

Vesta Resource Guide

Muskoka

This Guide Is For You



V E S T A

www.VestaSIT.com

Table of Contents

Page 1	Intro - This Guide Is For You
Page 2	What Are We Talking About?
Page 4	What About Consent?
Page 6	Is There A Problem?
Page 7	Signs To Look Out For
Page 10	Now What: How To Help
Page 17	Reporting Is Her Decision
Page 18	Why You Should Document
Page 19	Grounding Exercises
Page 20	Document Now: Report If She Wants To
Page 21	Conclusion - We're Here To End GBV



This Guide is For You

Welcome. We believe you. We believe her.

This guide is for you. You have a friend and you're worried about her. She's in a bad situation. You're pretty sure things are not good for her and getting worse.

What do you need? Information. Resources. Things to do RIGHT NOW.

This guide is a list of things you can share and do **now**. It's written for where you live in Muskoka. This is not for people living in the city and it's not about programs you can't access. This is about you and your life.

We created this guide for women who want to help other women. Maybe your bestie needs support. Maybe you are a survivor of violence and you never want to see another woman go through what you experienced.

Whatever path brought you to Vesta, this guide was created as a place to turn to for information and next steps.

We believe that together we can fight gender-based violence and end rape culture. But it takes all of us standing together and saying, Me Too. It takes every woman who has endured gender-based violence standing up and refusing to let it happen to another woman.

Thank you for being the woman who does something.



~ Team Vesta

What Are We Talking About?

Before we get into the nitty-gritty, let's talk about what we're talking about.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence that is directed at people because of their gender. We understand that anyone can experience violence based on their gender, but we also know that because women have been historically considered less valuable than men women are far more likely to experience violence at the hands of men because of their gender. GBV covers many other forms of violence directed at women including sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and domestic violence.

Sexual Assault is any non-consensual sexual act. Anyone can experience sexual assault, including wives, girlfriends, and partners who live together. We often think that sexual assault and rape are the same thing, but sexual assault is a bigger category that includes non-penetrative sexual activity, including touching, fondling and molestation.

What Are We Talking About?

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Rape is about non-consensual penetration. Whether it's an object or a body part, rape means she has experienced unwanted penetration of the vagina or anus. Rape also includes having her mouth penetrated with someone's sex organ without consent. Even if she consented to earlier sexual activity, rape can still happen.

Sexual Harassment is about unwanted words and sexual behaviours that could include sexual assault and rape. Sexual harassment may include comments on how someone is dressed, on their body or looks, and these comments could be negative or positive. Sexual harassment has nothing to do with whether or not the person doing the harassing is 'just joking' or 'trying to give her a compliment'. It's about how she feels about the behaviours, how severe it is, and how often this is happening.

What About Consent?

Everyone talks about 'consent' these days. But what exactly does consent mean? According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, only 28% of Canadians feel confident they understand what consent means. So, let's talk about that.

Consent means you're actively saying that you're into sexual activity with someone. Any sexual activity without your active consent is sexual assault. Don't forget that you can't give consent if you're drunk, high, sleeping or underage.

Tricking, manipulating, or pressuring someone into sexual activity is called sexual coercion.

When we ask 'did she consent?' what are we really asking?

Back in the day, it was trendy to stand by the 'no means no' idea. We assumed that if she (or he) didn't like what was happening sexually she would say no and likely push away or fight back.

Then we learned that survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence may not be able to speak up. Fear, flashbacks, and trauma can make it impossible to speak, or even move. Survivors reported staying silent or just laying still until it was over and their silence was argued to be consent.



What About Consent?

