in the DVD and design a strategy to address the issues involved using the notes they made.

After discussing the different options, each student in the group draws one of the character cards from the pack and decides if this strategy would be appropriate for this person. They replace their character cards and draw a new one for each new strategy that they discuss.

This process helps students to see beyond their own reactions and to demonstrate that different strategies will suit different people. When the group has examined each scene, they could select a scene to prepare for presentation to their classmates in the following role-play activity.

6. Presenting conclusions

Time permitting; each group role plays the situation they have chosen to reflect the solution they think would be most appropriate.

Students should be given time to work with their groups to prepare their performance. Teachers should encourage students to be creative, using minimal props and basic furniture as their setting.

After each presentation, the whole class should discuss the solution proposed by each group.

During this activity, teachers may need to provide some guidance to students on the boundaries that they should respect when creating their performance. It may be helpful to identify the types of action that is appropriate, making clear that while the presentations can be light-hearted and entertaining, they should not 'cross the line' and engage in actual sexual harassment or any other form of discrimination.

7. Thinking about your own school

- Activity sheet: Thinking about your own school

Students work in small groups to undertake a survey to see whether or not any problems with sexual harassment exist in their school

A collection of survey questions are included in the activity sheet *Thinking about sexual harassment at your own school* to assist students in making a useful assessment of the kinds of behaviour that is common within their own school community.

If students do identify potential problems or examples, discuss with them the avenues that are available for students to resolve the problem. For instance, does the school have a policy about sexual harassment? What is in that policy? How is the policy implemented? Are there other strategies that might help?

Teachers should encourage students to discuss the results of their survey in the context of the information they have gathered about the law and sexual harassment in previous stages.

8. Applying your findings

- Resource sheet: Developing a sexual harassment policy for your school

Following on from the discussion in the previous stage, students could develop strategies that could be implemented in their school to improve understanding within the rest of the school about sexual harassment and effective strategies for dealing with it.

This could include:

- developing or updating and revising the school's sexual harassment policy
- publicising the issue (or the policy) through a poster campaign in the school or via the school newsletter
- raising the issue at a school assembly
- involving the Student Representative Council (SRC) in running a peer education program on the issue for younger students.

The resource sheet *Developing a sexual harassment policy for your school* provides useful information on school sexual harassment policies which can be used as a starting point for students in developing their own policies.

Sexual harassment – true or false?

Activity sheet

Throughout this topic you are asked to be an expert on your school culture – to explore the issue of sexual harassment at your school.

But first, let's see what you know and think about sexual harassment. See how you go with the quiz below.

Your answers are private and confidential and do not need to be shared with anyone. Be prepared to answer honestly and say what you believe – not what others expect you to say.

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Sexual harassment is really just a form of teasing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Sending an SMS to a friend that spreads false stories about another person's sex life is OK.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Sexual harassment is against the law.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	If a person likes the sexual attention you give them, it is not sexual harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	If a student is being sexually harassed by an adult at school there is nothing that can be done about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If a student is being sexually harassed at school there needs to be a witness for it to be investigated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Schools have a legal responsibility to deal with sexual harassment in the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	If a person has accepted the sexual attentions of someone in the past, they cannot complain about sexual harassment by that person in the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	A person can only complain about sexual harassment where a reasonable person would anticipate that the behavior would make someone feel humiliated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Girls sometimes harass boys sexually.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Sexual harassment has to be between people of different sexes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	If a girl wears revealing clothing she cannot then complain about being sexually harassed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Writing true comments about a person in a toilet cannot be sexual harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	If a person is only joking and does not intend to harm or distress another person it cannot be called sexual harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Sexual harassment can make the person being harassed feel intimidated and humiliated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	Statement	True	False
16.	Boys are sexually harassed as often as girls are.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Sexual harassment is a form of flattery.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	It's OK to ask a person for sex as long as you accept their answer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Sexually explicit jokes can be sexual harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Rude gestures are not sexual harassment, you have to actually touch or say something to another person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Teachers can be sexually harassed by students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Saying to someone 'You're a queer and I hope you get AIDS' is a form of sexual harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	Sexual harassment is not really serious – it's just a bit of fun.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	Looks are OK, as long as you do not touch another person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	The best way of stopping sexual harassment is to ignore it and it will go away.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sexual harassment – true or false?

