

"Stand still in that which is pure."

~ George Fox

An Introduction to Our Collective Work: Ensuring Our Communities Are Free From Sexual Misconduct

Establishing Context

All instances of sexual misconduct rend the fabric of our communities and stand in direct opposition to our shared Quaker testimonies and core values such as truth, equality, nonviolence, mutual respect, honesty, and integrity. Therefore, we engage in this work as a part of our collective commitments: to our love for each other and our communities; to our Quaker heritage; and to our experience of ongoing revelation as our hearts are tendered to each other.

To begin this session, we offer these quotations to help your group ground this time in the foundation that draws us together.

"Truth will not lose ground by being tried." ~ Isaac Penington

"Gender equality is not a women's issue. It is a human issue that affects us all." ~ Alice Paul

[Note to session leader: if your Monthly Meeting has spent time identifying shared values that ground your particular community, opening this session by refreshing memories of those covenants, mission statements, and agreements would be ideal here. Begin this time by reminding yourselves of your goals and highest intentions for your community.]

The next step of this education session is designed to both establish definitions — so that the group has a shared vocabulary — and provide statistics so that we might glimpse the breadth of this societal problem. Note: professionals in the fields of research and treatment agree that the statistics we have are inadequate, as the vast majority of sexual misconduct is never brought to light. According to a Justice Department analysis of violent crime in 2016, nearly 80% of rapes and sexual assaults go unreported. There are many reasons for this situation: historically, women's voices have been discounted; trauma that occurs with the abuse contributes to voicelessness; many who have been victimized have been silenced not only by our culture and by their trauma, but even by those they love when they attempted to speak up — because their stories were too painful for their listeners to bear.

In their Ministry to Survivors, University Friends Meeting, Seattle, has recognized that even years after an assault, "the voicelessness imposed by sexual abuse may complicate survivors' self-expression."

To glimpse the breadth of this societal problem

Defining our scope: Please see the full text of our note on page 6 on Child Sexual Abuse. OVYM has a separate policy on Child Safety that directly addresses the matter of sexual abuse of children. The incident that spurred the creation of the Task Force was an allegation of sexual assault between adults. As a result, the Task Force has focused on adult behaviors. However, because first instances of abuse frequently occur during childhood, we do mention children's experiences below.

Definitions and Statistics: Types of Sexual Misconduct

Definitions are adapted from <https://firststep.org/education>

Statistics are from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center: <https://www.nsvrc.org/statistics> - parenthetical letters after each statistic refer to original sources, for those who wish to research the data further. We note that most statistics, below, come from crime reports. Because not all sexual misconduct is recognized as a crime, there are no nationally recognized statistics for those instances of abuse. We suggest that the statistics for the most violent, criminal offenses have a lot to teach all of us about the prevalence of other sexual misconduct.

Sexual misconduct is a broad term encompassing any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation.

Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any sex or gender, and it can occur between people of the same or a different sex or gender.

Misconduct can be an overt violation, or so subtle or normalized by society that one does not realize until years later that an inappropriate incident occurred. If one is confused or uneasy by recalling a sexually charged memory, or is unsure if they have been a victim of sexual misconduct, chances are high that the individual was indeed victimized. It is important to remember that healthy sexual relationships are based on mutuality, respect, trust and consent. Every individual has agency over their own body, and has the right to decide what does or does not happen to it.

Misconduct includes but is not limited to sexual contact, sexual language, or sexual behavior. It can include actions such as: child, youth or adult sexual abuse, harassment, rape, sexual assault, sexualized verbal comments or visuals, unwelcome touching of body, hair, or clothing, unwelcome advances, pressing up against a person's body, blocking a person's movements, inappropriate hugging or kissing, tickling, playful aggression, masterbating in the presence of another, stalking, and sexual intercourse. Inappropriate sexual innuendos, flirtations, jokes, pressure, or touching are unacceptable even when the offender states they were "Just kidding" or "Didn't mean any harm."

Following are several definitions of some different types of sexual misconduct. Not all misconduct is assault, nor is this a comprehensive list.

Sexual harassment - unwanted sexual advances, verbal remarks that are obscene or carry innuendo, attempt to leverage social "rank" to manipulate or coerce undesired physical

contact, uncomfortably suggestive “mindgames,” or requests for sexual favors. Sexual harassment can occur in the workplace, online, in Meetings, the general public, or in other social settings. **Harassment is defined by the impact on the victim, not the intent of the perpetrator.** (See note on the next page on treatment professionals’ growing acknowledgement of the harm perpetrated by sexual misconduct.)

Sexual assault - sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. Sexual assault is a broad spectrum that includes various kinds of unwanted sexual contact, and can even occur without physical touch. Different types of sexual assault are listed and defined below:

Fondling - touching the private body parts of another person. Fondling can occur through or underneath the clothing.

