

Together, we can shift the narratives and perceptions around sexual violence.

**LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!**



**SV 101**

**WHAT IS AND ISN'T  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE?**

# SV 101

## WHAT IS AND ISN'T SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

**Prepared by:**  
Association for Struggle  
Against Sexual Violence

**Translation:**  
Tuğba Yavuz

**Graphic Design:**  
Özge Özgür | [o'kreatif](#)

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# INTRODUCTION

We all have a perception, an idea, about what sexual violence is. But where do we get this information from?

We do not learn in schools what sexual violence, personal boundaries, consent, or sexuality mean; which behaviors fall within the scope of sexual violence; how these are shaped by history and culture; and how they can be prevented.

Our understanding of sexual violence takes shape through our childhood and adult experiences, our families and friends, our relationships, what we see in the media, the shows we watch, the news we follow, and the books we read. We imitate some behaviors from our surroundings, think we will be excluded if we do not engage in others, and sometimes fail to realize that certain behaviors are actually forms of violence.

Sexual violence is both deeply personal and profoundly social. It is a difficult topic to talk about – especially in the first person. That's because sexual violence is often discussed in society with stigmatizing and judgmental language – and almost always through the stories of others. This stigma can be directed not only at perpetrators but also at those who have been subjected to

violence. Feelings like guilt, shame, and loneliness do not appear out of nowhere. In such an environment, even speaking to ourselves can become hard. That's why knowing we are not alone matters so much.

We prepared this booklet for anyone who wants to access accurate information about sexual violence, understand key concepts, and raise awareness in their community. Together, we can question the learned patterns, myths, and misinformation about violence; we can reshape perceptions and narratives. By questioning, we can transform ourselves, and we can become stronger together through solidarity.

Sexual violence will not begin to change only when perpetrators are punished, but also when we refuse to laugh at jokes that trivialize rape, when we abandon sexist insults, when we refuse to stay silent to the violence we witness, when we believe those who speak out, and when we stand with them.

**What you read here can be a new beginning, for each and every one of us.**

This booklet contains examples and descriptions of sexual violence. If you find the content distressing, we recommend taking a break and continuing when you feel ready.

# CHAPTER 1

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## Sexual Violence and Related Concepts

# sexual violence and related concepts

When we talk about or describe sexual violence, we use various concepts and expressions. The language we choose reflects not only our emotions and thoughts but also the cultural and social judgments of the society we live in.

Defining the violence we have experienced with accurate terminology helps us recognize its effects, make it visible, and take steps to challenge it. That's why it is essential to define sexual violence and related concepts in an inclusive way without excluding anyone and by taking into account power relations.

## Let's Define Sexual Violence

**Sexual violence** refers to any action, behavior, or intervention of involving attempts or threats toward sexuality, carried out by one or more persons without consent, by manipulating consent, or in situations where consent cannot be given.



**Sexual violence** can involve a completed act, an attempt, or a threat.

It also includes intimidation, blackmail, or other forms of coercive behavior related to sexuality.

Any direct interference with a person's bodily and/or sexual integrity also falls within the scope of sexual violence.

In such cases, sexuality is used as a means to an end, or the person's sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression becomes the target.

“Sexual violence” is an umbrella term that encompasses many different forms of violence.

In addition to direct acts such as harassment, rape, sexual assault, and sexual abuse, it can also include actions that threaten sexual health, restrict access to reproductive health services or medication, or impose forced procedures related to gender identity.

## **SEXUAL VIOLENCE;**

Is not sexuality

Is about the use of power  
as a tool of violence

Is a public health issue

Is a violation of rights and freedoms

Is socially learned,  
and therefore CAN BE  
PREVENTED.

# What Is Consent? / Let's Talk About Consent

## Consent Is a Clear and Enthusiastic "Yes!"

Consent is at the core of sexuality. It means that all parties involved in a sexual act say "yes" clearly, willingly, and enthusiastically, without any form of pressure or influence.

For any sexual activity to begin or continue, consent must be explicitly expressed.

"Consent" given under pressure, fear, guilt, obligation, or helplessness is not real or valid consent.

**Silence, hesitation, lack of response, or the absence of a "no" does not mean consent.**

### There are situations where consent cannot be given:

- The person is a child (under 18 years old),
- The person's resistance is impaired due to alcohol or psychoactive substances,
- The person is under threat or blackmail,
- The person is not mentally or physically capable of giving consent,
- The act involves a non-human being (an animal).

In all these cases, any sexual act constitutes sexual violence.



