

TA TRVERSE AREA CK COMMUNITY OF KINKSTERS

Sexual Boundaries: How to Spot Sexual Coercion

If you've ever gone along with sexual activity but didn't really want to, you may have been sexually coerced.

Sexual coercion is using pressure or influence to get someone to agree to sex. People can knowingly coerce others into sex, such as learning manipulative pick-up artist strategies, or unknowingly, such as assuming the other person is OK when they're not.

Although intentions can be different, the impact of sexual coercion is always the same: consent isn't given freely.

To stay safe, check out these warning signs of sexual coercion. Remember: How far you want to take physical intimacy is always up to you, whether you're with your partner, crush, hookup buddy, or someone you just met.

Repeated Attempts

One form of sexual coercion is wearing you down by asking for sex again and again. Whether you've gently declined or directly rejected someone's advances, they shouldn't keep the pressure on — they should accept your boundary and stop asking. Examples:

- Egging you on, as in: "Come on, it'll be fun... Oh come ON!"
- They touch your body, you move their hand away, and they do it again.
- Asking multiple times if you'll have sex without a condom.
- People who are being pressured like this might give in just to end the coercion itself. But that's not freely giving consent.

Sudden Moves

Passionate first hookups in movies often move swiftly from kissing to sex. IRL, it's rare for two strangers to be on the same page so much that they don't have to check in with each other. In fact, it's a form of coercion if someone you don't know very well starts touching you unexpectedly or starts taking off your clothes without giving you a chance to consent. These types of actions can push you into a situation you're not ready for.

Examples:

- Showing you porn without warning.
- Quickly getting in your personal space.
- Taking their clothes off and setting the expectation that you'll get naked.
- Saying, "I'm about to come — quick, do this [sexual act]."
- Bringing another person into your sexual space without asking.
- Putting on a condom without asking if you want to have sex, setting the expectation that you'll have sex.

- Sudden moves also include moving your body into a position where you can't give consent — such as turning you around so you can't see your genital area, and then touching you in a way you wouldn't have consented to if you'd been able to see it coming.

Manipulation

Have you ever felt tricked into having sex? Or that it was easier to acquiesce to sex than risk upsetting the other person? Know that it's not your fault. Manipulators create imbalances of power and exploit other people's penchant for people-pleasing.

Guilt-Tripping You

If someone complains when you set a sexual boundary, it can be a way of guilt-tripping you into sex.

- "If you really loved me, you'd do it."
- "But it's been so long since I've been with someone."
- "What, do you think I'm ugly?"

Shaming or Punishing You

- Insulting your sexual performance in one area to either get you to do it again or perform a different sexual act.
- Withholding affection with the aim of getting you to drop a boundary.
- Saying they won't give you something they promised unless you have sex.

Pressing Your Sense of Obligation

It's coercion if someone tries to convince you that you should have sex or that you owe them.

- "You're my GIRLFRIEND. Girlfriends are supposed to have sex with their partners."
- "You're such a tease. I'm going to get blue balls if I don't come."
- "We've already done it before. What's your problem?"
- "Doesn't everything I've done for you mean anything to you?"

Making Their Way Seem Like the "Normal" Way

Nobody should gaslight you or make you feel weird for wanting something different than they do. If someone is normalizing how they think and making your reality out to be wrong, it can be coercion.

- "I know you better than you know yourself. And I know you want [this sexual act]."
- "We're sexual people. It's just the natural thing to do."
- "Most people have sex when they've been hanging out as long as we have."

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Love-Bombing

This form of sexual coercion includes extreme compliments and big promises if you get sexual.

- "I know we just met, but I feel like I love you. I need to make love to you now."
- "You're the sexiest person I've ever seen. If we were having sex I would buy you presents all the time."

Pushing Substances

Alcohol or drugs get your guard down. Perk up your ears if you hear things like:

- "Come on, have another drink."
- "I like someone who can keep up with me when I'm partying."

Changing the Environment

This coercive tactic involves unexpectedly moving you from a known, safe place with exit access to a more isolated place. Changing the environment can be the first step toward physically manipulating you into sex — literally moving your body to a place where it's more difficult for you to resist.

- While the other person is driving and you're in the passenger seat: "Change of plans! Instead of a bar, it's drinks at my place."
- While at a bar: "It's too loud. Let's go somewhere quieter." Then, grabbing your hand and leading you out to the car.
- While in your date's living room: "My couch isn't comfortable. We should finish the movie in bed." Then, going straight to the bedroom without checking in.
- Perpetrators who get you to a private place might take things further with more sexually coercive tactics.

Up-Negotiation

Consenting to a sex act is just that: consent for one action. But sexual coercion usually isn't an isolated incident. And it can increase over time. That can look like "up-negotiation" — getting you to agree to one sexual act and then upping the ante. Examples:

- Pressuring you to go from a couch to a bed, then pressuring you to go from clothed to unclothed.
- Quickly taking off your clothes and then saying you might as well have sex.

Threats

When you're too afraid to say "no," there's usually a direct or indirect threat involved. You may have a vague fear of consequences from turning the other person down, or they may say something like this:

- "If you don't do it, I'll find someone who will."
- "It's cool if you don't want to do it. I'll just be forced to break up with you."
- "If you don't do it, I'll share private things about you and private photos of you."

If You've Been Coerced: Don't Blame Yourself

Consent is given enthusiastically, and can be taken away at any time. If you do feel enthusiastic about sex, great! Enjoy it. And always trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, speak up and slow down.

If you've said "yes" when you actually didn't want to, know that it's not your fault. Talk to a trusted friend or counselor to process your feelings. You can also talk to the National Sexual Assault Hotline on chat, over the phone (800-656-HOPE), or on their app. Afterward, if you think the other person didn't know they were pressuring you — and if you feel safe and supported — then talk to them about it.

If You Don't Want to Coerce Another Person: Keep Watch for These Signs That You Don't Have Consent

Sexual coercion can sometimes end up with someone acquiescing to sex, but it's not a true "enthusiastic yes" consent to sex. How can you tell the difference?

If you're hearing someone agree to sex in the following ways, take a step back. These are signs that the other person isn't really enthusiastic about sex:

- You hear your partner saying "Yes?" as if it's a question, or "I guess it's OK." If you hear this, pause. It's probably not OK.
- Your partner says, "I don't know," or "Maybe later." Take this as a polite "no," not as an invitation to try again.
- They say, "Just a little," or "OK, but just a bit." This reflects discomfort with what's happening.

Other signs that you don't have consent are when your partner avoids eye contact, stops moving, pulls away, or pushes you away. These actions are their body's way of saying "no."