(Answers)

Activity sheet

Compare your true or false answers from the Resource sheet: *What is sexual harassment?*

#	True or False	Comments
1.	False	Sexual harassment can be very hurtful and have long-lasting effects on people. It is also against the law.
2.	False	Sexual harassment includes sending inappropriate text messages that will offend or humiliate another person even if they don't see it.
3.	True	Sexual harassment is against the law under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and legislation in every Australian state and territory.
4.	True	Sexual harassment is not about mutual attraction and friendship.
5.	False	Sexual harassment by an adult at school is against the law. You can have the issue dealt with under a school policy or by making a complaint to the Commission.
6.	False	Sexual harassment does not need to be witnessed for a complaint to be made and taken seriously.
7.	True	The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act covers sexual harassment in 'educational institutions'. This means that schools have a duty to ensure sexual harassment doesn't occur.
8.	False	Sexual harassment is any sexual attention that is unwanted. Just because someone accepted this sort of attention in the past doesn't mean that it's ok now.
9.	True	Sexual harassment occurs when it could be reasonably expected that such attention would make a person feel uncomfortable, humiliated or intimidated.
10.	True	Girls can sexually harass boys. Although this doesn't happen as often as boys harassing girls.
11.	False	Girls can sexually harass girls and boys can sexually harass boys.
12.	False	The responsibility to avoid sexual harassment is on the person doing the harassing. You cannot use the way a person dresses as an excuse for harassing them.
13.	False	Sexual harassment includes sexual comments or graffiti that offend or humiliate another person.
14.	False	Sexual harassment is based on the effect it has on the person being harassed, not the intentions of the harasser.

#	True or False	Comments
15.	True	Sexual harassment can have a very serious effect on people, including humiliation and intimidation.
16.	False	Complaints received by the Commission show that 95% of people who are harassed are female.
17.	False	Sexual harassment is not about flattery. It's happens when someone 'crosses the line'.
18.	False	Depending on how it's said, requests for sex can be a form of harassment.
19.	True	Sexually explicit jokes, either told or sent by email, are a form of harassment.
20.	False	Sexual harassment is more than touching. It includes explicit gestures, comments, staring or leering and intrusive questions about a person's private life.
21.	True	Adult students can be liable for sexual harassment against their teachers.
22.	True	This could be a form of sexual harassment. However, it would be covered by laws in every Australian state and territory that protect people from homophobic behaviour.
23.	False	Sexual harassment can have serious effects on people, like making them avoid certain places and classes or drop out of school entirely. It is also against the law.
24.	False	There is no one 'right' way to deal with harassment. However, there are probably more constructive ways to deal with harassment than trying to ignore it.
25.	False	Sexual harassment includes staring or leering that makes another person feel uncomfortable and intimidated.

Let's start thinking about your school. Imagine that you heard the comments and saw the incidents on the next page. Would they be examples of 'sexual harassment'?