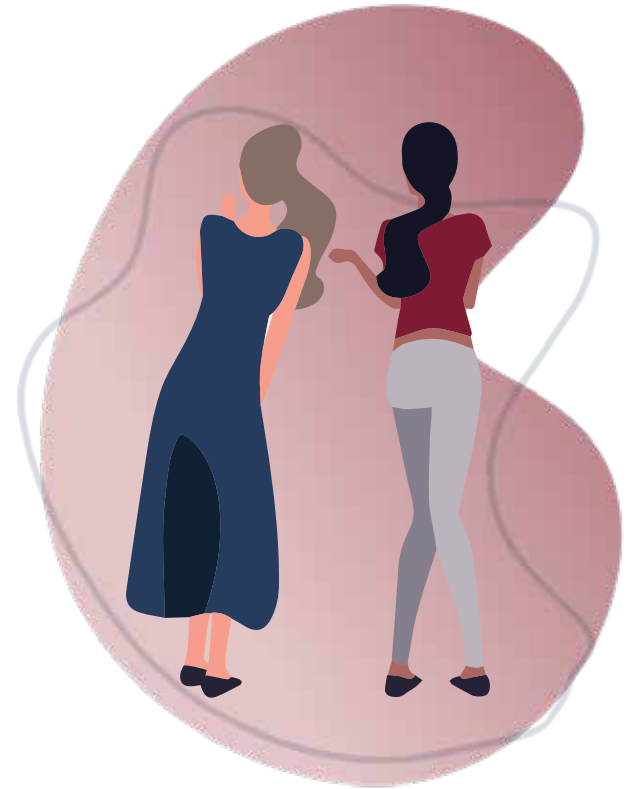
Today we know that consent is always ACTIVE and verbal. We're looking for an enthusiastic 'Yes!' because 'yes means yes'.

Not sure how to consent without ruining the mood? How about...

- **What sounds like fun?**
- **Does that sound good?**
- **What excites you?**
- **Is that good?**
- **What would turn you on?**
- **How does that feel?**

Want to know more? Check out the Consent 101 video series by Planned Parenthood.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3xP1-jlf1jgJRkChwVOlwQcV0-UqcWiFV>



Is There A Problem?

It wasn't anything you could put your finger on. She was telling you a story, almost like it was a joke, but something in her tone caught your attention and made your stomach knot up.

There's something wrong here.

You don't know what it is exactly and you definitely can't just ask, *hey hun, is everything okay? Is he hurting you?*

How do we know if there's a problem?

There are signs. Gender-based violence follows pretty standard patterns because abuse isn't about love or jealousy. It's always about power and control.



Signs to Look Out For

Here are the 10 most common signs* to keep your eyes open for:

1. Her boyfriend/husband/partner is just plain mean. He humiliates her, makes fun of how she dresses, and is super harsh in front of everyone. He says he's just joking but it doesn't feel like teasing and you can see she's being hurt by his words. You can only imagine what he must say to her when there's no one around.

2. She's told you stories about having to have sex just to make him happy. He's pressuring her into doing things that she doesn't like and/or are painful. She's making it seem like a normal part of a relationship, the normal kind of compromises, but something sounds weird and you suspect that she's not telling you the worst parts.

*Source:

https://canadianwomen.org/blog/warning-signs-abusive-relationship/?gclid=CjwKCAjw57b3BRBIiwA1lmytv3K10reCVIY2eCzAMc_u2BF2MgrS_q1RL_9WkwpxFvpor0s_QFk8txoC8dIQAvD_BwE



Signs to Look Out For

3. You know she's doing things she doesn't want to do, like drugs and stealing, just to make him happy.

4. He's always texting, calling, and showing up uninvited.

He has to know where she is all the time. Sometimes he doesn't let her leave the house and will even hide her purse. You wonder if he's going through her phone and breaking into her Facebook. He tells her who she can be friends with and who she can't talk to.

5. She doesn't control her own money. He makes her work, or refuses to let her work. And he controls all the money and spending. She can't make any decisions around money without him and he keeps their financial situation a secret from her. You suspect he's stolen money from her.

