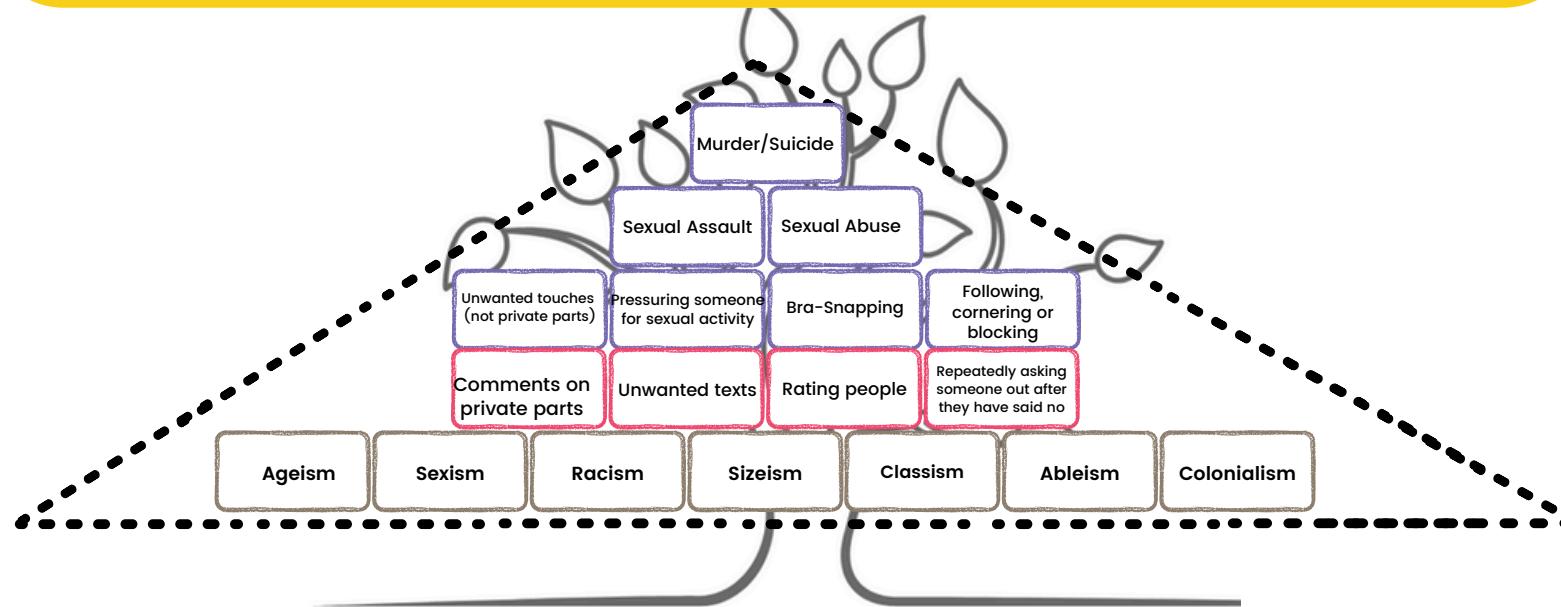


Tree of Sexual Violence

How does a tree become a tree?

A regular tree needs many factors for it to grow - sunlight, water, good soil, a seed, and time. Similar to a regular tree, someone does not randomly wake up one day and decide they want to use sexual violence. They too, get exposed to many different factors throughout their lifetime that influences their choice to engage in sexual violence.



Look at the tree above. At the bottom are the harmful attitudes and beliefs that give more power and control to one group of people over another. These serve as the roots of sexual violence. When someone internalizes these, they might view others as less than them and might disregard their consent through verbal and physical expressions of sexual violence through sexual harassment. When these behaviours go unchallenged, people might think that it's okay to continue engaging in them and they might use more physical expressions of sexual violence through sexual assault or sexual abuse.

The tree of sexual violence shows how someone can progress from having discriminatory attitudes and beliefs in the form of 'isms' and eventually engage in sexual violence. The tree, although shaped like a pyramid, is not meant to show a hierarchy with things at the top being more harmful or impactful than the others, rather it shows how a person can move up and down. Remember, all of the things on the tree are harmful in their own way and the only person who can make sense of the impacts is the person who experienced the harm.



