

TUSHAR DUTT.DNA



Sexual harassment at the workplace can be devastating, personally and professionally. Speak Up explores ways to prevent such a situation and even handle it

DON'T BE A VICTIM at your workplace

The difference between the two genders should be nullified now

India still has an imbalanced power structure. It is ingrained in children's minds that women should be subservient. Instead of looking at women as mothers or sisters, they should be treated as equal citizens. Similarly, women need to be taught to be responsible citizens. There are women who use their beauty and body to get favours. This is a wrong practice.



The difference between the two genders should be nullified in these times of globalisation. Women and men should behave in a mature way. The concept of a woman being a sex symbol needs to be abolished. This need not be only at the workplace, but anywhere. Women need to be respected and should be able to guard their dignity.

—Vidut Bhagwat, SENIOR RESEARCHER, WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF PUNE

The ratio of men and women is equal now; so it's quite safe

I have chosen the Human Resources (HR) field, which is challenging for any girl. The office environment today is different from what I had heard from my seniors. This decade of globalisation has brought about many changes in the human psyche, especially among the workforce and in offices.



Now, the ratio of women and men in offices is almost equal, so it has become quite safe. The troublesome men are the ones who like to flirt and cross the acceptable limit. Women are confident enough to face such situations and also find a solution to them. However, it is always better if women stick to the 9 am to 5 pm jobs rather than night shifts or working at odd hours.

—Deepthi Mhase, HR CONSULTANT

Being alert can prevent such scenarios to a great extent

Differentiations due to gender are an evil that exist at our workplaces. However, we have to decide whether to live with them, leave them aside or fight them.



People take advantage if given a chance, so a little bit of alertness can prevent harassment issues to a large extent. We, as women, face many problems; for example, double meaning communication in the form of e-mails or SMS. Technology like chat, voice conferencing and networking sites add fuel to the fire.

Many offices have cubicles, allowing everyone privacy and space. However, even glances from the male staff towards our dressing or giving appreciating looks are signs, wherein we have to be alert. Women have to make a choice to set their parameters right. Since women employees leave office on time for safety reasons and men can wait even after office hours, it gives them an edge for promotions. Performance should be the sole criterion for promotions. If this is not the case, then it's time to make a decision. It is time everyone stops referring to women as the secondary species at the workplace.

—Sangeetha Mudliyar, CONSULTANT

The SC has made guidelines that companies ought to follow

In case of sexual harassment at the workplace, whether the woman is married or not, she finds herself helpless as she cannot discuss the problem with anyone, not even her dear ones.



The Supreme Court, through the Vishakha Guidelines formed in 1997, has clearly defined harassment against women and has given parameters of harassment that women face in offices. Though the guidelines were formed in 1997, the implementation has begun now. As per these, the women staff should form committees in the office. However, very few companies have such committees.

There are also no sensitisation workshops held in offices to make employees aware of the psychological and sexual harassment that women go through. However, there are preventive measures that are not known to most women.

Sexual harassment happens not only at the workplace, but also in public places and education centres. Though the Sexual Harassment Bill has been tabled in Parliament and is displayed on the Department of Women and Child Welfare website, it has not been passed as yet.

—Lata Bhise, SOCIAL ACTIVIST FOR WOMEN'S WELFARE

If you cannot complain, look for other ways out

One of my friends had faced a problem like this. She told me that her boss used to trouble her, but since I was not in her office, I could not help her personally. I advised her to talk to the HR manager and fight, but she was terrified as the person in question was her boss.



I discussed the issue with other friends and we thought that since she cannot complain, she should at least get a transfer to another branch, even if it is in the same city. This process took three months, but it was worth the wait. She was finally away from her tormentor, who had harassed her for six months. It is important for women to learn to fight such male colleagues and bosses. However, there are other ways to get out of this situation too.

—Avinash Nikalje, OFFICE ASSISTANT

The work culture has changed for the better now

It depends on organisation to organisation. Nowadays, the HR department is well organised and takes such matters seriously. Due to globalisation and various multinational companies having their base in India, the work culture has changed for the better.



Women are in a position to express themselves and they know how to handle such situations. Definitely, for those who face these instances, it is psychologically traumatic. It can disturb women emotionally and physically. It puts a fear in their mind and they start blaming themselves for the problem.

