



2026

OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK FOR YOUTH WORKERS

Inclusive sex education and informed digital skills

SEXUALITY CONNECT · TRAINING ON SEX EDUCATION AND SAFE ONLINE PRESENCE

A tool for youth workers who support and work with adolescents aged 12 to 18, with an inclusive, non-judgemental, participatory and rights-based approach.

Sexuality Connect: Equipping Youth Workers with Digital Solutions for Inclusive Education
Erasmus+ KA210 Small-Scale Partnership in Youth

Project number 2025-1-LU01-KA210-YOU-000362941



ORIENTATION

How to use this handbook

This handbook grows out of the youth worker training delivered under ACT2 of the **Sexuality Connect** project. It is designed first of all as a reference tool for those who took part and want to revisit concepts, questions, materials and educational practices, even after some time has passed. It can also support youth workers who did not take part in the training but want to approach inclusive sex education and digital citizenship with adolescents aged 12 to 18. It does not replace specialist training or your organisation's protocols.

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is designed for youth workers who work with adolescents, or for anyone who is in contact with them.

Three ways in

If you need to...	Go to...	You'll find...
Review a topic	pp. 7–26	Concepts, examples and facilitation stance
Prepare a session	pp. 27–31	Ten activities adapted from the course
Look up terms or links	pp. 32–33	Glossary, resources and bibliography

Language note: this English edition uses gender-neutral phrasing and singular “they” throughout. The symbol † refers to an operational note at the bottom of the page, flagging health, legal or safeguarding information to check against your own country and organisation.

Content note

This document addresses gender-based and sexual violence, grooming, manipulation, pornography, non-consensual sharing of images, abortion, body image and other topics that may bring up emotional reactions.



Contents

ORIENTATION	2
Who is this handbook for?	2
Contents	2
Three ways in	
SEXUALITY CONNECT AND THE ACT2 TRAINING PATHWAY	4
The project	4
APPROACH	5
A shared educational compass	5
INCLUSIVE SEX EDUCATION	7
Pleasure, consent and the plurality of bodies	7
Gender identity, orientation and affirmation†	8
RELATIONSHIPS AND EMOTIONAL LIFE	10
Relationships, care and communication	10
PREVENTION AND EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE	12
Gender education, gender-based violence and secondary victimisation†	12
INFORMATION, ACCESS AND NON-JUDGEMENT	13
Bodies, sexual health and reproductive choices†	13
ONLINE SAFETY	14
Digital identity and the internet as a resource	14
Online belonging, the manosphere and critical thinking	15
Online pornography: effects, expectations and critical reading	16
Grooming and online manipulation†	18
Sexing, digital consent and responsible sharing†	19
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE	20
Activities 1–3: pleasure, consent and representation	20
Activities 4–6: relationships, the body and content	21
Activities 7–10: the manosphere, pornography, grooming and sexting	22
WORDS WORTH REVISITING	23
Working glossary	23
MATERIALS AND ONLINE SPACES	24
Resources to keep exploring	24
RESPONSIBLE USE	25
Checklist and selected bibliography	
PROJECT SOURCES AND REFERENCE FRAMEWORKS	26
OPERATIONAL SHEER	27



SEXUALITY CONNECT AND THE ACT2 TRAINING PATHWAY

THE PROJECT

Sexuality Connect is an Erasmus+ partnership between **KEHSIA** (Luxembourg), **DONNEXSTRADA** (Italy) and **EUducate** (Spain). The project aims to strengthen the quality and innovation of youth work, giving those who work with young people the knowledge and tools for inclusive sex education and for **sexual digital literacy**: understanding the risks and opportunities of the web, recognising reliable sources and supporting informed choices about sexuality, relationships and online presence.

Beyond the training itself, the project includes co-designing digital resources, mobility, field testing and dissemination of results, with particular attention to people with fewer opportunities. This handbook makes the training content reusable and contributes to the collection of materials, online spaces and educational practices envisaged by the project.

Period	December 2025 – June 2026. The online schedule was organised into 13 sessions, from 2 December 2025 to 12 May 2026, for a total of 24 hours.
Phase 1	Sex education: pleasure, consent, identity, orientation, relationships, stereotypes, violence, the body, STIs, contraception and abortion.
Phase 2	Digital sexuality: online identity, the internet as a resource, pornography, the manosphere, grooming, manipulation, sexting and responsible sharing.
Method	Teaching materials and theoretical references, thematic presentations, discussions and reflective questions, Padlet, case and content analysis, group activities and workshop design.

