

## Recognizing sexual coercion

**If you can answer "YES" to any of these questions, you may be experiencing sexual coercion:**

- ▶ Do you feel pressure from your date, partner or friends?
- ▶ Are there times you don't want to have sex, but feel like you can't say no?
- ▶ Have you ever had a sexual experience that left you frightened, angry or feeling guilty?
- ▶ Have you ever had sex without using a condom because your partner didn't want to use one?

## Stand up to sexual coercion

- ▶ Know your limits.
- ▶ Respect yourself. Remember, just because someone desires you does not mean they value you.
- ▶ Speak Your Mind. It is better to risk hurting their feelings than it is to do something you feel uncomfortable about or will regret

**Trust your feelings and follow your instincts:**

- ▶ If you feel uncomfortable with a situation in any way—trust that feeling and trust yourself!
- ▶ Say no firmly and then leave immediately. And, seek help if needed.

## Ways to respond to sexual pressure

**You could say:**

*"I really like you. I'm just not ready to have sex."*

*"If you really care about me, you'll respect my decision."*

*"I said no. I don't owe you an explanation."*

Resources:

*Preventing Sexual Coercion Among Adolescents: A Training Guide for the Family Planning Provider*, Emory University Regional Training Center 2nd Edition, 2003.

LoveIsRespect.org

*Sexual Coercion Awareness and Prevention*, Kelsey McCoy, M.S., and James Oelschlager, Psy.D., Florida Institute of Technology.

Wikipedia

*Information and resources  
for responding to*

# SEXUAL COERCION



**Indiana Coalition to  
End Sexual Assault**

Engage. Educate. Empower.

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## What is sexual coercion?

Sexual coercion is the act of persuading or coercing into engaging in an unwanted sexual activity through physical force, threat of physical force, or emotional manipulation. It differs from rape in that the coerced individual consents to the sexual activity for a variety of reasons. The coerced individual feels it is easier to consent to sexual activity than decline due to an imbalance of power. Coercive situations may not be obvious, even to the coerced individual.

The definition also includes “the act of using pressure, alcohol or drugs, to have sexual contact with someone against his or her will and using persistent attempts to have sexual contact with someone who has already refused.”

### Coercion can be used to obtain the following sexual behaviors:

- ▶ Sex
- ▶ Kissing
- ▶ Oral Sex
- ▶ Petting
- ▶ Caressing
- ▶ Genital Touching
- ▶ Other Sexual Behaviors

## Types of coercion

### Verbal Sexual Coercion:

Can be flattering, name calling, begging, arguing, lying, tricking or deliberately misleading

*"You know you want it."*

*"I'm so hot for you."*

*"Don't make me stop now."*

*"Don't be a prude."*

### Emotional Sexual Coercion:

Involves perpetrator taking advantage of trust, intimacy, or emotional instability

- ▶ Using emotional pressure  
*"You're not a virgin—why not have sex with me?"*  
*"You know you want it."*
- ▶ Exploitation of other person's emotions  
*Saying things like, "If you LOVE me, you'll have sex with me."*
- ▶ Threats (friendship or relationship is over)  
*"If I don't get sex from you, I'll find it elsewhere."*
- ▶ Using guilt
- ▶ Wearing one down through constant, emotional laden phrases

### Social Sexual Coercion:

Involves peer pressure and/or threats of social isolation

- ▶ Buying dinner means owing sexual favors
- ▶ Using social standing or power to get sexual favors  
*This behavior can also be termed “sextortion”—a form of sexual exploitation that employs non-physical forms of coercion to extort sexual favors from an individual. Sextortion also refers to a form of sexual blackmail in which sexual information or images are used to extort sexual favors from an individual. Social media such as Snapchat, Kik, Yik Yak, Instagram, Periscope, text messages and many more are often used to share personal information and/or nude photos and become the means by which the individual is extorted and threats are made to share that personal information and/or nude photos if sexual favors are not performed.*
- ▶ Buying gifts to make someone feel as though they “owe” sexual favors
- ▶ Saying things like, "Everyone expects that we're having sex."

Another form of coercion involves making the person feel as though the *only* answer is to have sex, one partner relentlessly pushing their advances upon the other until he or she finally gives in—out of a sense of guilt, an effort to appease or even just to bring an end to the argument.

## Emotional effects of sexual coercion

Feelings of:

- ▶ Exploitation
- ▶ Vulnerability
- ▶ Betrayal
- ▶ Shame

The individual who has been coerced may feel uncomfortable and/or violated as their right to freely determine the circumstances in which she or he engages in sexual activity has been dishonored.