



Suojellaan Lapsia
Protect Children

#MyFriendToo

Terminology on sexual violence for youth

More information:



Consent means that all people involved want to participate in the activity. Consent is always necessary for all sexual activities.

Those taking part in an activity know what the activity in question is. They clearly say (or otherwise communicate) that they want to take part in it. Consent can be taken away at any time, for any reason. Even if a person agrees to take part in an activity at first, they can change their mind at any point.

If a person does not say “no”, it does not mean that they say “yes”. It is very important to communicate openly. Always ask how someone feels about an action before doing it.

Even in a relationship, a person has a right to not take part in sexual activities even if they agreed previously. Consent is needed every time you engage in any sexual activity!

The age of protection/consent – is the age when a young person can agree to participate in a sexual activity. When someone is above the age of protection/consent, they can give consent (see above).

In Finland, the age of consent is 16. This means that a person over 18 who engages in any form of sexual activity with a child who is under 16 may be punished by law. If the older person is a teacher, coach, own parent, or other authority figure, the age of consent is 18.

Children may legally engage in consensual sexual activities with each other under the age of 16, as long as both participants are close in age and of a similar developmental level.

Sexual violence is, broadly speaking, any sexual act to which a person did not agree.

Sexual violence does not always include physical contact. For example, sexual questions or comments from an adult to a child are an act of sexual violence too. Sexual violence can also occur online. For example, when an adult sends a naked picture to a child or tries to start a sexual conversation.

Sexual harassment against children and young people is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. This is a form of sexual violence.

Sexual harassment can be:

- Verbal – said out loud. For example, sexual comments or jokes; sexual remarks or questions about the body, or clothing of a child.
 - Physical – touching a child directly or with an object.
 - Non-verbal – sexual gestures or expressions; sending sexual content, messages, images, or videos to a child; recording or distributing sexual pictures or videos of a child; exposing genitals to a child.
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Grooming – is a process where an offender tries to befriend or in some other way prepare a child with the intention to commit acts of sexual violence against them.

The offender may be a stranger, but also a familiar person. Grooming can happen both online and offline. Online, for example on social media platforms, offenders can create a fake profile, pretending to be someone else, often a much younger person. It can be very difficult to differentiate a normal new friendship or relationship from grooming.

Sexting – exchange of sexually explicit messages, images, or videos.

Sexting can be done when both individuals of a similar age want to and agree to do so. When messages, images or videos are received, sent, or forwarded unasked or unwanted, it makes it a crime. Sexual messages, images or videos sent to a child or requested to be sent by an adult is a crime.

Sexual extortion – is a situation when the offender threatens to spread sexually explicit images or personal information about a child unless they agree to the demands which can involve acts of sexual violence. These demands can be for example more sexually explicit images, sexual favours, or money.



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