What emerges from the responses of the most regular participants

Among the **44 people who attended at least 9 of the 13 sessions**, self-assessments scoring 4 or 5 out of 5 show a markedly higher perception of competence at the end of the course compared with the initial questionnaire:

I feel able to...	Before · n=93	After · high attendance
recognise and challenge stereotypes	52.7%	86.4%
talk with adolescents about assigned sex, gender and orientation	43.0%	83.7%*
recognise the positive potential of the internet	44.1%	86.4%
explain sexual deepfakes, IBSA and non-consensual sharing	20.4%	83.7%*
support someone who has experienced online violence	26.9%	65.1%*

Perceived usefulness



41 out of 44 people in the high-attendance group said what they had learned would be useful in their work with adolescents.

In the open-ended responses, participants most often flagged as particularly useful the topics of **consent, communication and boundaries, gender-based violence and secondary victimisation, gender identity and orientation**, as well as the section on **online life**: digital identity, grooming, sexting, pornography and non-consensual sharing. What is most appreciated is the non-judgemental approach and the ability to turn the content into conversations and activities with adolescents.

Requests for more depth focus in particular on grooming and manipulation, relationship violence, sexting and IBSA, pornography, sexual health and legal aspects. There is also a recurring wish for more hands-on examples, field-tested activities and theoretical materials to consult: this handbook responds directly to that need by combining summaries, tools and replicable proposals.

** For these items, n=43 responded. The pre- and post-course samples do not fully overlap and are not matched person by person: the data describe aggregate self-assessments and do not, on their own, demonstrate a causal effect.*

APPROACH

A shared educational compass

According to UNESCO's international technical guidance (2018), Comprehensive Sexuality Education is a curriculum-based process that addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed for health, wellbeing, dignity and respectful relationships. In the Sexuality Connect pathway, **inclusion is a quality condition of the work, not a final add-on.**

Principles to hold together

Accuracy	Distinguish between facts, experiences, values, opinions and norms; update what changes over time.
Appropriateness	Tailor depth and activities to age, developmental stage, context and the group's real questions.
Rights and autonomy	Put dignity, information, privacy, consent, non-discrimination and freedom of choice at the centre.
Inclusion	Make visible the plurality of genders, orientations, bodies, abilities, cultures, languages and social conditions.
Participation	Build with young people, without forcing them to expose themselves or placing adult responsibilities on them.
Critical thinking	Question stereotypes, power, media, algorithms, economic models and whatever is left out of the picture.

Key words

These words recur throughout the handbook because they help identify the educational stance that links the different topics and translate it into concrete facilitation choices.

Sex positivity	Talking about sexuality without shame or moralising, centring information, pleasure, plurality and the freedom to not want something or to change one's mind.
-----------------------	---



Bodily autonomy	Supporting informed decisions about one's own body free from coercion, while being clear about the limits of your role and safeguarding procedures.
Consent	Building an agreement that is free, informed, specific, current and revocable; silence, doubt or pressure are not the same as a yes.
Intersectionality	Observing how gender, orientation, disability, origin, class, language and migration status affect access, visibility and safety.
Participation	Involving young people in questions, examples and evaluation without forcing them to expose themselves or to represent an entire group.
Online/offline continuity	Recognising that identity, relationships, desire, belonging and violence run through both environments: what happens online produces real emotions, consequences and needs.

Before facilitating

- Co-create a few concrete ground rules: listening, the right to pass, respectful language, breaks and anonymous questions.
- Use fictional cases and third-person questions; don't turn the group into a space for confession.
- Be explicit about the limits of confidentiality and your organisation's internal pathway when a situation of risk or violence comes up.
- Adapt depth, vocabulary and scenarios to the 12–15 and 15–18 age groups without being patronising.
- Close with a debrief and transfer to daily life — “What phrase, resource or action could you use in everyday life?” — leaving a resource people can consult and the option of speaking privately with a competent adult.



INCLUSIVE SEX EDUCATION

Pleasure, consent and the plurality of bodies

Why start from pleasure

Sexuality is often talked about through taboo, stigma, shame and guilt. Starting from pleasure — understood as a broad and plural experience, not confined to the sexual sphere — opens up a vocabulary of curiosity, wellbeing, desire, boundaries and self-determination instead. A sex-positive (or sex-neutral) approach does not dictate what should give pleasure: it creates the conditions to talk without moralising and to choose.