6. He's used physical force (push, punch, slap, choke, shake, used objects/weapons) and you know he's hurt other people (children, pets, family members, friends, neighbours). He's even destroyed her stuff. Her stories make it clear that he's threatening violence, and sometimes those threats aren't words – he just glares and does something to make sure she knows he can hurt her and others.



Signs to Look Out For

7. He's manipulating her with religion and using it to justify hurting her. And she's being forced to practice his religion (or he's not letting her practice her religion).

8. When she called him on his behaviour he told her it was because he loved her so much. He said it would never happen again. It was better for a little while but then the same behaviours started again.

9. When she called him on his behaviour he blamed her and said it was all her fault. He said she made him act like this.

10. She's told him she was going to leave and he threatened to kill himself (or he threatened to kill her).

Abuse and gender-based violence doesn't always start with major physical violence. It often begins with emotional, sexual, financial or spiritual abuse that slowly cuts her down, makes her feel alone, and like no one else will love her.

She may even believe that this is all her fault and feel too ashamed to talk about it. Even with you. Not every situation will show each of these 10 signs, but the pattern of abuse from words to actions will be similar.



Now What: How to Help

1. Listen to her.

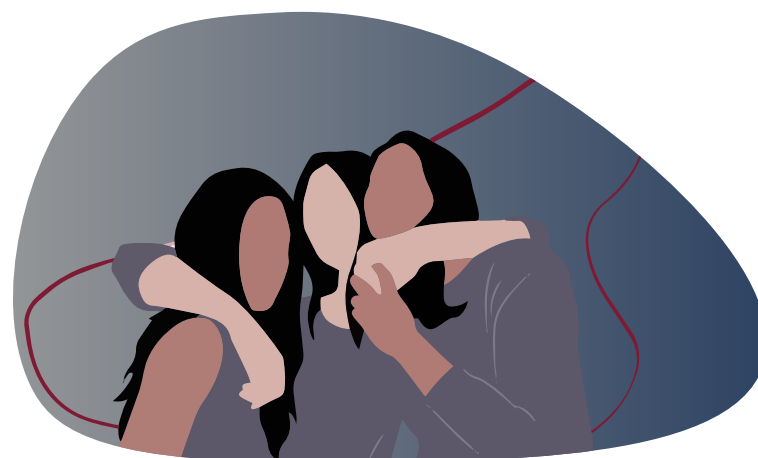
If you're reading this guide there's likely someone you're worried about. The most important thing you can do is make sure she knows that you love and support her.

To the outsider looking in, it can be hard to understand why she doesn't just leave. It's important to remember that gender-based violence often includes emotional manipulation, threats, and violence that can get worse when she tries to leave. Don't forget that it's hard to leave someone you love, even if they treat you badly.

What You Can Do

With your friends, form a circle of support around her. It's everyone's job to make sure she knows you are all there for her, ready to listen, and without judgement.

If she wants to talk, it's important that you listen to her, believe her, and above all, don't judge her or her decisions.



Now What: How to Help

Here is a quick list of Do's and Don'ts:

DO

1. Listen if she wants to talk. Don't judge and don't offer solutions. Just listen closely and BELIEVE HER.

"I believe you."

"Thank you for telling me. I know this is hard to talk about."

2. Tell her that you love and support her. Whatever she wants to do (or not do), you support her decision.

"There's nothing you did (or didn't do) that makes this your fault."

"I hear you and I totally support you."

3. If she asks for help, offer resources.

"I'm here for you. What can I do to help?"

"You're not alone in this. I'm here to listen and help."

DON'T

1. Confront her or have an 'intervention'.
2. Ask her why she doesn't just leave or imply that she deserves violence if she stays.
3. Put yourself in danger.

Now What: How to Help

2. If she asks you for help, be ready with resources.

The most dangerous time in an abusive situation is when the survivor stands up for herself. This might mean leaving, telling a friend or boss, or reporting to police. Whatever the situation, asking for help takes a massive amount of courage on her part and it means the danger she's in could get worse, fast

As her friend, it's important that you don't put yourself in danger. Don't commit to doing things that could put you at risk of violence.