Comments in the schoolyard

Activity sheet

#	Is this an example of sexual harassment?	Yes	No	Don't know
1.	"What they'd do was get a ruler and try to stick it up your skirt. They'd do it all the time. It was so bad that I was begging the teachers to let me go to another class."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	"I was sitting in the classroom and this boy walked behind me and shouted right in my ear: 'UGLY'. Then he kept on walking. I was so shocked. I left the room, I couldn't cope. At that age you're going through a vulnerable period – so that just crushed me."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	A girl approaches a group of girls. They turn away and ignore her, and exclude her from their group, saying "We don't want a lezzo like you with us".	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	A boy calls a girl over to his locker. He shows her a picture of a naked woman. The girl looks and then walks quickly away.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	A boy and a girl are hugging each other. She laughs and tells him that he's only after one thing. He laughs, pulls her closer and kisses her. It is clear that they like each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	A boy bumps into a girl and then brushes against her front, but it seems to be deliberate because he's done it to her before. She reacts sharply and pushes him away. He laughs and says, "It was only an accident"!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	"Look, we have this teacher and he doesn't really do anything, it's just the way he always comes up behind us girls, and looks over our shoulders while we are working. Sometimes he seems to look down the front of our dresses. It's really creepy."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	"I usually get a hard time about hanging out with the girls in class and at lunchtime. Because I spend time with girls, I get called a faggot – which makes me feel pretty bad, like I'm not a real guy."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	"As a young female teacher in a boys' school, they often try to provoke me by asking if I was out last night, did I get home, do I have a boyfriend. It's juvenile and I ignore it."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	"Look at Jenny – the way she wears those short skirts and tight tops. She's just asking for comments – right Tim? Well, if she's advertising, I may as well take a visit to the shop. See ya later."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	Is this an example of sexual harassment?	Yes	No	Don't know
11.	"I was new at the school. Now I'm not a big sports jock or anything, so on the very first day these feral girls grabbed me, started calling me 'gay' and 'queer'. They dacked me in the schoolyard and then ran away. Kids everywhere were laughing at me."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	A group of students graffiti comments in the boys' toilet about another girl and her sexual experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How did you go with these comments and situations?

You have probably decided that some were definitely sexual harassment, some were more general bullying and some you could not be sure about.

To decide if your answers to the previous pages are accurate, you need to know the definition of sexual harassment.

The Sex Discrimination Act gives the following definition:

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual behaviour which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated and that this reaction could reasonably have been expected in the circumstances. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship.

Unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour can include:

- unwelcome touching
- staring or leering
- suggestive comments or jokes
- sexually explicit pictures, posters, screensavers, calendars
- unwanted invitations to go out on a date
- requests for sex
- intrusive questions about a person's private life or body
- insults, name-calling or taunts based on your sex
- derogatory graffiti
- sexually explicit e-mails, text messages, etc.

Discuss your answers with your classmates.

Make some notes about your conclusions for future reference below.

Your notes:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Comments in the schoolyard (Answers)

Activity sheet

How do your answers compare?

You can check your answers with those of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

#	Answers to 'Comments in the schoolyard...'
1.	Yes – this is sexual harassment. The overtly sexual nature of what the boys were doing and saying wasn't welcomed by the girl and made her feel very hurt and upset.
2.	This probably isn't sexual harassment – but it is certainly a pretty nasty form of bullying. Shouting something insulting like 'ugly' is done to deliberately hurt and humiliate someone else.
3.	It's not clear if this is sexual harassment – but it is a form of bullying and homophobia. There are laws to protect people from homophobic behaviour in every Australian state and territory.
4.	This could be sexual harassment – it depends on how the girl feels about seeing the pictures. It would be harassment if she didn't want to look at those sort pictures or she felt offended by them.
5.	This would not be sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is not about friendships, mutual attraction or consensual relationships like boyfriend-girlfriend.
6.	This is likely to be sexual harassment as it doesn't seem like it was an accident. Being too familiar with someone, such as brushing up against them, is harassment when it's unwelcome behaviour.
7.	This could be sexual harassment. Staring or leering can make someone feel just as uncomfortable as unwelcome touching or explicit jokes.
8.	This may be a form of sexual harassment covered by a state law. There are laws to protect people from homophobic behaviour in every Australian state and territory.
9.	This is sexual harassment. It's not acceptable to ask people lots of questions about their personal life if it makes them feel awkward and uncomfortable.
10.	This could be sexual harassment – it depends on who was saying it, who was listening and how they felt when they heard those comments.
11.	This looks like sexual harassment that could be covered by state laws. Girls can sexually harass boys just as boys can harass girls. In this case, they embarrassed and humiliated him in front of the other students.
12.	Writing explicit comments that are offensive or humiliating can be sexual harassment, even if the girl doesn't see the graffiti.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or uninvited sexual behaviour that is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship.