## CONSTRUCTED CONSENT

Trying to turn a person's "no" into a "yes" to a sexual act means trying to construct the person's consent. Constructed consent happens when someone tries to obtain "consent" through insistence, **emotional pressure, manipulation, threats, or persuasion – without physical force**. "Consent" obtained through compliments, gifts, guilt-tripping, or anxiety reduction is not genuine consent. For example: Insisting after a sex worker says "no" by saying "But that's your job," or using emotional pressure like "You will regret it if you lose me," are both forms of constructing consent.

 Consent can be withdrawn at any time!

Saying "yes" to a sexual act does not mean "yes forever". People can change their minds and their desires. Silence is not consent, and "I'm not sure" is not either. One of the most beautiful parts of sexuality is asking again, hearing consent again, and choosing again at every step. Talking about consent is both safe and romantic.

For more information about consent:

**Safe Relationships Guide**  
(in Turkish)



## Have You Heard of Sexualized Violence?

**Sexualized violence** refers to all invisible and indirect forms of sexual violence. In many countries, rights-based activists and experts have pointed out that the term “sexual violence” can be limiting, and therefore prefer the term “sexualized violence.” This is because “sexual violence” may give the impression that such violence occurs only through “sexual acts”, failing to capture the broader forms of violence that surround our lives and target our sexuality. The term “sexualized violence” emphasizes that this form of violence is not truly about sexuality itself, but rather about power relations, structural inequalities, and discriminatory systems – including sexism, speciesism, homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia. In other words, sexualized violence refers to acts of violence used to control, monitor, humiliate, or punish the bodies and sexualities of women, children, LGBTI+ people, young people, and animals.

## Imagining a Life Free from Sexualized Violence

-  No one faces discrimination because of their gender, sexual orientation, identity, or existence.
-  Trans people's rights are not violated when they seek housing, education, or visibility in public spaces.
-  Intersex children can grow up without non-consensual interventions on their bodies.
-  Women can work in any profession without fear of violence or discrimination.
-  Trans people can freely access the gender identity processes they seek.
-  Abortion can become widely available, and every child can benefit from comprehensive sexuality education.
-  And society can clearly understand the difference between sexuality and violence, and learn not to stay silent in the face of violence.
-  In such a world free from sexualized violence, we can live together in equality, freedom, solidarity, and diversity.

## Survivor / Person Subjected to Sexual Violence

The term “survivor” refers to a person who has experienced sexual violence, centering their resilience, strength, and process of healing after the experience. It serves as an alternative to words like “sufferer” or “victim”, which emphasize helplessness. The term reminds us that healing is possible through support and solidarity.

Every individual has the right to define their own experiences using the words they choose. Whether someone identifies as a “survivor” or a “victim”, or something else entirely, that choice must be respected. When speaking about sexual violence, language should be used in a way that does not reproduce violence, and individuals should not be defined solely by their experience of harm.



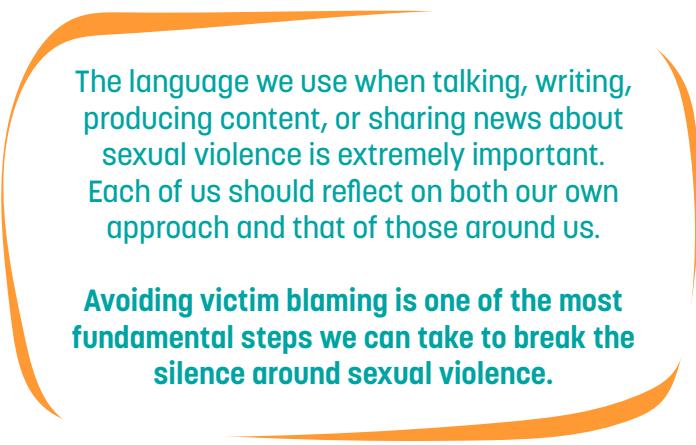
## Victim-Blaming

Sexual violence is one of the least talked-about forms of violence, and those who experience it often share their experiences the least. There are many reasons for this, but a central one is that survivors may feel responsible for the violence they endured or fear that society will blame them.

**When the survivor, rather than the perpetrator, is blamed or questioned in cases of sexual violence, this is called “victim-blaming”.**

Victim-blaming seeks to explain sexual violence not through the actions of the perpetrator, but through the survivor's behavior, clothing, location, or the time of the incident, shifting responsibility onto the person subjected to violence. This blame can come directly or indirectly from public institutions, family members, or close friends. For example, the frequently used media question, "What was she doing there at that hour?" is a clear case of victim blaming. Every explicit or implicit blame reproduces the idea that sexual violence is somehow "deserved".

Victim-blaming makes it harder for survivors to speak about their experiences and reinforces silence. It keeps sexual violence focused on the survivor rather than questioning the perpetrators and the structures that enable violence. Yet sexual violence is not independent of the cultural structures we live in. Responsibility, however, lies solely with the perpetrator.



