Lesson

Transforming a Culture of Silence: Preventing Sexual Violence and Rape

Important Terminology

Accountability: A willingness or obligation to accept responsibility for one’s actions.

Acquaintance rape: Also known as “date rape”. Rape between two people who know each other.

Age of consent: The age at which a person is considered by law to be able to consent to sexual activity. Someone above this age who has sex with someone below it can often be charged with statutory rape, even if the younger person wants to consent.

Blaming the victim: Victim blaming is a devaluing act that occurs when the victim(s) of a crime or an accident is/are held responsible—in whole or in part—for the crimes that have been committed against them.

Bystander: Anyone who is not a perpetrator or victim who witnesses a given situation; this may include friends, family, teammates, teachers, peers, adults, staff.

Bystander intervention: A strategy to change social norms in peer cultures at all age and grade levels. Bystander intervention teaches people how to intervene, interrupt, speak up and take action to influence an event that is potentially dangerous, such as an assault.

Child pornography: Federal and state laws make it a crime to produce, possess, distribute (on and offline) or sell pornographic materials that exploit or portray a minor—someone under the age of 18.

Consent: Permission for something to happen. An agreement.

Culpability: Responsibility for a fault or wrong; blame.

Cyber-bullying: The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. Electronic communication includes communication via devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers and tablets, as well as tools such as social media sites, text messages, chats and websites.

Incapacitated: Having lost the ability to do something in the usual or desired way.
Justice: Just behavior or treatment; the administration of the law or authority in maintaining this.

Perpetrator: Someone who has committed a crime or offense.

Pornography: Written, visual or other kinds of media expressly designed to elicit feelings of sexual desire and/or that people use to elicit those feelings.

PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder): A collection of long-term symptoms, or long-term psychological harm, from having been sexually assaulted or having been the victim of any trauma or horrific experience. Symptoms include depression, anxiety, flashbacks, substance abuse, disconnection, irrational self-blame, a preoccupation with the trauma and difficulty concentrating and sleeping.

Rape: The legal definition of rape varies from state to state. Nonconsensual sexual behavior that usually includes some form of penetration of a bodily orifice.

Rape culture: A term used to describe the broad cultural factors that encourage unhealthy masculinity and highly sexualized femininity that ultimately enable sexual violence and the blaming and shaming of assault victims and survivors.

Rape kit: A container for a sexual assault forensic exam that includes a checklist, materials and instructions, along with envelopes and containers to package any specimens collected during the exam. A rape kit may also be referred to as a Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK).

Sexting: The practice of sending nude or semi-nude pictures by cell phone or other electronic media; the term means sexual text message. Sexting is against the law and any minor who sends nude photos of themselves (or others) can be prosecuted under federal child pornography laws. These laws may be changing in some states, so please do your research about current status.

Sexual assault: A form of sexual violence. Any kind of nonconsensual sexual behavior in which a person is coerced or forced against their will. It includes any kind of nonconsensual sexual touching and any kind of oral, vaginal or anal penetration.

Sexual violence: An umbrella term for all personal violations that are sexual in nature, including harassment, unwanted touching and sexual assault, rape and other acts.

Slut-shaming: The action or fact of stigmatizing a woman for engaging in behavior judged to be promiscuous or sexually provocative.

Social Media: Any website or application that enables users to share content, including text, photos and video, with one another. This includes large social networking websites such as Facebook and Snapchat, as well as private email lists, such as those that exist within schools or on email servers.
**Survivor:** An individual who has been raped or sexually assaulted. Many of these individuals and their advocates prefer to use “survivor” rather than “victim” because it’s more empowering.

**Upstander:** A person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.

**Victim:** Someone who has been the target of a crime. For some, the term “victim” feels disempowering, as if the crime defines a permanent loss of agency. For this reason it is important to talk about “victims” and “survivors” in order to acknowledge both.

**Victim blaming:** When the victim of a crime or any misconduct is held entirely or partially responsible for the wrong.

**Witness:** A person who sees an event, typically a crime or accident, take place.