Sexual harassment is serious – and against the law. Sexual harassment can take many different forms – it can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal. It includes behaviour that creates a sexually hostile or intimidating environment.

For example:

- unwelcome touching
- staring or leering
- suggestive comments or jokes
- sexually explicit pictures, posters, screensavers, calendars
- unwanted invitations to go out on a date
- requests for sex
- intrusive questions about a person's private life or body
- insults, name-calling or taunts based on your sex
- derogatory graffiti
- sexually explicit emails, text messages, etc.

Where does it happen?

Sexual harassment can occur in the workplace, in schools, colleges and universities, in clubs, or when buying goods or receiving services, seeking or obtaining accommodation, as well as when using Commonwealth services.

Female students are protected against sexual harassment in schools under the federal Sex Discrimination Act. Male students are likely to be protected from sexual harassment by other students under state and territory laws.

What's the legal situation with sexual harassment?

At school

As a student you are entitled to an education free of sexual harassment. The same applies to teachers – they are entitled to a workplace free from harassment. Schools have an obligation to deal with sexual harassment and all other forms of bullying.

Sexual harassment by a member of staff

Regardless of your age, it is unlawful for a teacher to sexually harass you.

Sexual harassment by another student

Regardless of your age, it is unlawful for an adult student to sexually harass you. Certain types of bullying, about sex or sex-based characteristics, may also be sexual harassment.

Who is responsible?

Anyone aged over 16 years is considered an 'adult student', which means they are personally liable for sexually harassing another student or teacher. If you are harassed, you may be able to lodge a complaint against the student and, in some cases, against the school.

A complaint of sexual harassment can't be made against another student if the harasser is under 16 years of age. In these circumstances, however, you may be able to make a complaint against the school as it has a duty of care to protect students from harassment and discrimination.

What is sexual harassment?

Activity sheet

Look at these situations:

Situation 1:

There is a group of boys in the school yard. They gather near the entrance to the girls' toilets. They pick on some girls, but not others. Some girls tell them to get lost; some just laugh at it; some ignore it; some are really upset and affected by it.

There is one girl they always harass, and try to flick her school uniform up as she goes past. They also make sexual comments and remarks to her. They always make sure that there are no teachers around when they do this.

They have told other students that there's no harm in it – it's just a bit of fun.

Situation 2:

There is a boy who is very friendly with a group of girls. He doesn't mix with the sporty males. They call him names and pick on him whenever they can, especially in front of the girls.

He starts to avoid places where these boys hang out, so starts to spend more time alone, and away from a lot of the school facilities. Some of the girls stick up for him, but most just walk away when he is being harassed by the gang of boys.

Choose one of the cases above. Think about why the harassers are doing the action, how the harassed kids feel, what other possible actions could be taken, what the implications are for those involved and for the whole school.

Summarise your ideas on each of the questions in the spaces below. Comment on it from each of the following points of view:

The student being harassed	
One of the harassers	
A friend of the student being harassed	
A friend of the harasser	
A bystander	

A teacher on yard duty	
The parent of the student being harassed	
The parent of the student harassing others	

Discuss your ideas with your classmates. Did they come up with similar responses to yours?

Work together to discuss the following questions. Write down the major points raised by your classmates.

Why do people harass others?	
How does harassment make the target person feel?	
What are the best things a person who is being harassed can do about it?	
You see someone being harassed – what are the best things you can do?	

Now that you have considered the legal definition of sexual harassment, go back and look at the answers you gave in the quiz in the first activity sheet. Would you change your responses based on your new knowledge about the definition of sexual harassment?

