

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any uninvited or unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that causes a person to be humiliated, intimidated or offended. There are many different forms of sexual harassment such as inappropriate physical contact, verbal comments/propositions/jokes/questions, and the display of offensive material. Sexual harassment both at work and during work related activities is unlawful under the *Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984*.



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Your non-military, non-government, confidential volunteer help and support service



Australia

Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling Service (WVCS)

Phone: 1800 011 046 – 24 hrs, 7 days



New Zealand

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand (VANZ)

NZ Freephone: 0800 4 838372

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8am-5pm Monday to Friday (NZ time)



Assist Psychological & Counselling Services

www.assistyourself.com.au

Sexual harassment

How can sexual harassment affect me?

A person exposed to sexual harassment can experience a range of negative emotional, psychological and physical effects including

Anxiety and/panic attacks * Short and long term stress reactions (including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) * Depression * Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence * Feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, shame and self-blame * Feelings of anger and betrayal * Insomnia and/or nightmares * Headaches * Fatigue * Loss of appetite or overeating * Intimacy issues * Withdrawal and isolation

Sexual harassment—What can I do?

- * **Remember you are not alone and you are not powerless**
 - Many people have experienced or are experiencing sexual harassment
 - People will believe you. Your concerns are legitimate and serious. Seek professional counselling and/or join a support group (face-to-face or online). Having the support of others who have had similar experiences will help you to cope and heal
 - Maintain positive relationships and friendships. Try to discuss the harassment with a trusted friend or family member
 - Try to be honest and open with your wife/husband/partner about your thoughts and feelings
 - Identify 'at risk' situations and, where possible, develop early intervention/prevention strategies to remove yourself from, or to avoid these situations
- * **Do not blame yourself**
 - Remind yourself daily that the harassment is not your fault
- * **Reinforce your self-esteem and self-confidence**
 - Remind yourself daily that you are coping
 - Gather inspiring sayings, supportive letters/cards etc. from your friends and family and put them where you can see them
 - Make a list of your skills, talents, and achievements and refer to it regularly
- * **Combat stress, anxiety and depression**
 - Practice slow, deep breathing exercises and learn progressive muscle relaxation techniques. This will enhance your control over the physical signs of stress and tension and help you to stay calm during encounters with the harasser, as well as helping you to relax afterward
 - Be aware of your non-verbal behaviour and try to control outward signs of stress and distress while dealing with the harasser (eg. biting nails, touching hair, excessive fidgeting, shaking)
 - Find activities that help you to release anger and stress such as physical exercise, meditation, listening to music, social interaction, keeping a journal of thoughts and feelings, role playing with a trusted friend what you would like to say to the harasser if it were possible (including allowing yourself to cry if you feel like it)
 - Try to schedule activities to fill up any spare hours of your day to avoid unstructured time where you may dwell on negative thoughts
- * **Protect your physical health and wellbeing**
 - Try to maintain a normal routine with regular sleep, healthy eating habits and regular physical activity
 - Avoid excessive use of alcohol or other drugs to cope