Consent is a process

Consent can be described as **free and voluntary, informed and aware, explicit, specific, ongoing, enthusiastic and revocable**. It concerns everyone involved and the whole experience: consenting to one thing does not mean consenting to another, or forever.

The consent continuum

Between a full yes and a clear no there is doubt, ambivalence and “I don’t know”. Uncertainty is not permission: it calls for slowing down, asking questions, checking the context and allowing time. Changing your mind is always a valid response.

Three essential perspectives

A conversation about pleasure remains incomplete if it doesn’t also address who gets left out of representations, which myths regulate people’s worth, and which tools can support conscious exploration. The perspectives below help avoid reducing sexuality to a single body, a single practice or a single experience.

Sexuality and disability

Disability emerges from the interaction with social and environmental barriers. Infantilising disabled people and portraying them as devoid of desire limits their access to education, intimacy and self-determination. Creating safer spaces means supporting dignity, agency, pleasure and participation.

The myth of “virginity”

The idea of virginity can impose the assumption that sex must be penetrative, and use sexual behaviour as a measure of a person’s worth. Recognising the many forms sexuality and pleasure can take helps avoid tying someone’s status or dignity to having been with a cis man.

Sex toys / pleasure toys

These can be individual or shared tools for exploring pleasure. Naming them without stigma makes it possible to talk about choice, communication, consent and conscious use, without turning them into a requirement or proof of sexual openness.

Continue exploring with:

[Padlet “What about pleasure”](#) · [WAS · Declaration on Sexual Pleasure](#) · [Disability and Sexuality · video](#) · [la CLIT](#)

INCLUSIVE SEX EDUCATION

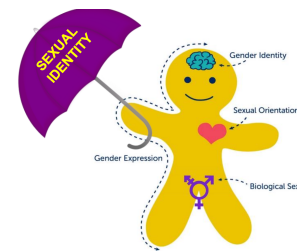
Gender identity, orientation and affirmation¹

Adolescence is a phase in which identity, in all its dimensions, takes on new forms and becomes the object of more conscious exploration. Young people begin to ask themselves who they are, who they feel attracted to, what meaning they give to relationships, and how they want to express themselves.

Words give shape to experience: naming something lived means making it visible and acknowledging its reality. Silence, by contrast, can feed shame, isolation and the feeling that some experiences cannot be shared.

Talking about the plurality of genders and sexual and romantic orientations does not mean imposing labels or asking a person to define themselves. It means offering a vocabulary through which to understand, communicate and live one's own experience, to encounter representations to recognise oneself in, and to receive validation. Labels can be useful, provisional, changeable, or not used at all: they must remain tools available to the person, not categories assigned from outside.

The **GenderBread Person** is a pedagogical map that helps distinguish dimensions that are often confused: sex characteristics, gender identity, expression, attraction and behaviour. It is not a test and is not meant to place people into rigid categories. It can be used to show that these dimensions are connected but independent, and that each can be experienced, named or left unnamed in different ways.



GenderBread Person. Source: It's Pronounced Metrosexual.

Five dimensions that are related but not interchangeable

Sex characteristics / sex assigned at birth	Bodily characteristics and the classification assigned at birth; intersex bodies and people represent one possibility within human experience.
Gender identity	One's internal sense of self: for example cisgender, transgender, non-binary, or defined in one's own words.
Gender expression	The ways a person communicates gender; these do not automatically reveal identity or orientation.
Sexual and romantic orientation	Who a person experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction toward; the two dimensions may or may not coincide.
Behaviour	What a person does does not necessarily determine how they identify or what they feel.

Beyond the binary and beyond labels

The gender binary is a cultural construct that can erase experiences and create pressure. "Non-binary" is an umbrella term; people may identify as gender fluid, agender, genderqueer, or in their own words. Identities and orientations can evolve over time or never be named at all. Romantic and sexual orientation may not coincide: separating love and desire reduces the pressure to follow a single script.

¹ HEALTH AND LEGAL REVIEW: before giving guidance on intersex variations, medical or legal gender-affirmation pathways, or access for minors, check sources and legislation in your own country.



Gender affirmation can have **social** dimensions (name, pronouns, expression), **medical** and **legal** ones. Every path is personal and no dimension is mandatory. Youth workers use the name and pronouns a person indicates, don't assume, and pay attention to which family, economic, healthcare or institutional barriers limit safety and authenticity.