—Natasha D'Cruz, PSYCHOLOGIST

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

According to the Supreme Court definition, sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexually determined behaviour, such as:

- Physical contact
- A demand or request for sexual favours
- Sexually coloured remarks
- Showing pornography
- Any other physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature

Dealing with the harasser upfront

- Do the unexpected: Name the behaviour. Whatever he's just done, say it, and be specific.
- Hold the harasser accountable for his actions. Don't make excuses for him; don't pretend it didn't really happen. Take charge of the encounter and let people know what he did. Privacy protects harassers, but visibility undermines them.
- Make honest, direct statements. Speak the truth (no threats, no insults, no obscenities, no appeasing verbal fluff and padding). Be serious, straightforward, and blunt.
- Demand that the harassment stop.
- Make it clear that all women have the right to be free from sexual harassment. Objecting to harassment is a matter of principle.
- Stick to your own agenda. Don't respond to the harasser's excuses or diversionary tactics.
- Reinforce your statements with strong, self-respecting body language: eye contact, head up, shoulders back, a strong, serious stance. Don't smile. Timid, submissive body language will undermine your message.
- End the interaction on your own terms, with a strong closing statement: 'You heard me. Stop harassing women'.

What steps can employees take?

- Speaking out:** Speaking about sexual harassment is an effective tool in combating it. While speaking about it, the problem becomes visible, it is acknowledged that it exists, and this in turn leads one to take effective measures against it.
- Speak up at the time:** Be sure to say 'no' clearly, firmly and without smiling as that is the best way to let the harasser know that his behaviour is offensive. Objecting to the behaviour when it occurs helps if you decide to file charges later.
- Keep records:** Keep track of what happens in a journal or diary and keep any letters or notes or other documents you receive. Write down the dates, times, places, and an account of what happened. Write down the names of any witnesses. Write a letter. The letter should be polite, unemotional, and detailed. Such a letter seems to be more powerful than a verbal request. The recipient of the letter seldom writes back; the person usually just stops the behaviour.
- Be aware of situations and people who may harm you:** Don't ignore other's warnings about particular people or social settings. Acknowledge their concern for you and for themselves.
- Trust your own instincts about possible danger:** In an uncomfortable situation, be direct and honest, and remove yourself from the situation immediately. Regardless of your previous behaviour or signals you may have given earlier, you have the absolute right to halt any sexual exchange at any time. Accept this right and act on it.
- Create a witness to the behaviour:** Inform a trusted colleague and try to ensure that s/he is an eye or ear witness to a situation where you are being sexually harassed. This will be useful later if you choose to file a formal complaint.
- Report sexual harassment to the appropriate person in the organisation:** Explore the different avenues available to you and file a formal complaint, if necessary. If your organisation does not have a policy, ensure that your employer formulates an anti-sexual harassment policy and carries out all the connected tasks.

Parameters based on the Vishakha Guidelines set by the Supreme Court.

—Source: www.indiatogether.org

Draw a line in the first instance; the next stage won't arise

In the Indian context, since childhood we are taught to never complain even if someone troubles you. Instead, children should be taught to talk and fight against anyone who troubles them.

Women have an instinct and understand if someone is behaving differently with them. As soon as you feel this, draw a line in your interaction with that person. Many women compromise if they are getting a favour in return, but there is a limit to this. This is where things go wrong. If men are stopped right then and there, the next stage does not arise. Business meetings and dinners are part of the work culture now, but avoid them if possible.

I feel that every office should have a women's group and connectivity that will help in such situations. However, professional jealousy comes in the way.

—Neha Udas, HR MANAGER

team speak up
Kiran Dahitule, Rajesh Rao & Mallika Rale

What is your view?

GET IN TOUCH: Write to us at punespeakup@dnaindia.net or call us at 020-39888888 extn 123.

T E L E V I S I O N

19:00 - 00:00 hrs.