What's so wrong about sexual harassment?

Now we know what sexual harassment is – but what's so wrong with it?

Think about some of the insults that you've heard used at school. Do any of these sound familiar?

For boys:

“he plays like a girl”, “wussy boy”, “poofter”.

For girls:

“dog”, “stupid bitCh”, “fat cow”, “slut”.

You can probably think of your own examples.

Why are these expressions offensive?

Think not only about the words themselves, but who says them and who they are directed at. Why is it a bad thing for a boy to be called a ‘girl’ or an ‘old woman’? Why are so many insults directed at girls and women based on female animals?

Using insults like these is a way of exerting power over another person and a way of defining ‘correct’ behaviour for males and females.

For boys

These words and phrases are based on a stereotype that says that men (macho, straight) are better than women.

For girls

These expressions equate them to animals and, therefore, make them feel like they're less than human.

Name-calling, such as these examples, is a form of bullying – sometimes it can be discrimination and against the law.

Either way, these words can make a person feel like they have no worth or value. And not only for a short time – if people hear the same thing over and over, it can shape how they think about themselves for the rest of their lives.

Sometimes people use these sorts of insults without thinking – it's just a reflex action and they do it to be ‘funny’. Often, however, people seek to deliberately hurt and abuse someone else.

It pays to be aware of the sort of language that people use. Many of the words and phrases that get thrown around a playground are full of assumptions and stereotypes about what it means to be a ‘man’ and what it means to be a ‘woman’. Some of them aren't too helpful.

Everyone has basic human rights and responsibilities. If these rights aren't respected then we can be treated in a way that reduces our humanity.

So, while we have the right to be free from harassment and intimidation, we also have the responsibility to treat other people in the way we expect them to treat us. It's a matter of mutual respect.

Tackling sexual harassment

Script

The DVD is set in a typical high school in Australia. One of the students is doing a video presentation on her school's culture and she's investigating whether or not sexual harassment exists there.

Scene 1: In the school canteen

Two boys walk into the canteen and one of them grabs a girl around the waist from behind. She clearly doesn't like it and she pushes him away. One of the girl's friends intervenes and tells the boy to back off.

The presenter says that what she just saw was a perfect example of sexual harassment. Some of the other students around her disagree – “no way is that harassment – that's just how he is”.

The group then starts talking about what they think is – and isn't – sexual harassment. As they start talking, one of the guys in the group leans over and puts his arm around a girl. She looks up, smiles at him and holds onto his arm.

One of the girls in the groups starts talking about the substitute science teacher, who all the guys think is 'hot'. She tells the others: “All the guys in the class would drop their pen on the floor and she would bend over to pick it up. Because she was wearing a low-cut top, the boys were always dropping their pen. It wasn't until halfway through the period that she knew what was going on. I felt so embarrassed for her.”

Two girls walk into the canteen and stand by the drink machine. They start whispering loudly about a girl sitting nearby. They call her a 'slut' because she got with a guy over the weekend “and she didn't even know his name”. They say that everyone knows she's a slut – and that's what's written about her in the girl's toilets. The girl they are talking about looks very hurt by what they're saying.

Scene 2: The two friends

The presenter wants to film an example of a healthy 'boy-girl' relationship – two people that she knows are good friends. She shows us a couple sitting together on the steps talking. The girl tells her friend, Russ, how much she appreciated being able to call him up on the weekend and talk about a problem she was having. He responds by telling her how much he values their friendship.

Russ goes off to join up with some of his mates and when his friend walks past the group, the boys abuse her – call her a 'dog' and a 'dumb bitch'. Russ stands there but doesn't say or do anything to defend her. She runs off crying – obviously very hurt.

The boy and girl meet up later in the library. The girl is sitting with another friend. She's still very upset and tells him how hurt she is that he didn't stick up for her. She feels betrayed, that their friendship means nothing and that she's thinking of changing classes, maybe even schools.