**The language we use when talking, writing, producing content, or sharing news about sexual violence is extremely important. Each of us should reflect on both our own approach and that of those around us.**

**Avoiding victim blaming is one of the most fundamental steps we can take to break the silence around sexual violence.**

## Perpetrator of Sexual Violence

A perpetrator is anyone who engages in a sexual act or attempt without consent. This term is used in both social and legal contexts. Anyone can be a perpetrator of sexual violence. Perpetrator profile cannot be reduced to stereotypes; media labels such as "sick" or "pervert" distort reality, portraying perpetrators as exceptional "monsters" and obscuring the prevalence of violence and its structural causes. Perpetrators of sexual violence are often people close to us, trusted, or socially respected: a partner or ex-partner, teacher, coworker, family member, neighbor, public official, etc. Regardless of the relationship or context, responsibility always lies with the person who commits the violence. Closeness, status, or familiarity does not change this fact.



## Bodily / Sexual Autonomy / Agency

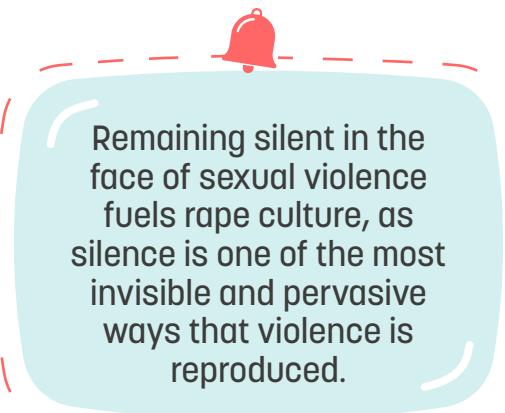
Bodily/ sexual autonomy is a fundamental human right. When addressing sexual violence, it is crucial to highlight bodily autonomy as a right that is often violated. Bodily autonomy means the control, voice, decisions, and choices regarding one's own body, life, and future belong solely to the individual. This right encompasses decisions related to health, sexuality, reproduction, and personal identity. It is about respecting every person's right to manage their own body without external pressure or interference. Access to this right depends on living in a respectful environment where personal boundaries can be established and having a cultural framework that provides accurate information for bodily and sexual development. All living beings have the right to live free from violence and coercion, exercising their bodily autonomy. Combating sexual violence is, in essence, also a struggle for the right to bodily autonomy.

## Rape Culture

Rape culture refers to all situations in which sexual assault, rape, and various forms of violence are ignored, normalized, or made the subject of jokes. This culture presents sexual violence as merely an individual "incident" while obscuring the gender inequalities and power dynamics that make it possible.

In such an environment, sexuality remains taboo, and misconceptions about sexual violence become widespread. Statements like "Boys will be boys", "She asked for it", "They deserved it" shift the blame from the perpetrator to the survivor. Power, aggression, and "uncontrollable urges" associated with masculinity are treated as natural, and violations of boundaries, including sexual violence, are justified on these grounds. The sexual abuse of children through marriage is also part of this culture: the reality that children cannot give consent is ignored, and sexual violence is normalized under the guise of "marriage".

Rape culture is not limited to individual behavior; it is also reflected in jokes, TV shows, sports chants, fairy tales, and other products of popular culture.



Remaining silent in the face of sexual violence fuels rape culture, as silence is one of the most invisible and pervasive ways that violence is reproduced.

## Consent Culture

In a society where consent culture is prevalent, the presence of consent is explicitly discussed, questioned, and respected in all relationships involving personal boundaries and sexuality. All parties respect both their own boundaries and those of others. Asking for consent before any form of physical or sexual interaction becomes a natural habit. A “no” is accepted without question; just as “yes” is normal, so is “no”.

In a consent culture, children also have the right to bodily autonomy. They are encouraged to listen to themselves, explore their boundaries, and express them when saying “yes” or “no”. In this culture, no one is pressured to express or hide desires according to gender roles. Sexualized violence does not thrive in such an environment.

In short, in a consent culture, boundaries and respect are fundamental. Any sexual activity without consent is not considered sexuality. Violence is never justified, and misconceptions about sexual violence are not perpetuated.



**For detailed information on concepts  
related to sexual violence:**

**[cinselsiddetlemucadele.org](http://cinselsiddetlemucadele.org)**



Glossary  
of Concept



## CHAPTER 2

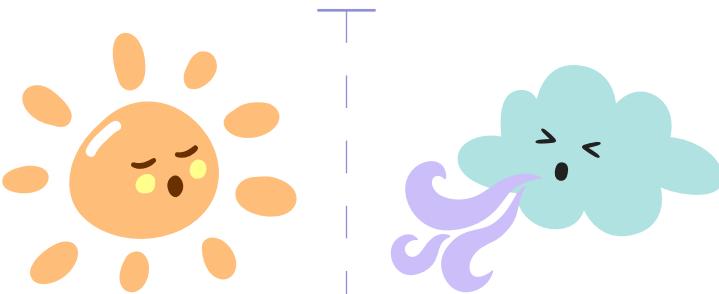
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# Different Forms of Sexual Violence: Dialogues from Everyday Life

# different forms of sexual violence: dialogues from everyday life

Sexual violence can take many different forms and does not always involve physical force. For this reason, many people may not immediately recognize that what they have experienced constitutes sexual violence.