<p>AXN 19:00 Wipeout 20:00 Slamball 21:00 So You Think You Can Dance 23:00 David Blaine - Magic Man</p> <p>BLOOMBERG UTV 19:00 The Countdown 19:30 Headlines 20:00 The Countdown 21:00 Today On Dalal Street 21:30 Tomorrow's Bets 22:00 News 22:30 The Asian Consumer Rises 23:00 News 23:30 Newsroom</p> <p>CHANNEL V 19:00 Dare 2 Date 19:50 Music 20:00 The Player 21:30 Zabardast Hits 21:40 Fresh [V] Deo 21:50 Bollywood Busters 22:00 Zabardast Hits</p> <p>PIX 19:00 Cold Steel 21:00 Scary Movie 3</p>	<p>22:50 Lola One Question Please 23:00 Zabardast Hits</p> <p>COLORS 19:00 Bhagyavidhaata 19:30 Charon Mein... Swarg 20:00 Balika Vadhu 20:30 Bairi Pliya 21:00 Yeh Pyar Na Hoga Kam 21:30 Laagi Tujhse Lagan 22:00 Uttaran 22:30 Laado 23:00 Balika Vadhu</p> <p>DISCOVERY 19:00 Discovery Select</p> <p>WILSON'S WAR 23:00 Face Of Terror 20:00 1920 20:00 Mashaal</p>	<p>20:00 Engineering The World 21:00 Man Vs Wild 22:00 I Shouldn't Be Alive 23:00 Monster Inside Me</p> <p>MTV 19:00 Mtv Roadies 20:00 Fantastic 5 20:10 Style Check 20:20 Wassup 20:30 Non Stop Hits 21:00 Wassup 21:10 Non Stop Hits 21:30 What The Hack 21:40 Wassup 22:00 Spiltvilla 23:00 VJ Hunt 23:30 Style Check</p> <p>NDTV GOOD TIMES 19:00 Lock Stock & Two Smoking Tikkas 19:30 Bodylicious Yoga 20:00 Highway On My Plate 20:30 The Big Fat Indian</p>	<p>20:00 1920 on STAR GOLD Wedding 21:00 Spectacular Spas For Men 22:00 The Making Of Kingfisher Calendar 2010 22:30 Warrior Tribes Of Nagaland 23:00 The Muse</p> <p>NDTV IMAGINE 19:00 Do Hanso Ka Joda 19:30 Jyoti 20:00 Rahul Dulhaniya Le Jaayega 21:00 Rehna Hai Teri Palkon Ki Chhaon Mein 21:30 Do Hanso Ka Joda 22:00 Devi</p> <p>STAR GOLD 20:00 1920 23:30 Rubaru</p>	<p>22:30 Bandini 23:00 Rahul Dulhaniya Le Jaayega</p> <p>SAB 19:00 Saajan Re Jhoot Maat Bolo 19:30 Lapataganj 20:00 Manben.Com 20:30 Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashma 21:00 Saajan Re Jhoot 22:30 Fir 23:00 Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashma 23:30 Saajan Re Jhoot</p> <p>STAR PLUS 19:10 Firestorm 21:00 Rogue Assassin 23:05 Michael Clayton</p>	<p>Maat Bolo</p> <p>SAHARA ONE 19:00 Ghar Ek Sapna 19:30 Ganesh Leela 20:00 Kesariya Balam Aavo Hamare Des 20:30 Mata Ki Chowki 21:00 Woh Rehne Waali Mehlon Ki 21:30 Kesariya Balam Aavo Hamare Des 22:00 Mata Ki Chowki 23:00 Ganesh Leela 23:00 Movie - Astiva</p> <p>SONY 19:30 CID Classics Cases 20:30 Crime Patrol - 2 21:00 Sukh By Chance 21:30 Jeet Jayenge Hum 22:00 Bayttaab Dil Ki Tmanna Hai 22:30 Pyaar Ka Bandhan 23:00 Crime Patrol - 2 23:30 CID Special Bureau</p> <p>STAR MOVIES 21:00 Firestorm 21:00 Rogue Assassin 23:05 Michael Clayton</p>	<p>Jaana Hai 23:30 Mahayatra</p> <p>STAR WORLD 19:00 How I Met Your Mother 20:00 Bones 21:00 Friends 21:30 Rules of Engagement 22:00 Lost 23:00 Bones</p> <p>ZEE CAFE 19:00 The Tonight Show With Conan O' Brien 20:00 Friends 20:30 America's Funniest Home Videos 21:00 Brothers & Sisters 22:00 Private Practice 23:00 The Tonight Show With Conan O' Brien</p> <p>ZEE DASH 19:00 News Dunia</p>	<p>23:30 Rocksta</p> <p>ZEE TV 19:00 Ghar Ghar Mein 19:30 Choti Bahu 20:00 Jhansi Ki Rani 20:30 Yahaan Main Ghar Ghar Kheeli 21:00 Pavitra Rishita 21:30 Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Hi Kijo</p> <p>ZING 19:00 Zing Back To Back 19:10 Zing Scoops 19:40 Zing Back To Back 20:00 Zing's Big Screen 23:30 Zing Back To Back</p>
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tonight's best...

'So You Think You Can Dance' Axn 21:00
For all the viewers who have been vovied by the various dance genres showcased by the energetic and talented contestants on "So You Think You Can Dance", it is time to sit up and make way for the jaw dropping performance of Caitlin & Jason grooving to the beats of the runaway hit "Jai Ho". The Bollywood choreographed by the eminent Nakul Dev Mahajan.

ZEE CINEMA
20:00 Meri Jung

ZEE STUDIO
21:00 Father Of The Bride 2
23:25 Robocop 1