

5 REASONS

REASONS YOU SHOULD WANT TO

NORMALIZE TALK ABOUT SEXUAL & GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

IN YOUR PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL LIFE

1

We can't prevent or respond to what we can't speak about.

If we are unable to speak about sexual violence—whether due to social taboos, cultural norms, or other barriers—we are also less able to prevent, address, or respond effectively to it. Speaking out, naming harmful behaviours, and creating time and space for open dialogue are essential steps toward breaking cycles of silence and addressing the violence at home and at work, and at interpersonal and more broadly social levels.

Sometimes we're reluctant to talk about things because we haven't yet explored our own beliefs. Take a look at this exceptional piece, [An Open Letter from Childhood Innocence about Sex Education](#), by Mike Reynolds.

2

Everyday, normalized little talks help us avoid having “the big talk.”

Normalizing small, everyday conversations about sexual violence helps build a culture of respect, awareness, and prevention. These frequent, low-pressure talks, whether at home, in the workplace, or in public life, can prevent the need for larger, more difficult “big talks” about sexual violence later on. By making these conversations common, we reduce stigma, challenge harmful attitudes, and can equip individuals with the language and knowledge they need to address sexual violence before it becomes a more significant issue.

Explore these practical strategies to assist you in [Talking to your kids about sexual assault](#) by RAINN.

3

Normalized conversations about sexual violence disrupt the permissibility that silence can facilitate.

By destigmatizing discussion about sexual violence, we challenge societal silences and taboos that can allow it to persist. Normalizing these talks at home and in the workplace can prevent harmful behaviours from being overlooked, dismissed, or ignored, thus fostering an environment where such behaviours are less likely to be tolerated. These ongoing conversations can therefore be powerfully transformative ways of engaging in sexual violence prevention and intervention.

Silence about sexual violence can be particularly pronounced in certain communities such as those involving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (PIDD). Take a look at this great resource by [The Arc that offers healthcare providers practical strategies when working with PIDD](#) who have been harmed by other people.

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4 Talking about sexual violence helps us all share responsibility for prevention, intervention, and response.

Cultivating environments where sexual violence is openly discussed across different spheres of life encourages and supports collective responsibility and accountability. When conversations about sexual violence become part of everyday dialogue in personal and professional settings, the responsibility to prevent and address it is shared by people at all levels. This can keep the burden from falling solely on people who have been victimized by others or only on specific groups (such as HR departments, police, or advocates, and so forth) and fosters a culture where everyone plays a role in prevention and response.

Check out this quick read on *Shifting Social Norms* by the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS).

5 Normalized talks help us see that no one is alone in this.

Talking about something that has historically been shrouded in silence can have a profound impact in reducing isolation, fostering empathy, and creating solidarity among those who have been harmed by others and/or among those who are concerned about sexual violence. When sexual violence is not treated as a taboo subject, people who have been harmed by others may feel more supported and less isolated, while those who have not may become more aware of its prevalence and the need for collective action. The act of normalizing conversations about sexual violence at home and in the workplace can lead to a culture of mutual support, understanding, and shared responsibility. In this way, continuous dialogue plays a critical role in cultural change.

Read about this fascinating initiative, *Stop Rape Bread Bags*, that started in 2001.

Importantly, we want to normalize conversations not just about sexual violence specifically, but including, and not limited to, issues such as: *bodily autonomy, boundaries, consent, gender, individual and collective responsibility, power, refusals, and respect.*