Continue exploring with:

[GenderBread Person](#) · [AMAZE](#) · [What is Intersex?](#) · [Judith Butler](#) · [Your Behavior Creates Your Gender](#)



RELATIONSHIPS AND EMOTIONAL LIFE

Relationships, care and communication

Attraction, infatuation and love

Attraction can be physical, emotional, aesthetic, affectionate or spiritual, and doesn't require acting on it. The split attraction model distinguishes sexual, romantic, affectionate and aesthetic attraction. Infatuation refers to a phase of strong attraction and desire for closeness; love can take romantic, sexual, platonic, family or spiritual forms and is built through care, trust, freedom and taking responsibility for one's impact.

Relational safety

A safe relationship is not a conflict-free relationship: it is one that can move through conflict without calling into question the dignity, freedom or belonging of the people involved.

- A safe relationship makes it possible to:
- stay true to yourself, instead of having to play a role;
- express disagreement without losing connection;
- show emotions, complexity and imperfection and still feel accepted;
- set limits without guilt;
- trust that repair is possible after a conflict or a rupture.

Safety is co-created: it shouldn't have to be earned by behaving the "right" way or by proving you're good enough. It grows out of presence, clarity, mutual respect and taking responsibility for the impact of one's actions. Safety is the condition intimacy needs, not a reward to be won.

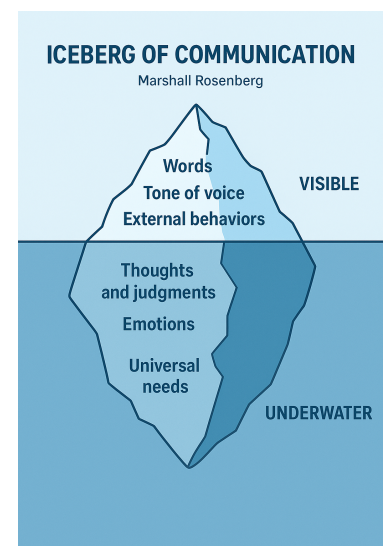
Care as practice

These actions are aimed first of all at facilitators, but they can also become behaviours to model and discuss with adolescents. A **check-in** is a brief, open question that checks how the other person is doing or what they want in that moment, instead of assuming: for example "How are you feeling?", "Do you want to keep going?", "Do you need space, or do you want me to stay?".

- check in instead of assuming; listen to understand, not only to solve;
- respect boundaries, pace, silence and the need for space; name your own limits too;
- recognise the impact of your actions and make repair without turning responsibility into guilt or control;
- question the implicit hierarchy between romantic relationships, friendships, family, work and community.

Communication traps and the iceberg

In difficult conversations it's easy to stop at what appears on the surface — words, gestures and reactions — and to attribute intentions without checking them. The iceberg image invites us to also look at what lies beneath: thoughts and judgements, emotions, needs and fears. Nonviolent communication helps us look past what is immediately visible, encouraging us to





distinguish between our observations and our judgments, between our underlying feelings and our thoughts, between our core needs and the strategies we use to meet them, and between making a genuine request and issuing a demand. One possible template is: “When I see or hear..., I feel... because I need... Would you be willing to...?”.

Mind-reading	Ask instead of guessing.
Defending yourself right away	Pause, breathe, and reflect back what you’ve understood.
Sarcasm or the silent treatment	Name the discomfort; take space by explaining why and when you’ll come back to it.
Fixing instead of listening	Acknowledge the experience first; offer solutions only if asked.

Continue exploring with:

[Padlet · Relationship system](#) · [Nonviolent Communication · video](#) · [What happens to your brain when you fall in love?](#)



PREVENTION AND EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE

Gender education, gender-based violence and secondary victimisation²

From stereotypes to gender education

Stereotypes simplify and prescribe: they dictate how bodies and genders should behave, which desires are acceptable, and which roles belong to whom. **Gender education** is the pedagogical approach that questions and deconstructs rigid norms, promotes gender as an open space for expression, values different experiences and supports inclusive relationships. In this sense it contributes to wellbeing and to preventing gender-based violence.