Forced Sexual Contact - force doesn’t always refer to physical pressure. Perpetrators may use emotional coercion, psychological force, or manipulation to coerce a victim into non-consensual touching of private areas. This also includes forcing a victim to perform sexual acts they do not want to perform, such as oral sex or penetration.

- In the U.S., one in three women and one in six men experienced some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime (o)
- Almost half (49.5%) of multiracial women and over 45% of American Indian/Alaska Native women experienced some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetimes (o)

Attempted Rape - assault on another person with the intent to rape, but rape does not occur.

Rape - a form of sexual assault in which vaginal, anal, or oral penetration occurs without consent. Rape includes intercourse with a minor (statutory rape) and forced sex within a marriage.

- One in five women and one in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives (a) ● 51.1% of female victims of rape reported being raped by an intimate partner and 40.8% by an acquaintance (a)
- 52.4% of male victims report being raped by an acquaintance and 15.1% by a stranger (a)
- 91% of victims of rape and sexual assault are female, and nine percent are male (m)
- In eight out of 10 cases of rape, the victim knew the perpetrator (j)
- Eight percent of rapes occur while the victim is at work (c) One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old (d)
- 30% of women were between the ages of 11 and 17 at the time of their first completed rape (a)
- More than one third of women who report being raped before age 18 also experience rape as an adult (a)

Impact Statements

One practical, concrete way to acknowledge the ongoing pain and the need for healing for those victimized by sexual misconduct, and the harm done to communities who do not adequately take steps to prevent and address harm, is to listen to impact statements from those directly affected. Three anonymous statements follow. Those who prepared this resource make a direct request to you:

Please invite the Light to search your heart as you consider these stories.

"If you love the light,
then you come to the light to be proved,
and tried whether your works be wrought in God.
But that which hates the light, turns from the light..." ~ Margaret Fell

Impact Statement #1

"I grew up in a Christian church, going multiple times a week. As soon as I started to hit puberty, an older male church member (50-60 years older than me) would force me into hugs any time I saw him, saying "where's my hug" or "there's my girl." He would squeeze me very tightly to his body. This happened every time I saw this man, and would occur in front of my parents, his wife, other church members, youth leaders, church leaders — the list goes on. Nobody ever said anything about it. I would walk to avoid him, or try to make jokes to avoid it, but it never seemed to work. Eventually I even spoke to my parents about it, and they just brushed it off. I'm now in my late 20s, and this still happens if I visit the church. It didn't hit me until recently how inappropriate this behavior was, and how abhorrent it is that no adults ever intervened. It was just considered normal and expected that I, as a young woman, owed this male acquaintance physical affection just because he was there."

Anonymous - (<https://everydaysexism.com>)

#1 Possible queries for consideration:

Have you experienced or witnessed anything similar?

What keeps people from noticing/ responding in situations like this?

What do you imagine a young person in this scenario would feel during and after the conversations in which the child's concerns and discomfort were "brushed off"?

How would Friends in our Meeting respond?

What kind of policies and practices might help in preventing or responding to such incidents?

Impact Statement #2

My father is very well-loved and respected in every Meeting he has been part of. As an adult I faced the truth of my molestation as a child, and very painful memories of my father came flooding back and incapacitated me. When I told some Friends what I was dealing with, there was disbelief. I was told that I must be remembering wrong, that our memories from childhood can get mixed up. When I needed to break off my relationship with my father, I felt judged by others. I was not being a good Quaker because I did not mend the relationship. Thank God a few Friends listened and supported me.

~Anonymous Quaker

#2 Possible queries for consideration::

When a member of our community trusts us with an account of their experiences, what steps can we take to honor that trust?

If a story holds pain that feels too much for us to bear, how can we respond in a way that is still loving to them?

If we hear a story that we don't feel adequate or qualified to respond to, what steps might we take next?

What does this person's experience of being judged "not being a good Quaker" bring up for you?

What do we do with important situations which inherently invite members to "take sides" between members of the Meeting? - How do we fairly handle the matter?

Impact Statement #3

I attended a women's circle at a [large Quaker organizational] meeting. I shared about a problem with sexual harassment in our meeting and asked for resources and support. One woman said that sexual harassment is impossible among Friends because we do everything as a community, and we're aware of what people are doing with each other. Her words belittled my own experience and the experience of a woman in my meeting.

~Anonymous Quaker

#3 Possible queries for consideration::

When we hear of instances of sexual misconduct in Quaker contexts, what is our own response?

When we hear an account of someone's experience that rattles our expectations and assumptions, what steps can we take to remain open?

When someone asks for resources and support, what response might we make that is loving and helpful to them?

Contrasting Nurturing Spiritual Silence with Silence used to Hide

A few lines from Pastor Gricel Medina (twitter handle: @pastorgricel)

“Silence is spiritual when we are reflective, contemplating, or pondering deeply upon a matter.