In this section, we illustrate different forms of sexual violence through short dialogues between two adult friends. Each example aims to help readers understand how a particular type of sexual violence can manifest in everyday life.



## 1 Sexual Harassment



**Güneş:** On the bus today, someone kept staring at me and then leaned in and said, "Where is this beauty going?"



**Rüzgar:** Sweetheart, that's sexual harassment. Feeling uncomfortable is completely normal.

## 2 Sexual Assault (Physical Contact)



**Güneş:** Someone in the crowd came up from behind and touched my hip. At first, I thought it was an accident, but they didn't pull away.



**Rüzgar:** This is not harassment, but is definitely sexual assault. No one has the right to do that.

## 3 Aggravated Sexual Assault (Rape)



**Güneş:** I met my ex. We went home after the bar. I said no, but they didn't listen...



**Rüzgar:** Güneş... Anything done without your consent is sexual violence, no matter who does it. I'm here for you. What would you like to do next? We can figure it out together.

## 4 Boundary Violation



**Güneş:** I wanted to kiss them, but suddenly they started doing other things. I could not say no, I stayed silent.



**Rüzgar:** Consent must be obtained at every step. They violated your boundaries.

## 5 Constructed Consent and Blackmailing



**Güneş:** My boss keeps complimenting me and inviting me to dinners. "If you say yes, your job is guaranteed," they said.



**Rüzgar:** This is pressure through power. They are trying to construct your consent.

## 6 Substance/Alcohol-Facilitated Sexual Assault



**Güneş:** I was very drunk that night, I don't even remember. But they say we had sex...



**Rüzgar:** If you can't even remember, you can't consent. What happened is sexual violence, not a sexual encounter.

## 7 Online Sexual Violence / Sextortion



**Güneş:** My ex is threatening to share intimate photos we took when we were together.



**Rüzgar:** This is serious. Digital violence is also sexual violence. I'm here for you, we can figure it out together.

## 8 Digital Sexual Harassment



**Güneş:** I was so angry today. Someone keeps messaging me privately on social media. At first, they were talking normally, but then they started sending inappropriate photos.



**Rüzgar:** Seriously?! You know that counts as digital sexual harassment, right? Take screenshots and keep them as evidence. Then report the account to the platform, and if you want, we can also take legal action. Boundaries around one's body and privacy apply in digital spaces too. Harassment is the same, whether it happens on the street or on a screen.

## 9 Forcing to Watch or Be Watched



**Güneş:** One day, my partner said, "Let my friends watch too, it'll be more exciting." I refused and they got angry. I was very scared.



**Rüzgar:** Güneş, it is sexual violence if your partner forces you to be watched by others while having sex.

## 10 Using Sexuality as a Tool for Punishment or Reward



**Güneş:** When we fight, they say, "You don't deserve it tonight," and withdraw.



**Rüzgar:** Using sexuality as a tool for control or punishment is also a form of violence.

## 11 Forcing Sex Work



**Güneş:** My boyfriend said, "Just once," and wanted me to sleep with a man to pay our debt. I refused but was threatened.



**Rüzgar:** Güneş... This is coercion and pressure on your body. Forcing sex work is a serious sexual violence and human rights violation. You are not alone; together, we can seek support.

## 12 Stealthing (Non-Consensual Condom Removal)



**Güneş:** He used a condom at first but removed it without telling me. I found out later.



**Rüzgar:** This puts you at risk. It was a violation of your consent and boundaries. Removing a condom without consent is classified as aggravated sexual assault in some countries.

## 13 Rape-Normalizing Jokes and Statements



**Güneş:** Today at the office, someone joked, "I saw her in that short skirt, she practically invited me to rape her," and everyone laughed.



**Rüzgar:** This is not a joke; it normalizes rape. Trivializing sexual violence in this way is extremely dangerous. The idea that someone's clothing can justify violence is an example of victim-blaming.

## 14

### Humiliation through Sexualized Insults



**Güneş:** During a fight, my boyfriend threatened me by saying, "I'll ... you in front of everyone," (a profane, sexually suggestive insult) and then dismissed it by saying, "I said it out of anger."