Forms of violence that can overlap

Psychological	Threats, humiliation, manipulation, isolation, control and constant criticism.
Physical	The intentional use of force, or the threat of it.
Economic	Restricting money, work or resources to create dependency.
Sexual	Sexual acts, pressure or harassment without free and informed consent.
Digital	Harassment, surveillance, cyberstalking, threats, doxxing and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

The term **femicide** can be described broadly as the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender. Prevention requires recognising control, threats and other forms of violence early. Definitions and legal frameworks vary between countries.

Responding without causing further harm

When a youth worker witnesses harassment, the **5Ds** offer five options to choose from based on safety: **distract** by interrupting the situation without confronting it directly; **delegate** by asking a responsible adult for help; **document** only if it is safe, useful and permitted, then handing the material over to the person involved; **offer support** during or after the episode; **intervene directly** by naming the behaviour and asking it to stop, but only if doing so doesn't increase the risk.

If a person, whether a minor or an adult, discloses violence, the first response is to listen with empathy, believe them, check on their safety, avoid judging or minimising, and present options they can understand. When the person is a minor, the safeguarding protocol must be activated and national duties of protection or reporting must be followed. Involving whoever holds parental responsibility should be assessed according to law and safety: if it could increase the risk, the safeguarding lead or the relevant service must be consulted first. Never promise absolute secrecy.

Secondary victimisation

Trauma can worsen when institutions, the media or people close to the person respond with disbelief, judgement, blame or inappropriate procedures. Possible consequences include further stress, shame, isolation and loss of trust in institutions.

Continue exploring with:

[Stereotipi di genere nelle pubblicità di giocattoli](#) · [Stand Up · training sulle molestie](#) · [Guida DONNEXSTRADA & Enilive](#)

² LEGAL AND SAFEGUARDING REVIEW: before acting, check the applicable definitions, documentation procedures, protection or reporting duties, and how minors are taken into care in your own country.



INFORMATION, ACCESS AND NON-JUDGEMENT

Bodies, sexual health and reproductive choicest³

Puberty, changes and body image

Bodies change over time in shape, size, smell, colour and range of movement. Puberty can involve hair growth, breast, genital and muscle development, changes in voice, skin and body shape, along with new emotions and curiosity. Not all bodies follow the same paths, timing or patterns. Self-image is also shaped by social perception, beauty standards, media and peers.

When a young person talks about their body, the youth worker can hold space without immediately treating it as a problem, notice their own discomfort, avoid judgemental comments, and recognise when to involve other adults or professionals.

STIs and stigma-free prevention

Sexually transmitted infections differ in how they are transmitted, their symptoms, prevention, diagnosis and treatment. No sexual practice is entirely without risk; barrier methods and testing can reduce it and support informed choices. Having an STI is not a sign of being dirty, guilty, or of lesser moral worth.

Contraception, access and abortion

Contraceptive methods include barrier, hormonal, intrauterine and cycle-tracking methods. The ability to choose also depends on health, accessibility, economic circumstances and how responsibility is shared. Abortion ends a pregnancy that has already begun and can be medical or surgical; emergency contraception acts before a pregnancy begins and does not end an existing pregnancy. The educational role is to offer listening, verified information and access to qualified professionals, without deciding on the person's behalf.

Continue exploring with:

[Padlet domande e approfondimenti del corso](#) · [AMAZE](#) · [Sex, Etc.](#)

^{3†} HEALTH AND LEGAL REVIEW: check access to contraception and abortion, as well as medical consent, confidentiality and access to services for minors.



ONLINE SAFETY

Digital identity and the internet as a resource

Digital identity is not just a profile: it includes self-representation, belonging, feedback, privacy and visibility. In adolescence, the exploration of roles and values continues online, but under new conditions: likes, comments, views and shares make feedback immediate and measurable; platforms and algorithms play a part in shaping the experience.

A multiple, situated identity

Young people build digital identities by posting, commenting and messaging; they decide what stays visible, adapt tone and content to different audiences, watch reactions, and use privacy settings, multiple accounts or pseudonyms. The educational question isn't just "how much time?", but **what they do online, with whom, with how much authenticity, and with what effects.**

Opportunities	Information about the body, sexuality and gender; community and belonging; creativity; activism; access to services; language to describe oneself.
Comparison pressure	and Comparison around body, attractiveness, popularity and desirability; pressure to stay visible and socially validated.
Reliability	Information about gender, relationships and sexuality can be incomplete or distorted; it's necessary to distinguish source, experience, opinion and advertising.
Public / private	Content and interactions can persist, circulate and affect reputation beyond the intended audience.
Identity theft	Catfishing uses a false identity to deceive and can be linked to romance scams, financial fraud or other forms of exploitation.

