

Dating as an Older Adult

This workshop will provide you with some tips to stay safe, have fun, and get the most from your relationships.



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Introduction

Dating can be both fun and challenging at any age. Many older adults fear violence and abuse at the hands of strangers, through robbery or home invasions. Research shows however, that seniors are more likely to be physically abused by their spouse or common-law partner than a stranger. It is important to have the tools to build safe and healthy relationships and know where to turn for support, should a partnership begin to show signs of becoming an abusive relationship.

Sexual Orientation

Take a moment to state that this is a safe space, for those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. In the past, many who identified as LGBTQ may not have felt comfortable sharing this with neighbours, friends and family or service providers. Be sure to encourage a respectful conversation at all times, and explore how dating may look differently for those who are part of this diverse community.

Opening Discussion

Engage in discussion with your group by asking the following questions:

*Are you dating? Are you interested in dating?
What are your concerns about dating as an older adult?*

Tips to Stay Safe

DISCUSSION:

Do you use the Internet to date?

There are several ways to meet potential partners -through friends, through attendance at social events or even blind dates. Internet dating sites and chat rooms are gaining popularity. While this can be a fun and efficient way to meet potential companions, it is important to exercise caution when sharing information with people you chat with on-line or off-line.

If you do choose to meet someone in person, consider the following:

- **Get to know the person you plan to meet**~ Take time to ask lots of questions. Withhold personal information such as your home address, phone number, and other identifiable or sensitive information.
- **Arrange to meet in a public place**~ Meet in a restaurant, café or ask your date to come along with a group of your friends. Be cautious when inviting a person to your home. Tell a friend where you are going, with whom, and when you expect to be back.
- **Use your own transportation**~ Arrange your own transportation to and from your date. Arrange a trusted person to drop you off and pick you up at a pre-arranged time and place.
- **Be cautious with alcohol**~ It is important to be alert on your date, try to drink in moderation and don't leave your drink unattended.
- **Listen to your instincts**~ If you feel uncomfortable call a friend or family member and leave the date.

Which Dating Site Should I Use?

Which site one uses, is a personal preference, as there are many sites. Be sure the site is reputable and has a strict privacy policy. When creating a profile you should exclude personal information that might help the reader identify your location.

You do not need to use your full name or provide a picture until you are comfortable giving it privately to another user.

Consider taking a course on Internet safety, to learn how to protect your privacy and get more comfortable with using the Internet both effectively and safely

How to Build Healthy Relationships

DISCUSSION: *What does a healthy relationship look like?*

Healthy relationships are built on love, mutual respect and support, understanding and open communication. The signs of a healthy relationship include:

- The ability to talk about feelings without fear of your partner making fun of you.
- Being mutually supportive of one another's needs and wants.
- Feeling free to talk about disappointments and concerns.
- Taking responsibility for your actions and avoiding blame.

Take the Quiz: Does Your Partner Do This?

| | YES | NO | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Get jealous when you are around others? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Blame you for everything that goes wrong? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Make fun of you in front of others? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Threaten to, or physically slap or push you around? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Destroy or threaten to destroy your things? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Try to force unwanted sex? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Threaten to commit suicide if you break up? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Take control of your money? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

If you answered YES to any of the questions you may be in an unhealthy relationship. Abusive partners are often apologetic and may be sorry for their actions but will often continue their behaviour. Abusive behaviour is a cycle that often escalates over time. Remember this is **NOT YOUR FAULT** and you have the right to live free from fear.

If I Live With My Partner Does That Give Rights to Property?

If you and your partner decide to move in together, this is referred to as living in a common-law relationship. You do not automatically get the same rights to property as a married couple. If you live together for 3 years or more and rely on the other for support, you may be legally entitled to support if the relationship ends. You should seek legal advice.

Law Society of Upper Canada
Law Society Referral Service
 1-855-947-5255

Community Legal Education
Ontario
www.cleo.on.ca

What to Do If Things Go Wrong

DISCUSSION: *How would you respond to a friend who told you they were being abused?*

Often in abusive relationships people feel shame and fear. This can stop them from reaching out for help. It is important that they be able to reach out to friends and family when they find themselves in this position. As a neighbour, friend or family member, we must respond to these situations with empathy and understanding.

What can you or a loved one do if there are signs of abuse in a relationship?

- If you are being harmed or threatened, call the police immediately.
- Talk to a family member or friend for support.
- Find out about support services in your area; counselling, transition housing, mental health services or talking to those in your faith community.
- Create a safety plan with your support service in order to leave the abusive relationship as safely as possible.
- Find out what your legal rights are to shared money and property.

What are some chargeable offences?

- Assault~ Including threats and physical harm
- Sexual Assault~ No person has the right to force sex or threaten sexual assault even if you are dating, married or living with the person.
- Intimidation~ Threats, harassment, stalking, destruction of property

Who Do I Call if I Need Help?

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Advocacy Centre for the Elderly | 1 855 598 2656 |
| Assaulted Women's Helpline | 1 866 863 0511 |
| Egale Canada Human Rights Trust | 1 888 204 7777 |
| Elder Abuse Ontario..... | 416 916 6728 |
| Law Society Referral Service | 1 800 268 8326 |
| Ontario Networks of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centres.. | 416 323 7327 |
| Rainbow Health Ontario..... | 416 324 4100 |
| Seniors Safety Line..... | 1 866 299 1011 |
| Support Services for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse Program.... | 1 866 887 0015 |
| Talk4Healing..... | 1 855 554 4325 |
| Victim Support Line..... | 1 888 579 2888 |