**Rüzgar:** This is a very serious humiliation and threat. Sexual violence is not just physical. This language, which conflates sexuality with violence, is a verbal and emotional form of sexual violence.

## 15

### Slogans, Chants, and Collective Rituals



**Güneş:** The other day at the match, the crowd was shouting that insulted the rival team through women. No one seemed to be bothered by phrases like "Bring your mother along!"



**Rüzgar:** These kinds of chants use womanhood as a means of humiliation to portray the opponent as weak. Encouraging rape through jokes, songs, chants, ritulas, banners, or slogans in football, others sports, media, or public spaces constitutes a form of gender-based violence.

## 16 Child Sexual Abuse

 **Güneş:** My cousin is 14. The school principal keeps buying them gifts and calling them into their office to give them. My cousin feels very uncomfortable but doesn't know who to tell.

 **Rüzgar:** That's sexual abuse. An adult cannot form such a private relationship with a child. They're exploiting their position of power and confusing your cousin. Let's talk about safe reporting options.

## 17 Sexual Violence Against Animals

 **Güneş:** Someone in our neighborhood posts sexually explicit content involving animals on social media. It makes me really uncomfortable.

 **Rüzgar:** That's the normalization of sexual violence against animals. Let's look into safe ways to report it.

## 18 Restricting Access to Abortion

 **Güneş:** Even though it's legal, they kept stalling me by saying, "We don't provide that service," and didn't refer me anywhere else.

 **Rüzgar:** This is a form of structural sexual violence that blocks access to bodily autonomy and healthcare rights. Let's find reliable institutions and support networks together.



## 19 Barriers to Accessing Health and Identity Rights for Trans+ People



**Güneş:** I started university this year. To change the gender marker on my national ID, I'm required to undergo surgery, but I don't have the financial means. On top of that, how am I supposed to stay in a KYK dorm as a trans student? I went to a pharmacy, and because they said "No sales to anyone under 21", I couldn't even obtain my hormone medication.



**Rüzgar:** Restrictions on accessing hormones and the requirement of surgery constitutes sexualized structural violence against trans+ people. You have the right to health, education, and housing. We can look into trans-friendly institutions and support networks together.

## 20 Gender Assignment Surgeries on Intersex Infants



**Güneş:** I watched a documentary yesterday about surgeries performed on intersex babies right after birth. It was truly disturbing.



**Rüzgar:** Yes, those surgeries are carried out without the baby's consent. Doctors and families try to choose a gender that seems "socially appropriate", but in doing so, they make an irreversible intervention on that person's body. And most of the time, there isn't even a medical emergency that requires it. This means depriving the individual of their right to determine their own identity later in life. So, in essence, it's a human rights violation, and a form of sexual violence.

If you would like to learn more about intersex rights:

[interdayanisma.org](http://interdayanisma.org)



## CHAPTER 3

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**Myths Fuel  
Sexual Violence**

## myths fuel sexual violence

**It is possible to talk about sexual violence using the right words in a way that is both safe and empowering.**

Many widespread misconceptions, incomplete information, and generalizations about sexual violence often turn into narratives that excuse perpetrators while blaming survivors. Expressions we frequently hear in daily life – such as “Was the perpetrator someone close to them?”, “They said no, but they actually wanted it.”, or “What was she doing there at that hour?” – reflect these harmful myths. These myths do not only appear in personal conversations; they echo in news headlines, courtrooms, and school corridors, across every layer and institution of society. When repeated and reproduced, they not only conceal the reality of sexual violence but also erase institutional accountability, the needs and resilience of survivors, and their pursuit of justice. Ultimately, this perpetuates silence and denial around sexual violence. The first step toward breaking that silence is to question and dismantle these myths.

Myths lose their power when we talk about them. When someone who has been subjected to violence is believed, not mocked; when safe spaces, where people can talk openly about consent, boundaries, and rights, grow; and when survivors of sexual violence are not made to feel isolated or powerless – sexual violence becomes visible, and it becomes something we can finally talk about.

# Myths and Truths About Sexual Violence

**MYTH:** Sexual violence only occurs through physical contact.

**TRUTH:** Sexual violence does not always involve physical contact. It can also occur verbally, digitally, emotionally, or psychologically. Forcing someone into sexual acts, insulting their body or sexuality, sending sexually explicit messages without consent, sharing their images without permission, or exposing them to nudity are all forms of sexual violence. At its core, sexual violence is about the absence of consent and the abuse of power. Therefore, it is not limited to physical "touch". Any behavior that violates a person's bodily or sexual boundaries, with or without contact, falls within the scope of sexual violence.

