

# Common questions about...

## STAYING SAFE



Staying Safe is about looking after yourself and caring for others. As we grow up, the way we think, feel and view the world changes. We are developing our identity, forming new kinds of relationships and trying different things. Growing up is a time of excitement and discovery, but we can face risks and challenges that we need to be prepared to deal with on our own.



Staying safe is partly about knowing the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships and knowing when people may be exploiting and abusing us or putting people at risk. It's also about knowing how to stand up for ourselves and others, and how to get the help and support we need.



All the questions in this Q&A are based on frequent examples received from young people through UNICEF digital platforms, social listening reports and IoT analytics. The answers were developed in collaboration with a reference group of young people from the ESAR region and reviewed by technical staff from UNICEF, UNFPA and UNAIDS.

1

**My father is drinking all the time and has started hitting my mother and threatening me. I just want her to leave him, what can I do?**



We all have the right to feel safe, especially in our own homes. You and your mother should never feel threatened or unsafe at home and you can get help and support from organisations that help families. Check local links for services.



Many people use alcohol and other drugs for fun or to make them feel good. But sometimes alcohol and other drugs can make people aggressive, angry, and even violent – especially if they are using lots and are starting to rely on them.



**Drinking lots of alcohol regularly can have a serious impact on someone's behaviour, and they may need help before the situation becomes even more serious.**

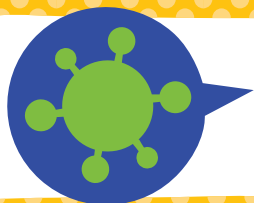


**Check local local links for services**

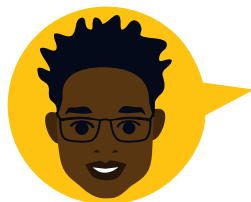
It's understandable that you want your mother to leave her violent relationship, but remember that this is your mother's decision. It can be very hard to leave a relationship, including one that's violent, especially if she and your father have been together for a long time.



Remember to also look after yourself – find someone to talk to about how you're feeling. If you don't find it easy to talk to your mother, talk to someone else who you trust who can listen. **Check local links for services.**



During COVID-19 it might not be as easy to see and talk to friends, but it is so important you call someone or arrange to meet someone safely to talk. **Check local links for services.**



Read more in the Q&A on **Healthy Relationships** for more information.

2

**A teacher at school is hassling me to go out with him. I don't want to, but am worried about offending him in case he gives me bad grades, what should I do?**



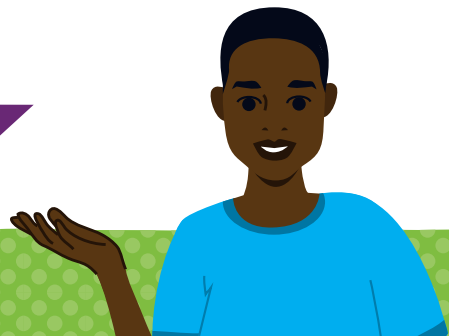
Teachers hold positions of responsibility, and your teacher is abusing his power by asking you to go out with him. Schools and colleges have strict rules that teachers should follow, to keep all students safe. Your teacher will know that what he's doing is wrong. He may have tried this before with other students and may have got away with it and he's also likely to try this again.



It's important that you find someone to talk to about this – maybe a trusted family member or someone at school. Remember, this is not your fault, and this should not be happening. If the people you tell don't believe you, or won't help you, then find someone who will.

Often in this situation it is your word against the teacher's, unless you have evidence (text messages, written notes, recorded conversations or such). It would be helpful to think if there are others who have had the same experience with the teacher and could also share their story or someone who may have heard the teacher hassling you.

You will be stronger, and better placed to report him if you have backup from friends or peers who have experienced the same.