The youth worker's stance

- believe in both the positive and negative experience, without reducing what happens to "just virtual life";
- start from curiosity and need, avoiding shame, moral panic and paternalism;
- make algorithms, economic interests, intended audience and actual audience legible;
- strengthen agency and boundaries without placing on the individual all the responsibility for systems designed to hold attention.

Continue exploring with:

[Algorithms and Identity · Basra Mohamud](#) · [Benefits of social media on young people](#) · [AVEN](#) · [Asexual Visibility and Education Network](#)





Online belonging, the manosphere and critical thinking

The internet and social media are not a separate world over which people have no power at all. Understanding their languages and dynamics can restore room for choice. At the same time, agency doesn't mean individual blame: platforms are built around profit and attention, and can encourage repetition, escalation and passive exposure to content.

When belonging is built against someone

The **manosphere** is not a single group but an ecosystem that can include incel communities, red-pill ideology, pick-up artists, masculinity influencers, MGTOW and "men's rights" activism. Some of this content shares anti-feminism, gender essentialism and "alpha/beta" hierarchies. Entry rarely happens through explicit hatred: it can start from the gym, discipline, success, dating and self-esteem, and gradually shift from self-help toward stereotypes, blame and hostility.

Why it can be appealing

Rejection, loneliness, desire, comparison and the need for recognition are central experiences in adolescence. This content offers names, simple explanations and a sense of control. The problem arises when a vulnerability is reinterpreted as systematic injustice, complexity turns into certainty, and certainty produces blame, rigidity and control. The consequences can include distrust, competitiveness, pressure to dominate or suppress vulnerability, and greater isolation.

Validate the emotion, question the explanation

Don't ridicule the real need, and don't stop at "that's not true". Ask: what emotion does this message tap into? What does it promise? Who gets turned into the one to blame? Where does the power imbalance show up? What other ways of belonging and relating can we make available?

Digital languages and sources

Images, cultural references, humour, subtext and memes are languages of identity and belonging. Analysing them means asking: who is speaking, with what interest, for what audience? What gets left out? What emotion does it activate? What will the algorithm probably suggest after this content?

Continue exploring with:

[Why manosphere content is appealing](#) · [Tradwives from a scientific perspective](#) · [Padlet Sexuality Connect](#)



Online pornography: effects, expectations and critical reading

Pornography includes visual, textual or audio material produced to arouse sexual excitement. It can take different forms: mainstream, amateur, educational, ethical or feminist.

Pornography as informal education

Pornography doesn't explicitly claim that what it depicts is how sexuality should be lived. However, when comprehensive sex education and opportunities to talk things through with competent adults are missing, the repetition of certain depictions can turn them into genuine sexual scripts.

Mainstream pornography can, for example, implicitly communicate that:

- sex is mainly a performance, rather than an experience of connection;
- pleasure is mostly male and one-sided;
- consent can be silent, implicit, or taken for granted.

These depictions don't automatically produce the same effects in everyone. Their impact depends on age and the circumstances of first exposure, frequency of use, personal and relational context, and above all, on access to reliable information and critical conversations.

Possible effects: forming hypotheses, not diagnoses

On an individual level, exposure to pornography can, in some people, contribute to unrealistic expectations, performance anxiety, insecurity about one's own body, emotional detachment from intimacy, or desensitisation.

On a relational level, distorted ideas about consent and reciprocity can emerge, along with difficulties with communication and building intimacy, objectification of other people, or less attention to their desires, limits and cues.

These are possible effects, not inevitable consequences. The task of a youth worker is not to make diagnoses or assume that all use is problematic, but to help adolescents and young people question what they see and distinguish between representation, fantasy and real experience.

Problematic use, coping and addiction

Using pornography as a coping strategy to deal with stress, loneliness, boredom or difficult emotions doesn't automatically amount to an addiction — a word to avoid using loosely or moralistically — but a youth worker can still explore the function of that behaviour together with the young person and, when necessary, guide them toward a competent professional.

Ethical and feminist pornography

Ethical and feminist pornography try to offer alternative depictions and production practices compared with many mainstream pornography models.