He looks at her confused and bewildered – but also guiltily. He defends himself by saying that if he had said something then his mates would have had a go at him instead.

The presenter looks into the camera and wonders if this is an over-reaction – asking the students “what do you think?”

Scene 3: In the library

Two boys – good friends – are talking in the library. One has his hand on the other's shoulder.

A group of boys come up to them and start to pick on one of them. They call him 'a queer' and pull at his shorts – “does that turn you on, mate”, they ask. When he tries to walk away, the boys get aggressive and push him to the ground. They tell him to stick up for himself and “be a man”!

Off-screen, a teacher calls out to them to break it up – “you know you can’t do that sort of thing in here”. The group of boys walk off and make a few parting comments at the boy who’s still on the ground, hurt and very upset.

The presenter is horrified – “that was ugly”!

Scene 4: Alyce and David

Alyce and David are sitting together in class. The boy leans over and asks the girl if she received his text message and whether she wanted to go out with him – “after all, I hear you’re pretty good fun on a date”. It’s obvious that this isn’t the first text message she’s received from him and that it isn’t the first time he’s asked her out.

Alyce says she doesn’t want to go out with him. A friend of David’s – a girl – overhears the conversation and tells Alyce that he’s a great guy and she’d have a fun time with him. She says again that she’s not interested.

At the end of the class, Alyce talks to the teacher and asks if he can tell David to stop harassing her. The teacher tells her not to worry about, that David’s harmless and that “boys will be boys”.

As she leaves the classroom, David is standing there with some friends. He says that she should “get ready for some more messages”. His friends laugh and walk off with him.

Scene 5: Alternative endings

We are clearly back at the end of Scene 4. The presenter speaks into the camera. “I don’t like how this ended. Let’s make some changes.” We rewind to the end of the scene see some alternative endings.

Alternative ending 1

Alyce approaches the teacher with her problem. He tells her that what David is doing is harassment and breaks the school’s harassment policy. He calls David over, tells him that an issue has been raised and that he wants the three of them to meet at the Student Counsellor’s Office at lunchtime to discuss it further.

Alternative ending 2

Alyce tells David that she’s not interested – “what part of no don’t you understand?” – and that she wants him to leave her alone and stop messaging her. David blusters but backs off – “OK, no more messages. But it’s your loss.”

Alternative ending 3

Alyce is a bit intimidated by David, so one her friends stands up to him and tells him to stop sending Alyce text messages and not to keep asking her out on dates. David backs off – but tells his friends “I don’t even know why I liked her in the first place”.

Alternative ending 4

Some of David’s friends see what he’s doing and think that his behaviour with Alyce has gone too far. They wonder what they can do about it – they suggest discussing it with their SRC or seeing what their school policy says about harassment.

DVD discussion guide

Activity sheet

Scene 1: In the school canteen

We see some students talking about things that have happened at the school.

List the different examples you see where people in the school interact in a way that involves sexual behaviour (including acts, looks, spoken words or written comments) that are revealed in this scene. Beside each, decide:

- Which of these are unacceptable behaviour? Why?
- Are any of these acceptable behaviour? Why

#	Example from the DVD	Unacceptable	Acceptable
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

Scene 2: The two friends

What do you think happened in this scene? Make some notes below.

What do Russ' friends say about her?	
Is this sexual harassment?	
How does the girl feel?	
Why did the boys behave as they did?	
Does it matter if it was just meant to be a joke and they didn't mean to hurt anyone?	
How does Russ respond to his friends?	
How does he feel?	
What impact does harassment have on the individuals involved?	
What impact does it have on the school environment?	

Scene 3: Boys in the library

Look at how the boys treat each other. Make some notes about the scene below.

What does the group of boys say and do?	
Is this sexual harassment?	
What is the impact on Stuart?	
What impact might it have on the other people involved? Does Stuart respond effectively?	
How else could he respond?	
Who else in this scenario might respond differently?	
What other things could be done to stop this situation happening?	

