



LANGUAGE WHEN SPEAKING ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Language surrounding sexual violence must be respectful and supportive. The STOP Campaign values the promotion of language that is trauma-informed and intersectional to foster a safe and inclusive environment for all.

Trauma-informed language does not attempt to 'fix', place blame or question someone's experience.

Intersectional language is responsive to different dimensions of someone's identity, and acknowledges that one label is not sufficient to account for an individual experience.

Everyone experiences and responds to sexual violence differently. What constitutes safe and inclusive language can differ from person to person and within cultures.

1 How to use trauma-informed and intersectional language:

- Respect the anonymity, confidentiality and boundaries of others and their experiences.
- Use appropriate gender pronouns and don't make assumptions. It's always better to ask than assume.
- Have meaningful, safe conversations about sexual violence, trauma and mental health.
- Understand that particular body language cues are not universal and respect each individual's bodily autonomy.
- Discourage rape jokes and slut-shaming when safe to do so.

2 Consequences of unsafe language:

- Contributing to negative stereotypes that normalise rape culture.
- Reinforcing damaging stigmas.
- Re-traumatising victim-survivors.
- Triggering vicarious trauma in others.
- Causing direct harm by discouraging victim-survivors from sharing their stories and asking for help.
- Placing blame on victim-survivors for their experiences.