3

**I feel embarrassed and ashamed when my friends shout sexual comments at girls on the street; how can I get them to stop?**



Shouting sexual comments, or 'cat calling' someone, is sexual harassment and a type of sexual abuse. Sadly, many girls and women experience this type of abuse daily. It can make them feel scared, angry, and sad. People shouldn't be made to feel like this, and it will only stop if we stand up to this type of behaviour by being strong, and challenging the people we know are doing this.



You can joke and keep things light when you challenge it, but it's important that you show them that you don't agree with this behaviour. It might seem easier not to say anything, but by doing that you are accepting that cat calling is ok and being a 'bystander' – someone who watches but does nothing.

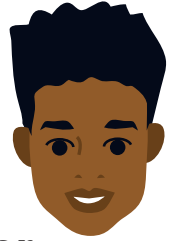


**Don't be a bystander!**  
Remember that this happens to your sister, mother and girlfriend and they don't like it.



4

One of my friends boasts about how he gets girls drunk so that he can have sex with them; he says that they deserve it for getting drunk. How can we stop him?



**Sex without consent is rape! And rape is a serious crime. People cannot give consent to sex if they're drunk or high or when they are asleep. [Read more about consent in the Q&A on Sex and other stuff.](#)**

Talking about what consent means with your friends can be helpful and might encourage your friend to think about his behaviour. Remind him that what he is doing is a serious crime, and that this could happen to his sister, mother and girlfriend too if this kind of male behaviour is not stopped!

Help your friend to understand how important consent is – he may not understand that what he is doing is sexual abuse or rape. Help him understand that sex is a two-way process, and that real enjoyment comes from being with someone who wants to be with you.



If your friend will not listen, and you think that this is not just boasting but he poses a risk, you must report him. You may want to find someone to talk to your friend as he may need support to deal with this behaviour. You may also want to think about finding other friends who share the same values as you.

5

I was raped and I am worried that no one will believe me and that I might be pregnant. What should I do?



You're going through a traumatic experience and you're not to blame in any way for what happened to you. It's important that you tell someone that you trust and who can help you take action – you will need support at this time in your life. There are many things to think through, including finding out whether you are pregnant, and reporting the rape to authorities.



It's really important that you get help quickly at any nearby healthcare facility, because you could prevent an unwanted pregnancy or getting infected with HIV if you seek care within 72 hrs of the rape.



You can prevent pregnancy by taking emergency contraception – this is often called 'the morning after pill'.



Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) may also be available where you live to prevent HIV infection.



Both emergency contraception and PEP need to be taken within a maximum of 3 days (72 hours) of the assault in order to work, and the sooner you take them, the better.



You'll be tested (and treated if needed) for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and pregnancy, and will be offered counselling to help come to terms with what's happened and advice on how to take action against the person who did this to you.



**Rape is a serious crime and the person who did this to you is accountable for his actions. Think about telling a trusted adult, such as a family member or someone you know well in the community. If you would find it easier to speak to a trained counsellor first, you can call or text. [Check local links for services.](#)**

It is important that he is not allowed to do this again. If he does it once, the chance of him doing it again to you or another girl is very high. You need to think seriously about reporting this to the police where they will take action to stop this from happening again.

In many places, little action is taken against sexual crimes, so talk to someone first and decide on the best thing to do, but always remember that this isn't your fault and you need to take care of yourself first.



6

I had sex with someone I thought really liked me. Now I've found out that they videoed us having sex and have shared it on social media. How can I make them delete the video?



Sharing sexual images without someone's consent is wrong and, in many places, it is a crime. This is especially true if the images are of a person who is under 18, or considered a minor.



To take images and share them without consent is a betrayal. It often happens at the end of a relationship when someone feels hurt or rejected and they want revenge.



Remember you have done nothing wrong – expressing your sexuality is natural and a private experience. The person is wrong for breaking your trust. It can be very distressing to know that others are seeing images of you and it is really important that you get support and talk to someone about how you're feeling.