Moving down the tree is possible!

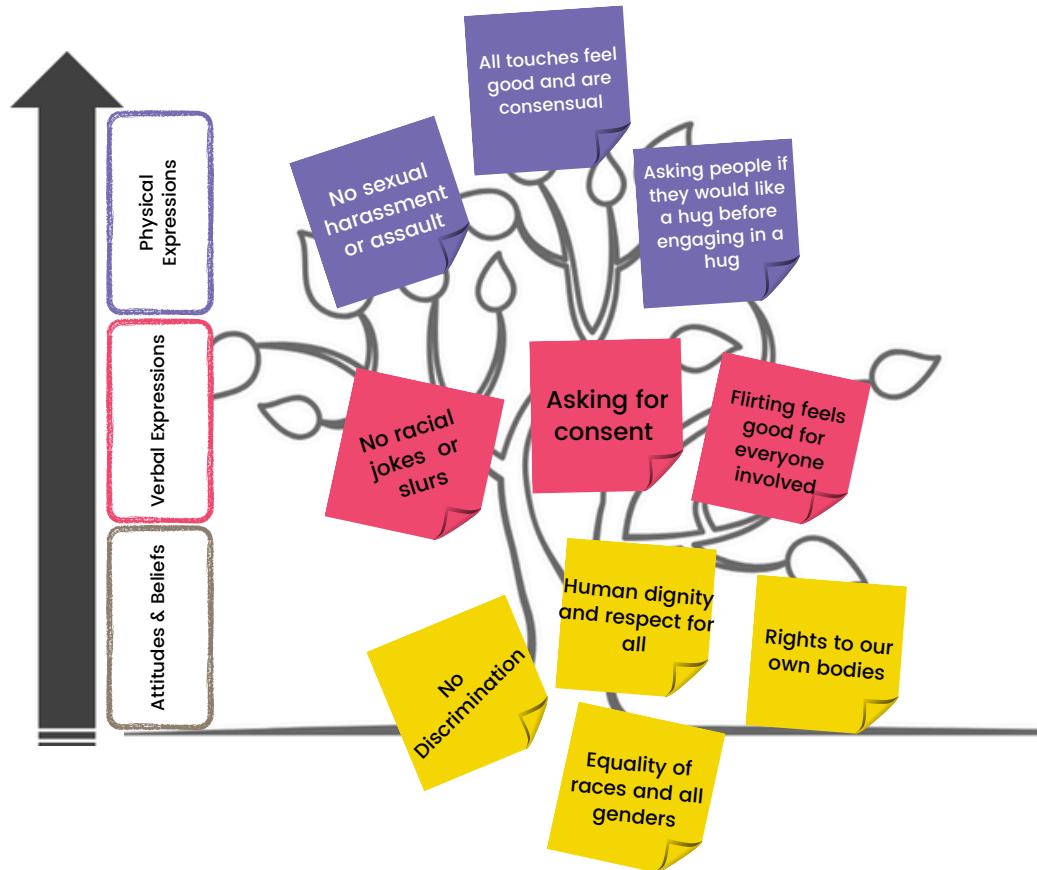
When people's behaviours are being challenged and they take accountability, they can go back down the tree of sexual violence. Taking accountability means apologizing for the harm that was done, unlearning these behaviours, and actively changing them for the better.



Remember! Apologies are not about getting forgiveness, but about taking accountability for our actions.

Planting a New Tree

What does the tree look like in a world free of sexual violence?



When envisioning a world free of sexual violence, we want to start examining the roots of the tree to make the biggest change in society. If we change the harmful attitudes and beliefs on our old tree with more positive ones, the ways we talk to each other and treat one another also become more positive, respectful, and inclusive. When we view other people as equals and deserving of human dignity and respect, we start putting more value in respecting their consent, their bodies, and boundaries. Challenging our own ways of thinking and behaviours, as well as other people's, are small changes we can make everyday that can leave great impacts to our society.



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