



“The internet and other technologies have changed everything. Never before in history has our popular culture been so sexually explicit, so instantly accessible and its degrading messages so unchallenged. Sexual harassment is the number one form of bullying among teens today and it's warping them. We just can't shrug our shoulders and dismiss it as a normal part of growing up.”

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DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

INTRODUCTION

What price do teenagers pay to be cool, hip and popular in a sexually charged social world? Whether it's posting sexy photos and raunchy videos on the net, ass-grabbing in the school hallway or spreading explicit gossip that shatters high school lives, harassment is commonplace, even acceptable. Through computer screens, inside all-age clubs, with candid personal diaries and in their own short dramas about sexual pressures, **It's a Teen's World** is an unflinching exposé of three culturally diverse groups of teens who share what it's like to navigate a tangled web of sex, lies and power trips.

Teachers may wish to use the feature version of the documentary with senior classes instead of or in addition to the interactive classroom modules. The 75-minute feature film is chaptered and is accompanied by its own User Guide. Downloadable pdf at www.itsateensworld.com.

It's a Teen's World is also a three-part CBC Radio One *Ideas* documentary series, useful as background for facilitators or for student research. Go to <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/teens-world/index.html>.

FORMAT

Divided into three modules, this interactive classroom version adapts the three short dramatic films created by the teen participants in the feature documentary. The stories are fictional but based on true teen experiences.

Each module includes an excerpt from the feature film, a definition of sexual harassment, a complete 8 minute dramatic film depicting a story about sexual pressures followed by on-screen questions to encourage discussion and strategies for change.

Each 8 minute dramatic film identifies a different set of behaviours that contribute to sexual pressures, harassment and assault among peers. On-screen questions invite brainstorming on the choices teens can make, on the role of power, and on school/community responses.

Suitable for Grades 7-12. There are mature themes and some coarse language. We recommend that teachers pre-screen the modules.



Module #1

UNDER PRESSURE is a dramatic film about sexual gossip and its consequences. Directed and written by Central Toronto Teens.



Module #2

THE PURSUIT OF POPULARITY is a dramatic film about the consequences of changing yourself to fit in with the cool group. This story is told from a female perspective. Directed and written by East Toronto Teens.



Module #3

IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU is a dramatic film about the abuse of trust in dating relationships. Directed and written by West Toronto Teens.

CONTENT

Module #1 UNDER PRESSURE

Runs: 7 min. 54 sec.

In this fictional story, based on the real experience of this teen group, two high school students find themselves being pressured to engage in a sexual situation neither of them want. Jake is the captain of the football team and has a reputation for being a “player” with the girls. Jessica is new to the school and wants to fit in with the cool group. What role do their classmates play in setting them up to be the target of sexual rumours? How common is this type of gossip in your school? What can you do in your school to stop it?

Module #2 THE PURSUIT OF POPULARITY

Runs: 8 min. 40 sec.

In this fictional story, based on the real experience of this teen group, Jane recalls her troubled social life in high school and shares an important lesson with her own daughter who is about to start Grade 9. The young Jane is easily influenced to re-invent herself as sexually provocative in order to fit into the popular group at school. Jane learns the hard way that being true to yourself – even if it’s not considered cool – is most important. How are you influenced by what your peers think and do? What are your boundaries for what is acceptable behaviour? What can you do to redefine what’s popular and cool in your school?

Module #3 IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

Runs: 8 min. 15 sec.

In this fictional story, based on the real experience of this teen group, Jenna starts a relationship with an older boy from her school. He appears to be very charming, but actually, he asks her out to prove that he is a “player” to his friends. She plans to sneak out of the house to go to a party with him but is caught and grounded by her angry parents. She rebels by sneaking out anyway – to an all ages nightclub – with dire consequences. How do you know when you can trust someone? What limits should parents set on social behaviour? What are the consequences of reacting in the heat of the moment?

SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Be part of the solution, not part of the problem...

1. “Log It, Stop It”

During the week, ask your class to note how often sexual pressures (including risky behaviours, harassment and assault) occurs in your school, outside of your school and/or in the media.

- Make sure that students understand the definitions of sexual harassment and sexual assault and how students normally feel about it. For example, guys might say that ranking a girl or patting her bum is a joke. But does the girl really feel that way about it?
- Think about examples where girls can pressure other girls or guys and guys can pressure other guys.
- Think about how sexual harassment can occur over the internet between peers or with other personal technology.
- Think about solutions that will send the message that this behaviour is unacceptable and uncool.
- Use the “What are Sexual Pressures” quiz at www.itsateensworld.com as a primer.

Divide the class into small groups and devise an appropriate plan for logging incidents. Next week, all groups should report back to the class. How did they feel about the incidents? What did they do in these situations? What did they wish they had done? Was there anything that influenced their decision to ignore the situation or intervene?

The class tabulates their results in chart form and includes a summary of behaviours, influences and intervention strategies (explaining which ones work and which ones don't). List recommendations for changes in school programs, policies and procedures. This study can be presented to the principal, displayed in the school or presented at an assembly.

2. "You Be the Judge"

Many forms of sexual harassment are seen as normal and acceptable and teens can be confused about what sorts of behaviour are actually problematic and harmful. Ask the class to indicate which of the scenarios listed below include forms of sexual harassment and provide reasons for their answers. Consider all perspectives in the behaviour the class identifies as sexual harassment. If you are the victim, what can you do about it? If you are the perpetrator, why are you doing this? What could witnesses do to make things better?

- In the school cafeteria, Jason tells a dirty joke to some friends.
- On MSN, Tony asks Kate if she has had sex yet.
- Thomas stares at Sarah's chest while he is talking to her and her friends.
- Tracy always waits outside the classes that her crush attends.
- Jon rubs against Lisa every time he sees her in the hallway.
- Melissa sends Raj messages that he is a love machine using Honesty Box.
- While changing in the gym locker room, Shelley makes fun of Teresa's bra size.
- While joking in the hall, Ruby pulls on Denzel's waistband and reveals his boxers.
- Damian and Scott tease Walter for still being a virgin.
- A bunch of guys whistle and holler at Claudia as she walks to her locker.
- Ethan texts all his friends that Amy is a loser because she refuses to have sex with him.
- Bobby has pictures of swimsuit models pinned up in his locker.
- Bill tells everyone that Rory is a homo because Rory came to the defense of a girl whom Bill was bothering.
- Joan and Kim spread rumours that Zoey is a slut because Zoey snitched on a boy who grabbed her bum.
- At lunch, Peter tells Shandra that her new jeans make her bum look nice.

Now, add your own examples!

Curriculum: Health, Drama, Leadership, Character Education, Sociology, Psychology, Law

Selected Resources:

www.itsateensworld.com

http://www.arts.yorku.ca/lamarsh/projects/trp/trp_wwa.html

www.bullying.org

www.cyberbullying.ca

<http://www.safekids.com sexting-tips/>

<http://prevnet.ca>

www.whiteribbon.ca

http://www.ywcatoronto.org/girls_family/girlscentre.htm

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