What You Can Do

Be ready with resources, like the following list we've put together in this guide, and talk to her about who to call first. If you're afraid she's in serious danger right now, call 911.



Now What: How to Help

Services and Resources for Muskoka-Perry Sound:

- An interactive map where you can find shelters near you: <https://www.sheltersafe.ca/ontario/>
- Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services <https://www.mpssas.org/>
- Muskoka Interval House <https://www.mwag.ca/> 1-800-461-1740
- Women and Children's Shelters and Transitional Home (Muskoka and Parry Sound)
- * Chrysalis (Huntsville) 1-866-789-8488 or (705) 789-8488
- * Esprit Place Family Resource Centre (Parry Sound) 1-800-461-1707 or (705) 746-4800
- * Green Haven Shelter for Women (Orillia) 1-888-285-6958 or (705) 327-7319
- * La Maison Rosewood Shelter (Midland) 1-800-461-1750 or (705) 526-4211
- * Muskoka Interval House (Bracebridge) 1-800-461-1740 or (705) 645-4461
- * Nipissing Transition House (North Bay) (705) 476-2429
- * Ojibway Family Resource Centre (North Bay) 1-800-387-2465 or (705) 472-3321

Vesta is working with local community services and police to create an anonymous and informal way to report to police. Until then, please contact the police for help or to report.

Local OPP Community Police Officer

- MacTier - (705) 645-2211
10 Front St, MacTier, ON

Local OPP Detachment

- Bracebridge - 705 645-2211
- Huntsville - 705 789-5551
- Southern Georgian Bay (Midland) - 705 526-3761

Now What: How to Help

Local Online & Phone Support:

- Women's Sexual Assault Help Line
1-800-461-2929 (Daily 24 hours)
- Muskoka Parry Sound Coordinated Sexual Assault Services
 - Bracebridge: 705-646-2122/1-877-406-1268
 - Parry Sound: 705-774-9083/1-877-851-6662
 - Huntsville: 705-783-8882
- Assaulted Women's Help Line (24/7 crisis counselling, emotional support, information, and referrals to women in 154 languages)
1-866-863-0511 or 1-866-863-7868
- Centre Passerelle Pour Femmes du Nord de l'Ontario (Gateway Centre for Women in Northern Ontario) 705-360-5657 or 1-877-858-8452
- Drug and Alcohol Helpline 1-800-565-8603
- Fem'aide (24/7 crisis line for French-speaking women across the province of Ontario)
1-877-336-2433
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans Youth Line
1-800-268-9688
- Mental Health Helpline 1-866-531-2600
- Talk4Healing (Help Line for Aboriginal Women)
1-855-554-HEAL (4325)



Now What: How to Help

3. Be there for her.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is show up when she needs you. Simply being with her can help relieve the stress and anxiety produced by trauma. If you can't be physically in the same space as her (because COVID sucks), be ready to talk.

Gender-based violence robs women of their sense of control over their own lives. Showing up and supporting her decisions, even simple ones, can help her reclaim her power.

What You Can Do

Join her for the things that feel really scary, like walking to her car after work or reporting to the police.

If she lives in the same community as her abuser, going to the grocery store may be overwhelming. Offer to shop with her.

Make sure you let her drive the action. Don't try to fix things or overrule her decisions. Support what she decides to do, even if you disagree. Let her tell you how to help."

Check out Option B for more ideas on how to support a friend after they've experienced violence.

<https://optionb.org/build-resilience/advice/how-to-support-a-friend-after-sexual-assault>

Now What: How to Help

4. Be an example of self-care.

Resist the urge to preach self-care. She's going to hear a lot people tell her to practice self-care like that's a cure-all for trauma. The pressure to do self-care 'right' can create more stress on top of trauma.

