

Information sheet

Impersonation

Impersonation occurs when a person uses someone else's social media accounts, email, or other accounts, and acts in their place, most often maliciously. It can also be when a person creates an account or profile pretending to be someone else. They may even set up an account that looks like it belongs to another person. This may be done to embarrass or damage reputation. Impersonation can happen without the victim-survivor knowing until there is a significant impact – such as a large debt in their name. Creating a fake account and impersonation is a crime.

Overview

You will watch a short video to explore the topic of impersonation and use the questions provided to reflect on it.

Objectives

- Understand what impact impersonation can have.
- Understand the personal, social, and legal impacts of impersonation.
- Know where to get help and support.



Background to the story

Mae is 30 years of age and has two children, a seven-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son. Mae has been living in Australia for three years after arriving with her abusive ex-husband, Jin. Mae has been separated from Jin for six months and has been living in transitional housing. Mae successfully applied for an apartment and has been organising to move.

 **Mae's story:**
youtu.be/8cd3VQDP_1A

Information sheet

Image-based abuse

Scene 1 - Preparing to move

Mae is packing her house to move when she finds out the real estate agency is not going to lease her the apartment. Mae is very distressed about this and asks for help from her social worker.

Q 1: What is happening here?

Reflection:

Consider how confused Mae must be. Think about how this affects her, and what steps she might take to understand what happened and try to fix it.

Q 2: How can someone act as you?

Reflection:

Consider how someone can pretend to be someone else. Consider the use of technology such as email or social media accounts and how difficult it is for the receiver to know what is real.

Scene 2 - Unpacking

Mae realises that her ex-husband has been impersonating her through her email. Mae's social worker talks to her about ways in which she can protect her email and other accounts. Mae's social worker also talks to her about the laws that protect her in Australia.

Q 1: What are some ways in which an abuser can continue to control someone's life even after the separation? What could the impact be?

Reflection:

Think about ways this can happen – for example, someone could set up a bank account in another person's name, someone could be using email to arrange things in another's name, or somebody might act as another on their social media or other sites and post inappropriate things.

Q 2: How common is it for someone to set up accounts for other people? When does it become a problem?

Reflection:

Discuss the difference between support and control, for example getting assistance (husband helping a wife set up account) versus someone controlling accounts to abuse.

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