Scene 4: In the classroom

Examine what happens between Alyce and David. Write your notes below.

What does David do and say? Is this sexual harassment?	
How does Alyce feel?	
What effect does it have on her?	
Why does David behave as he does?	
Do the students' friends have the right idea and approach and give good advice?	
Does the teacher?	
What effects might it have on others?	

Scene 5: Changing endings

Identify the different strategies for dealing with sexual harassment that are shown in the four alternative endings to the classroom situation. A different strategy is featured in each ending.

Alternative 1

Alternative 2

Alternative 3

Alternative 4

Character cards

Activity sheet

<p>Character card 1</p> <p>You are a strong character and are not worried by harassment or taunting. You realise that the harassers are the weak and pathetic characters.</p>	<p>Character card 2</p> <p>You have a strong group of friends who will support you in all ways.</p>
<p>Character card 3</p> <p>You are a shy and self-conscious character. You are sensitive to being called names, and need help to confront situations.</p>	<p>Character card 4</p> <p>You are a popular person at school, and have a large network of friends who are able to support you.</p>
<p>Character card 5</p> <p>You have a strong group of friends, but you and your group are not the school leaders. Your group is supportive.</p>	<p>Character card 6</p> <p>You are very keen to do well at school, and any harassment or disturbance could easily upset your academic performance.</p>
<p>Character card 7</p> <p>You are a popular and outgoing person, a real leader whom others listen to and follow readily.</p>	<p>Character card 8</p> <p>You are a quiet person, but you are widely respected by all your peers. They know you always act reasonably and fairly.</p>
<p>Character card 9</p> <p>You are someone who enjoys being part of a group, and who needs the support and help that a strong group can give.</p>	<p>Character card 10</p> <p>You are not a naturally popular character. You have a small group of friends, but you are fairly isolated and not seen as natural leaders by your peers.</p>
<p>Character card 11</p> <p>You are an impulsive person who needs others to help give good advice in many situations. You often tend to act first and think later.</p>	<p>Character card 12</p> <p>You are someone whose natural impulse is to be a 'peacemaker', to avoid trouble, even if it means accepting injustices. This means that you are often unfairly treated by others.</p>
<p>Character card 13</p> <p>You are lacking in confidence and self-esteem, and can easily feel worthless and devastated if you are personally rejected or picked on.</p>	<p>Character card 14</p> <p>You like to play the role of troublemaker. You say things to stir people up and get a reaction. Finding solutions to problems is not one of your strengths.</p>

Thinking about your own school

Activity sheet

It's time to have a look at your own school and see what the situation is. You may find that there is no problem at your school – that would be great. Or you may find that there are just a few isolated instances that need to be dealt with.

So, here are some questions to help you carry out a thorough and effective evaluation of types of behaviour at your school.

<p>When boys are together and a girl walks by, how do the boys respond?</p> <p>How does the girl?</p>	
<p>When girls are together and a boy walks by, how do the girls respond?</p> <p>How does the boy?</p>	
<p>What behaviour is teasing – and when does it become bullying?</p>	
<p>What behaviour is flirting – and when does it become harassment?</p>	
<p>Are there particular places where harassment occurs – in the classroom, or the corridors, or the yard, or the sports area?</p>	

<p>How do boys talk about girls when they are just with other boys?</p> <p>What happens when there are teachers around?</p>	
<p>How do girls talk about boys when they are just with other girls?</p> <p>What happens when there are teachers around?</p>	
<p>Are there places where there is graffiti that amounts to sexual harassment?</p> <p>How does the school respond?</p>	
<p>Is sexual harassment discussed in your school?</p> <p>Is there a school policy on it?</p> <p>Are there special school practices to address it?</p>	

Note: When you are recording your observations you need to keep details. But do not specifically name any people involved ('Jai harassed Katrina') but use descriptors such as 'a Year 10 boy tried to flip up the skirt of a Year 8 girl outside the girls' toilets'.