**MYTH:** If someone did not say "no" or physically resist, it means they consented.

**TRUTH:** Consent is a clear, enthusiastic, and freely given "yes". Silence, lack of reaction, or not fighting back do not equal consent. Many people experience a freeze response in moments of fear, threat, or shock. This is a natural trauma reaction that helps the body protect itself, and does not mean the person agreed. During sexual violence, someone might not scream, run away, or move – these are not signs of "acceptance", but of survival. Moreover, physical arousal or bodily responses do not indicate desire or consent; the body can react in complex ways under trauma. Consent must be given freely, consciously, and separately for each act and form of contact. Any action that occurs without consent is sexual violence.

**MYTH:** Increasing penalties will reduce sexual crimes.

**TRUTH:** A structural problem like sexual violence cannot be solved by punishment alone. While harsher sentences are often seen as the quickest solution, punishment by itself is never enough to address the root causes. People who commit sexual violence choose to do so consciously. Rape is not an “uncontrollable impulse”; it is a deliberate act fueled by power, dominance, and impunity. No one is born with a “tendency to rape”; violence is something that is learned over time. For this reason, violating bodily integrity through irreversible punishments (such as “castration”) does not solve the problem; it only obscures the roots of violence. Moreover, perpetrators are not always men. The real solution lies not only in punishing individuals but in transforming the structures that make violence possible in the first place.

This is why **restorative justice** is vital: It centers the person who has been harmed, examines the causes of violence, and seeks to prevent its recurrence. Struggle against sexual violence must take place not only in courtrooms but also in schools, homes, streets, social media, and personal relationships.

### What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice is an approach that, unlike punishment- and perpetrator-focused systems, centers the needs, healing, and empowerment of the person who has been harmed, as well as broader social transformation. Its aim is not merely to punish a “crime”, but to recognize the harm, restore it, and prevent it from happening again. In this approach, the active participation of the person who experienced harm is essential. Their needs, expectations, and wishes are taken into account, the process of restoration is shaped accordingly.

Restorative justice also supports community involvement, acknowledging that violence is not only an individual act but also a product of the social structures that make it possible.

Restorative justice is not a “reconciliation” that legitimizes violence; it is a process that demands accountability, fosters acknowledgment, and strives for transformation. Any process that forces a survivor to face the perpetrator or endangers their safety cannot be called restorative justice. True restoration becomes possible only when the harm is recognized, the perpetrator takes responsibility, and the survivor’s safety is fully ensured.



**MYTH:** Only women and girls are subjected to sexual violence.

**TRUTH:** While sexual violence most often targets women and girls, it is a form of violence that can affect anyone, regardless of gender or gender identity. Sexual violence is not solely a crime against women; it is a social issue fueled by power, control, and impunity. Ignoring and remaining silent about the sexual violence experienced by men, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and boys hinders a comprehensive struggle against sexual violence and renders many survivors invisible.

**MYTH:** Sexual violence does not occur between partners or married couples.

**TRUTH:** Being in a relationship or marriage does not mean perpetual consent. Consent must be given clearly and explicitly each time, and it can be withdrawn at any moment. Otherwise, the act constitutes sexual violence. Saying “no” is not a test of love; it simply means not wanting sexual activity at that moment. In intimate relationships, power imbalances and dynamics of trust or shame can make it difficult to name the violence or seek help, but none of these circumstances ever justify it. Unwanted sexual acts within marriage, where mutual consent is absent, also forms of sexual violence – defined as “marital rape”.

**MYTH:** "They were drunk or under the influence of substances; they did not know what they were doing."

**TRUTH:** Even if the perpetrator of sexual violence is drunk or under the influence of substances, this does not absolve them of responsibility of their actions. This common societal myth attempts to excuse the violence by claiming the perpetrator "lost control". In reality, any act or behavior carried out without consent, regardless of circumstances, is sexual violence, and accountability is not diminished.

**MYTH:** Survivors lie about sexual violence for revenge, regret, or psychological reasons.

**TRUTH:** Sexual violence is one of the most underreported forms of violence worldwide. Due to stigma, fear of retaliation, distrust, and institutional barriers, many people remain silent. Only a very small fraction of reported cases are false; therefore, believing survivors, listening without judgement, and providing safe guidance are essential.

**MYTH:** Sexual violence can make someone gay, lesbian, or trans.

**TRUTH:** This is a homophobic and transphobic myth. No one becomes gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, or intersex as a result of sexual violence or abuse. Gender identity and sexual orientation are intrinsic, natural aspects of a person's existence. Attempting to explain LGBTIQ+ identities through trauma or violence pathologizes sexual identity and perpetuates discrimination. LGBTIQ+ children may become more vulnerable due to societal exclusion, lack of access to support systems, and discrimination, which can make them targets for perpetrators. However, this fact is not an indication of LGBTIQ+ children's existence, but of the systemic failures and discrimination they are subjected to, and the fact that the system does not protect them.