In places where this is a crime, you can report the person and let the authorities take action. Although you may feel embarrassed, it's helpful if you can provide evidence by taking screenshots of the sites where it's shared. This may feel too difficult for you to do, but perhaps a friend can help. You can also report it to social media sites and ask for the video to be removed. Friends can help with this too.

You may also feel able to talk to the person who shared the video and ask them to take it down, but remember they may be doing this to cause you pain and if they see you are upset this may just encourage them further. Think about how likely it is that you will be able to persuade them.

Alternatively you can leave it to the authorities or other people to contact the person. Keep a record of the people who have seen and shared the images/video and give the list to the authorities.



7

**My friend's partner is becoming increasingly controlling. Last time I went round to her house he said that she wasn't at home, but I could see her through the window. What should I do to help her?**



It can be extremely hard to see our friends in relationships that we feel aren't right, with partners who are controlling and prevent them from seeing friends and family. It is important that you check your friend is OK.



**If your friend's partner refuses to let you see her when you knew she was at home, it's also likely that he may be checking her phone messages so it may not be easy to contact her.**

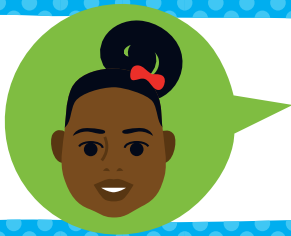


Try to find a way to meet your friend outside her home. For example, you could go to her school or workplace at lunch time, or around the time that she arrives or leaves or to where she does grocery shopping or goes to church. It might be hard to meet her if there are COVID-19 restrictions, but try to find a safe way to meet. Be honest and tell her you're worried about her and ask her if she's OK or needs help.

Remember that people who have partners who are controlling often convince themselves that it is done out of love.



Your friend may see no problem with her relationship. Sometimes you can't see things clearly when you think you're in love, but it's important to show her that you are always there for her if she needs help, and to tell her that it's not a healthy relationship.



If you're really concerned for her safety, then it's important to find a way to help her. You could approach a family member, or, if you sense there is real danger, you should contact the police. She may also need some support from a counsellor or social worker.



Read more in the Q&A on **Healthy Relationships** for more information.

8

**My friend keeps making me go with her to the motor park at night to hang out, the drivers buy us food and joke around with us, my friend flirts with them but I just get a bad feeling.**



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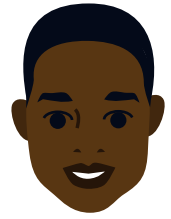
**If you are uncomfortable in a situation, you should trust your instincts and remove yourself from it. Being aware of your environment and the people around you is so important in staying safe.**



Being out late at night with older men could be a risky situation and you are right to be cautious and unsure. It is common for young women to be groomed or coerced into sex in these situations where offers of food, gifts and money are used to manipulate or exploit. Talk to your friend about how you feel and maybe suggest you do something else instead, but don't feel pressured by her to go. You can make your own decisions and keep yourself safe.

9

**My sister has a learning disability and has started to take an interest in boys. No one has talked to her about sex or contraception because my parents say there's no need and they still treat her like a young child but I'm worried about her.**



All young people need and deserve information on sex and sexuality and access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, including contraception, to have safe and pleasurable sex and to prevent pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. This includes young people with disabilities, who are often denied this information because other people think that they are not interested in sex or shouldn't be sexually active.

This is not true, and young people with disabilities have the same needs and desires as other young people. Denying them information on sex and sexuality and access to SRH services increases their risk to abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.





It's great that you've recognised that your sister needs this information. If you feel comfortable, maybe talk to her yourself about how she's feeling around boys and about sex. Make sure that she understands that sex isn't something bad or that she should be afraid of, but that it's not something to rush into and that she needs to feel ready and properly prepared.

Encourage her to be open with you and to ask any questions that she may have. You can also offer to go with her to the clinic with her and ask about information and services that meet her needs.





## Further information and contact details

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