“Silence is not spiritual when we use it to hide in order to avoid personal responsibility, accountability, and disregard opportunities to advocate for those suffering injustices.”

Possible queries for consideration:

Have you experienced or witnessed anything similar within yourself?

Was this within a Quaker context?

How can we guard against using silence in order to avoid what is unpleasant, uncomfortable?

What about what is unjust?

What else comes up for you as you read these lines?

“When we open our eyes to the Inward Light, we are empowered to fulfill the purpose of our lives — to acknowledge and overcome our limitations and to live faithfully.”

~Paul Buckley, *Primitive Quakerism Revived*, page 57

Continued from Page 2 — A Note on Child Sexual Abuse: as mentioned on page 2, the charge of the Task Force on Sexual Misconduct is to address behaviors and actions between adults. OVYM has a separate policy on Child Safety that directly addresses the matter of sexual abuse of children, and a number of Monthly Meetings have either adapted that resource or produced policies sufficient for their own use. If your Meeting has not labored on such a policy, or chosen to adapt OVYM’s, we urge you to consider doing so. Details are available at the OVYM website, or a request can be made to the Religious Nurture and Education Committee — Nikki Coffey Tousley is clerk (nikkitousley@gmail.com). Below, we provide a mere glimpse of the scope of the number of children who are affected (all statistics are from our earlier quoted source, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center <https://www.nsvrc.org/statistics>) :

- 96% of people who sexually abuse children are male, and 76.8% of people who sexually abuse children are adults (l)
- 34% of people who sexually abuse a child are family members of the child (l) ● It is estimated that 325,000 children per year are currently at risk of becoming victims of commercial child sexual exploitation (k)
- The average age at which girls first become victims of prostitution is 12-14 years old, and the average age at which boys first become victims of prostitution is 11-13 years

- Only 12% of child sexual abuse is ever reported to the authorities (f)

Our Continuing Task Force Work: Your Task Force on Sexual Misconduct continues to develop educational resources on a number of topics:

-a collection of many more impact statements entrusted to committee members -some guidance on the topic of Sexual Misconduct for Monthly Meeting committees charged with pastoral care

In addition we are considering the development of educational resources on other topics.

Two further examples follow:

A note on consent: imagine forcing someone to have an unwanted cup of tea

Because consent is key, the best approach is to ask before initiating physical contact. One way to consider this is through the “Tea Analogy”, below:

This video is considered by some an excellent overview of consent:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU>

That youtube video was originally in the context of a full discussion of consent:

<https://stdtestingfacilities.com/sexual-consent-101-a-basic-guide/>

Other individuals believe it only begins the conversation, as stated in this response:

<https://theconversation.com/sexual-consent-really-isnt-like-a-cup-of-tea-but-at-least-were-talking-about-it-50638> (from November 20, 2015)

Additional note on the tendency for our culture to discount survivors’ stories

This passage refers to survivors of potentially lethal physical abuse, but the underlying dynamics identified also apply to all survivors of abuse, including sexual misconduct:

“... because victims are so physically and emotionally damaged — their lives so ‘messy,’ [...] they’re less ‘likeable’ than ‘the average batterer,’ according to David Adams, leader of an abuse intervention program. Our society, Adams says, loves abusers, who can be charming, charismatic, and successful, beloved by institutions dedicated to elevating male authority and vanity [...]. They’re all around us, he says, and ‘they’re clustered at the top’.” (source: “When Will We Care About Domestic Violence?” by Caroline Fraser, *NYReview of Books*, May 28, 2020 pg. 16).

Larger cultural context

USC George Tyndall

-NYTimes "U.S.C. Agrees to Pay \$1.1 Billion to Patients of Gynecologist Accused of Abuse"

<https://nyti.ms/2P038ja> March 2021

- LA Times 2018

<https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-usc-doctor-misconduct-complaints-20180515-story.html>

.....

"USC said in a statement that it does not believe Tyndall should be allowed to treat patients and said the university is "re-evaluating its process" on reporting physicians. Last week, after The Times sent administrators detailed questions about Tyndall, school administrators contacted the Los Angeles County district attorney's office and later the Los Angeles Police Department. The outcome of those conversations is not clear.

"By the time Tyndall resigned, Gilbert had also left USC. She said she had been promised a promotion and even given business cards with the new title. But she said that in the wake of her report to the rape crisis center, administrators rescinded the promotion. Some clinic managers stopped talking to her, she said. She and many co-workers interpreted it as retaliation for speaking out about Tyndall. She resigned in June 2017.

"USC disputed Gilbert's account and denied retaliating against her.

"In a series of interviews this spring, Tyndall portrayed himself as a victim. At one point, he offered a theory that chaperones reported him because they had trouble reaching orgasm and were jealous of young patients with tighter pelvic muscles.

"After speaking for more than 10 hours, Tyndall cut off communication with The Times and said he was mulling over a lawsuit against USC that might force administrators to reinstate him at Engemann.