**MYTH:** Sex workers are always sexually active; consent is not needed.

**TRUTH:** Sex workers, like anyone else, have full control and decision-making power over their own bodies. Choosing sex work as a profession does not mean consenting to every sexual act. Each act requires clear, free, and momentary consent. Sex workers have the right to withdraw consent, refuse, or end sexual activity at any time. Occupation does not nullify human rights; any act without consent constitutes sexual violence.

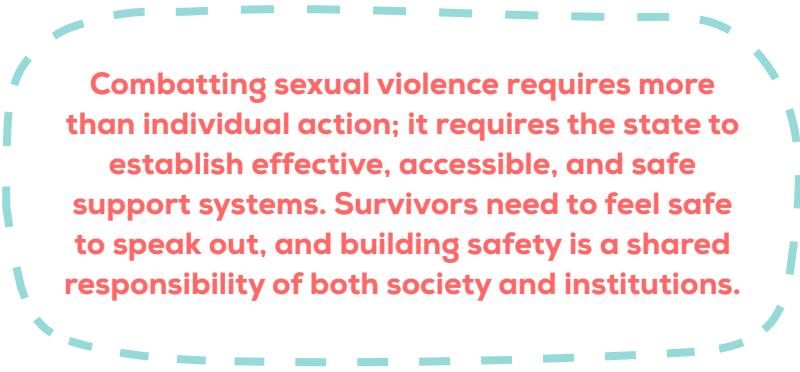
**MYTH:** Actions, clothing, looks, or behavior can “invite” sexual violence.

**TRUTH:** No outfit, behavior, look, or flirtation can justify sexual violence. This myth minimizes the perpetrator’s responsibility and tries to blame the survivor based on what they wore, how they acted, or how they expressed their sexuality. Sexual violence is never a “reaction”; it is a conscious exercise of power, control, and domination. While society continues to treat sexuality as taboo, especially for women and LGBTIQ+ people, their sexual expression is often interpreted as “provocative”. Male sexuality, by contrast, is frequently normalized with myths like “natural”, “inevitable”, or “uncontrollable”. This double standard both obscures sexualized violence and victim-blaming, and reproduces them.

**MYTH:** If a survivor does not file a complaint, the sexual violence they experienced must not have been serious.

**TRUTH:** Remaining silent after sexual violence does not mean the experience was “insignificant”; often, this silence reflects systemic failures and lack of safety. Survivors’ inability to access support services is not an individual shortcoming but a result of the state failing to meet its obligations.

In Türkiye, trauma-informed rape and sexual violence crisis centers or comprehensive support mechanisms accessible to everyone are not widespread. Existing reporting procedures are often lengthy, complex, and re-traumatizing. In an environment where complainants are insufficiently protected, stigmatized by society, and perpetrators remain unpunished, staying silent can become a form of self-preservation for many survivors.



**Combatting sexual violence requires more than individual action; it requires the state to establish effective, accessible, and safe support systems. Survivors need to feel safe to speak out, and building safety is a shared responsibility of both society and institutions.**

## CHAPTER 4

When Someone Close  
to You Says They've  
Been Subjected to  
Sexual Violence:  
**What Can You Do?**

# when someone close to you says they've been subjected to sexual violence: what can you do?

When someone shares their experience of sexual violence with you, it can feel unexpected and overwhelming – but it is also a profound sign of trust. It is completely natural to feel unsure about what to say. Remember: **Listening attentively, without judgement and with compassion**, is one of the most valuable steps you can take to support a survivor's healing process. Support may sometimes involve providing information about available services or guiding them toward resources they might need. Often, however, the most powerful support is simply being present and hearing what they have to say.

For survivors of sexual violence, opening up about their experience can be extremely difficult. Standing by them in this way can create space for empowering and restorative solidarity.

## 1 Listen. Sharing takes courage.

Do not interrupt or ask for details. Even in silence, show that you are present. Saying something as simple as, "I'm here, I'm listening" can be enough.

## 2 Support starts with believing in survivors.

Avoid phrases like, "That couldn't have happened". Doubting the survivor's truth can create a second trauma.

### 3 Ask what they need.

Do not tell them “what to do”. Ask instead: “What do you want?”, “How can I support you?” Let them retain control and express their needs.

### 4 Avoid blaming comments or questions.

Questions like, “Why did you go there?” or “What didn’t you say no?” can make the survivor feel guilty. Remember: The responsibility for sexual violence lies solely with the perpetrator.

### 5 Do not overreact; respect their feelings and choices.

People react differently during and after sexual violence. Seeking support or filing a report is entirely their choice. No one is obliged to explain their experiences or complain. Being there means accompanying them in their decisions, not judging them.



### 6 Healing is a process.

Healing is a process, and involves ups and downs. Comments like, “Why are you still affected?” can isolate the survivor. Respect their pace and process.