Responding to your findings

Your findings should identify what behaviour goes on, draw conclusions about the degree to which a problem exists and make some suggestions about what could be done about it in your school – such as posters, newsletters, or publicising the school policy. You could share your evaluation with your school's SRC or the principal through the SRC. You may be able to make a real difference!

Developing a sexual harassment policy for your school

Resource sheet

As a student you are entitled to an education free of sexual harassment. The same applies to teachers – they are entitled to a workplace free from harassment.

Schools have an obligation to deal with sexual harassment and all other forms of bullying.

Sexual harassment by a member of staff

Regardless of your age, it is unlawful for a teacher to sexually harass you.

Sexual harassment by another student

Regardless of your age, it is unlawful for an adult student to sexually harass you. Certain types of bullying, about sex or sex-based characteristics, may also be sexual harassment.

Who is responsible?

Anyone aged over 16 years is considered an 'adult student', which means they are personally liable for sexually harassing another student or teacher. If you are harassed, you may be able to lodge a complaint against the student and, in some cases, against the school.

A complaint of sexual harassment can't be made against another student if the harasser is under 16 years. In these circumstances, however, you may be able to make a complaint against the school as it has a duty of care to protect students from harassment and discrimination.

Anti-harassment policies

Each school should have a policy for dealing with these issues.

A good policy will include the following elements (You can tick off those ones that your school has in its policy on sexual harassment).

A good school sexual harassment policy has . . .

A strong statement on the school's attitude to sexual harassment	
This should state that the school is committed to ensuring that the working and learning environment is harassment-free. It should also state that sexual harassment is unlawful and will not be tolerated, and that action will be taken against those who breach the policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
An outline of the school's objectives regarding sexual harassment	
<p>This may include such aims of the school as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create a working and learning environment that is free from sexual harassment and where all members are treated with courtesy, dignity and respect • to promote appropriate standards of conduct at all times • to implement strategies to ensure that all members of the school community know their rights and responsibilities in this area • to encourage the reporting of prohibited behaviour • to provide an effective complaints procedure based on principles of natural justice • to treat all complaints in a serious, sensitive, fair, timely and confidential manner • to guarantee against victimisation or reprisals 	<input type="checkbox"/>

A plain English definition of sexual harassment	
It is best if this definition includes a list of the sorts of situations and behaviour that constitute sexual harassment. Use the <i>What is sexual harassment?</i> resource sheet to develop a good definition.	<input type="checkbox"/>
What sexual harassment is not	
The policy should stress that sexual harassment is not behaviour that is based on mutual attraction, friendship or respect. If the interaction is consensual, welcomed and reciprocated it is not sexual harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A statement that sexual harassment is against the law	
Students and teachers need to know that sexual harassment is against the law. Depending on the circumstances, all students and staff may be covered by the <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i> or laws in their state or territory.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possible consequences if the sexual harassment policy is breached	
Normally a variety of consequences will apply according to the severity of the situation and whether it is a first or subsequent offence. Consequences may include an apology, counselling, compensation, disciplinary action, misconduct proceedings or even suspension or expulsion.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Options available for dealing with sexual harassment	
Staff and students should be advised of a variety of possible informal and formal options for dealing with sexual harassment, such as confronting the harasser, or the processes for making a complaint within the school system (who to approach, and what their role is from then on).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where to get help or advice	
The policy should include the contact details of people who have been appointed to provide information or assistance or who are responsible for receiving complaints.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Making it work

A written policy is not enough. There must also be a program within the school for making the policy known, and for enforcing it.

Find out about the sexual harassment policy at your school.

- Are people aware of the policy? Do they have a copy of it?
- Is it provided to new staff and students?
- Is it periodically reviewed? It is available in appropriate languages?
- Are there training and awareness-related strategies associated with the policy?

For more information see www.humanrights.gov.au/sexual_harassment