What You Can Do

Be an example of self-care. Know your own limits and take time to recharge. Whether it's binging on your favourite Netflix series or getting a pedicure, show her how you're actively taking care of yourself.

For more ideas around self-care, for both you and her, check out RAINN.

<https://www.rainn.org/articles/-/self-care-after-trauma>



Reporting is Her Decision

Reporting is her decision. You may want her to report. You may really want to see him get arrested. You may be excited to see him go to court.

But, it's up to *her*.

She doesn't have to report. But if she wants to, now or later, she needs a record of what happened. As her friend, the most important thing you can do **right now** is help her document her experience.



Why You Should Document

Trauma impacts our capacity to remember events, actions, and details. It can make real events feel fuzzy. She may begin to question her memory, wonder if she made it all up, or think that she over-reacted.

Being able to recall details, create timelines, and show evidence is just the kind of information the police will want to know. They will ask for specifics that are hard to remember for anyone, let alone someone dealing with trauma.

Gently encourage her to document her experience(s) now. Offer to help her by recording her stories – write them down or record them on your phone. Keep them in a safe and secure location.



Grounding Exercises

Help her get ready to document by doing some simple grounding exercises. Grounding will help her stay present in the moment and prevent her from becoming overwhelmed by her memories.

Can you count the number of books on the shelf?

Can you count the number of trees you see?

Can you feel your feet in your shoes?

Can you notice your breath?

What sounds can you hear?

Remember, that she makes the decision on when to stop documenting. Tell her she can stop anytime. Reassure her that it's normal not to remember everything. Be non-judgemental in your words and your body language.

Learn more about grounding techniques:

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/grounding-techniques#alternatives>

And try these grounding exercises:

<https://www.livingswell.org.au/well-being/mental-health/grounding-exercises/>

Document Now. Report If She Wants To

How to document her experience:

1. Before you start, make sure she is in a safe place. Ask her to start wherever she wants to. Your job is to record or write whatever she is able to remember.

2. Ask her to do a mental scan of the physical environment(s) where the incidents happened. Record details like the colour of clothing or the layout of interior spaces.

3. Don't interrupt her. If she stops talking, wait 3-8 seconds before you say anything. If you want to ask questions, start with the last thing she talked about. For example, if she says "he pinned me to the door", your question could be "tell me more about being pinned to the door", "tell me what your thoughts were when that happened", or "tell me what being pinned felt like."

4. Name anyone else who was there and/or witnessed any of what happened.

5. Gather any evidence. Take screen shots of texts and messages, save emails, take photos of any physical marks on her body.

Documenting comes from the field of forensic interviewing and helps survivors recall their experiences. It's important to reassure her that it's normal to have blank spots in her memory and not remember everything in order.

The point is to record whatever she can remember in a safe place. This will be valuable information if she decides to report in the future. It's also important for her own well-being.



We're here to end GBV. Now.

We believe in the power of women to end gender-based violence and rape culture now. Not tomorrow. Not eventually. Not someday. We can end this now.

Why? Because women who have experienced GBV are strong. They will fight to prevent other women from living through what they endured.

If that woman is you, thank you.

At VESTA, we're building an online reporting platform to help women in your community document their experiences and make anonymous reports of gender-based violence to the police.

Easy, online reporting means more women documenting their experiences no matter how far away they are from local police detachment.

The more data we have, the easier it is for the service providers and police to target hotspots, identify perpetrators, and support survivors.



Ready to do something about GBV right NOW?

Here are 3 easy steps you can take to help make online reporting a reality.

#1

Share this Guide with Your Girlfriends.

Give your friends the info they need to support each other.

#2

Share this Guide on Social Media.

Find easy shareables on our Facebook and Instagram.

#3

Ask for Online Reporting.

Tell your local police you want online reporting.

**For more information on gender-based violence
and how you can join the fight, visit
VestaSIT.com**



**BE READY WHEN SHE
NEEDS YOU.**

#AskingForAFriend



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