### 7 Do not share without consent.

Information shared with you in trust should not be passed on to others without permission. Breaching that trust can harm the survivor. If you want to support them, make decisions together.

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## Explore support resources together.

Research reliable resources collaboratively. You could visit [csdestek.org](http://csdestek.org) together, contact a support hotline, or accompany them to seek professional help.

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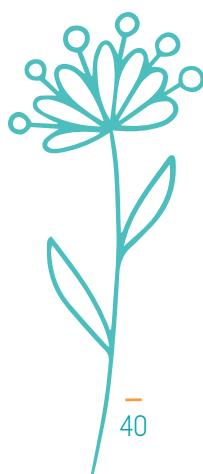
## Be understanding and give time.

Post-sexual violence needs and boundaries vary. Some may avoid physical touch, others may seek closeness. Both are normal and a part of the healing process. Respect their emotions and rhythm, and offer support in the way and time they need.

**10**

## Remember your own boundaries.

Supporting someone can be challenging. You do not have to be endlessly strong. Avoid making promises you cannot keep, and clearly communicate your own boundaries and limits. Do not hesitate to seek support for yourself if needed.





Support systems after sexual violence are personalized and varied. When a friend shares their experiences of violence with you, it shows that they trust you and consider you part of their support system. To learn more about what a support system is, you can watch the video "[What Is a Support System?](#)". For self-help exercises after sexual violence, you can recommend the website "[What Is the Post-Sexual Violence Support System?](#)" to your friend. [These resources](#) can also be helpful in supporting a friend experiencing sexual violence within a relationship.



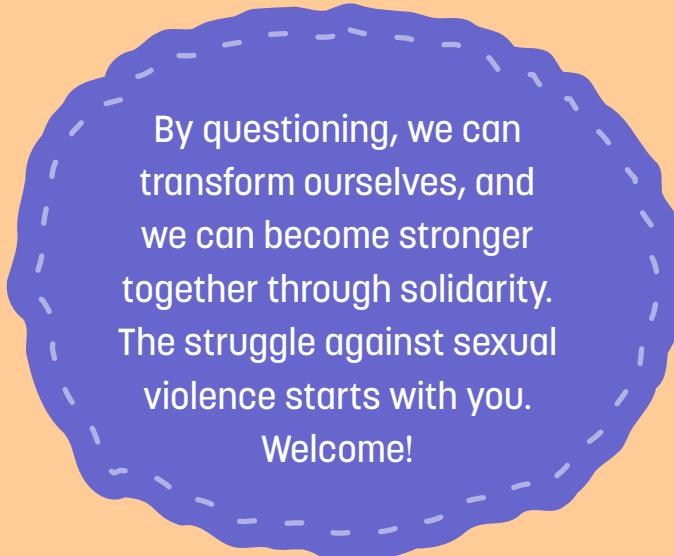
[Video: What is a Support System?](#)



[Web: Where is the Support System?](#)

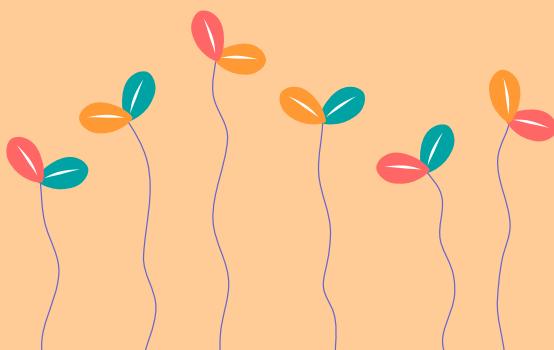


[Web: TabuKamu](#)



By questioning, we can transform ourselves, and we can become stronger together through solidarity. The struggle against sexual violence starts with you.

Welcome!



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [Glossary of Concepts](#)
-  [Not My Fault: Sexual Violence Information for Survivors of Sexual Violence](#)
-  [Safe Relationships Guide for Youth \(in Turkish\)](#)
-  [Safety Plans to Increase Safety in Youth Relationships \(in Turkish\)](#)
-  [www.tabukamu.com/p/iliskiler \(in Turkish\)](#)
-  [Responsibilities of Adults in Struggle Against Sexual Abuse](#)
-  [Rights-Based Visual Archive on Sexual Violence](#)
-  [Rights-Based Journalism on Sexual Violence \(in Turkish\)](#)
-  ["Healing Knowledge" Magazine \(in Turkish\)](#)
-  [Using the Right Words: Reporting on Sexual Violence \(in Turkish\)](#)
-  [Legal Information on Online Sexual Violence](#)



+90 542 585 3990



[info@cinselsiddetlemucadele.org](mailto:info@cinselsiddetlemucadele.org)



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