

Information sheet

Image-based abuse

Image-based abuse refers to threatening to share or to sharing an intimate photo or video without the person's consent. This impacts on a person at the time of the offence, but also afterwards, and can lead to criticism and/or harassment from those who have seen or heard about the image. Image-based abuse tactics can also be used as a coercive control tactic in domestic and family violence.

Victim-blaming attitudes are common. It is important to understand that not all photos have been consented to, and social media may not be accurate (the images may be fake images).



Background to the story

Zara is 21 years of age and has been living in Australia for one year. She is on a student visa. Zara comes from a very insular community. Zara has enjoyed the freedom of not living with family but has maintained close contact with her family and friends at home. Zara has been dating Dae, who is 22. Dae is not from Zara's community.

Overview

You will watch a short video to explore the topic of image-based abuse and use the questions provided to reflect on it.

Objectives

- Understand what impact image-based abuse can have.
- Consider the role of choice, pressure, and the concept of consent.
- Understand the personal, social, and legal impacts of image-based abuse.
- Know where to get help and support.



Zara's story:
youtu.be/BGgPtOauFh4

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Scene 1 - The photo

Zara is talking to her sister when her boyfriend, Dae, arrives unexpectedly. Zara is very uncomfortable with this, but regardless, Dae enters her room and without permission, takes photos. Zara is upset about this, and Dae is angry about Zara being upset.

Q 1: What is happening in this scene?

Reflection:

Think about consent and making choices. Consider how Zara's actions and requests are ignored by Dae. Consider that Zara's rights are not being upheld — it's not only that she hasn't given consent. Coming from a background where men's wishes are expected to be respected, does Zara fully understand what consent means?

Q 2: Who is responsible for the photo?

Reflection:

Think about responsibility. Consider who is responsible for the photo being taken. Should Zara be blamed if she is not consenting?

Scene 2 - The phone call

Zara is talking to her friend, Jess, when her sister calls. Zara's sister tells her that there is a photo of her and Dae online. Zara is very distressed by this.

Q 1: What is the impact to Zara of this photo being posted online?

Reflection:

How might Zara be feeling? Consider Zara's perspective — she may be feeling frustrated that Dae took the photo without her consent or distressed that Dae posted the photo without her consent. She may be worried she is bringing shame on her family or disappointing her family. She may be reflecting on her family wishes versus her own wishes, or she may be feeling fear.

Q 2: What do you think would have occurred if the photo was taken with Zara not wearing her hijab?

Reflection:

What are the laws in Australia around image-based abuse?

In Australia image-based abuse is defined as photos or videos of activities or actions that are sexual or naked (even partly). It is also image-based abuse when a person takes a photo of someone without their clothing of religious or cultural significance.

The image or video can be real or fake.

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Scene 3 - The outcome

Zara wonders what she should do about this and talks to her friend, Jess. Jess offers advice to Zara about support services and places that can help.

Q 1: In what ways can people be more empathetic towards Zara's situation?

Reflection:

Consider how Zara tried to avoid this photo being taken. Consider that she did not invite Dae to her room, she asked him to leave, she did not consent to the photo being taken, and that she broke up with him.

Consider the importance of not shaming or blaming the victim, but instead it is the perpetrator who bears responsibility. Think about the ramifications – they are not just from the perpetrator of the image-based abuse but may be from multiple people.

Q 2: What do you think Zara can do next?

Reflection:

Think about how Zara can get support. Consider how Zara would get information and report the event.

Think about that it is not the fault of the victim.

Support services

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence. They provide confidential information, counselling and support.

Contact details:

W: www.1800respect.org.au

P: 1800 737 732

Adira NSW Multicultural Centre for Women's and Family Safety

Adira supports effective, culturally responsive safety services for migrant and refugee women, children and families. They provide collaborative case management as well as referral pathways for specialist support.

Contact details:

W: [www.safetycentre@ssi.org.au](mailto:safetycentre@ssi.org.au)

P: 02 8111 7077

eSafety Commissioner

eSafety is Australia's independent regulator for online safety. They educate Australians about online safety risks and help to remove harmful content such as cyberbullying of children, adult cyber abuse and intimate images or videos shared without consent.

Contact details:

W: www.esafety.gov.au

NSW Police Force

If you believe you are experiencing technology-facilitated abuse — such as stalking, intimidation, or image-based abuse — you can report it to your local police.

In an emergency, call 000.

Support services

Wesnet

Wesnet provides relief and support to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based violence. They provide material relief to women and children as well as educational resources and advice to women and children to increase their safety.

Contact details:

E: wesnet@wesnet.org.au
P: 1800 937 638

Immigrant Women's SpeakOut

Immigrant Women's SpeakOut is a key organisation for migrant and refugee women within NSW supporting women subjected to domestic and family violence or who are at risk of homelessness due to violence or abuse. Immigrant Women's SpeakOut provides information, guidance and other direct services.

Contact details:

W: www.speakout.org.au
P: 02 9635 8022

Women's Legal Services NSW

Women's Legal Service NSW (WLS NSW) is a community legal centre providing women across NSW with a range of free legal services, with specialist legal services relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, family law, discrimination, victims support, child protection, human rights and access to justice.

Contact details:

W: www.wlsnsw.org.au
P: Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line:
02 8745 6999

Muslim Women Australia

Muslim Women Australia offers a wide range of services including settlement support for newly arrived migrants and refugees, community development programs, financial counselling, legal aid, and specific support for domestic violence and homelessness through their service, Linking Hearts.

Contact details:

W: www.mwa.org.au
P: 02 9750 6916