Among the principles that can characterise them are:



- explicit and informed consent;
- safety and fair working conditions;
- transparency in production processes and pay;
- representation of plural bodies, genders, orientations and desires;
- attention to mutual pleasure;
- representation of communication and connection;
- moving beyond an exclusively male and cis-heteronormative gaze.

Talking about ethical and feminist pornography makes it possible to show that pornography, too, is a cultural product: it reflects specific ideas about the body, gender, pleasure, power and relationships. It can therefore be critically analysed and compared with different narratives.

It remains essential to remember that no pornographic content is the same as real life: what is shown is a constructed representation. Real pleasure requires communication; consent is never optional; bodies exist in an infinite variety of shapes, colours and characteristics.

Consent, recording, sharing and age

The legal dimension of pornography should be approached by distinguishing at least three elements: consent, sharing and age.

Consent must cover, separately:

- the sexual act depicted;
- its recording;
- the storage and distribution of the content.

Continue exploring with:

[Silva Neves · profilo citato](#) · [Erika Lust · video](#)



Grooming and online manipulation⁴

Grooming is a manipulative process in which an adult approaches a minor, builds a relationship of trust, and prepares the ground for exploitation or abuse. It can happen on social media, in chats and in video games; the adult may pretend to be the same age. A recurring pathway moves through **contact, friendship, intensifying the relationship, sexting and proposing a meeting**, though not always in a straight line.

How to recognise it: observing the relationship

Power	Differences in age, experience, status, resources or ability to influence.
Secrecy	The relationship is isolated from trusted adults or the peer group: “it’s our secret”.
Pressure and dependency	Guilt, threats, promises, gifts or favours with strings attached; a need to respond right away.
Shifted boundaries	Time, topics, images and intimacy are expanded little by little; discomfort and curiosity can coexist.
Isolation	Friendships and family bonds are devalued; the new relationship is presented as unique and special.

Manipulation: three elements and three examples

Manipulation is a broader form of hidden or deceptive influence. Three elements help identify it: **an advantage sought for oneself, a power imbalance that exploits needs or insecurities** and **a lack of transparency**. Examples: **gaslighting**, which leads someone to doubt their own memory or perception; **love bombing**, excessive attention and affection to quickly create attachment; **guilt-tripping**, which makes the other person responsible for someone else’s happiness or suffering.

Preventing by building skills

- putting words to excitement, curiosity, confusion and discomfort; connecting body signals with emotions;
- teaching boundaries around time, topics, images and intimacy, and recognising when they are crossed or shifted;
- giving permission to say no, block, stop or leave: no one is obliged to offer attention, images or replies;
- identifying several trustworthy adults and practising concretely how to ask for help without fear of punishment.

Pedagogical question

Not just “Is this dangerous?”, but: what need for connection, recognition or belonging is this relationship meeting?

Continue exploring with:

[7 Warning Signs of Grooming](#) · [Council of Europe · Lanzarote Convention](#)

⁴ LEGAL AND SAFEGUARDING REVIEW: the Lanzarote Convention, EU Directive 2011/93/EU and national legislation do not fully overlap.



Sexting, digital consent and responsible sharing^{5†}

Sexting is the exchange of sexually explicit texts, images, videos or audio. It's part of digital sexuality and requires communication about style, tool, context and consent. Reacting only with panic, punishment or shame makes it less likely that a young person will ask for help; talking about desire, safety and responsibility instead helps recognise coercion and abuse.

Digital consent covers every action

It's not limited to sending: it includes **receiving, saving, showing, forwarding, screenshotting, commenting on, editing and reposting**. An image sent to one person, at one moment and for one purpose, is not authorised for other uses.

Before sending	Before receiving	After receiving
Do I want this? Do I feel pressured? Do I trust them? What did we agree on?	"Do you want me to send you something?" "Is this a good time?" "What do you want or not want to receive?"	Responsibility continues: don't save, show or share beyond what was agreed.

Language, responsibility and harm reduction

"Once you send a photo you never know what happens to it" shifts the weight onto the person who sent it. Consent-based language places responsibility back on whoever breaks the agreement: **"You are not responsible for someone violating your consent"; "whoever receives it is responsible for what they do with it"; "you have the right to ask for help"**. Suggestions like hiding your face, tattoos or location can help some people feel safer, but they don't shift the responsibility for a violation onto the person who sent the image.

"Revenge porn" is a misleading term: "revenge" implies some initial wrongdoing, and "porn" confuses abuse with consensual pornography. Preferable terms are **non-consensual sharing of intimate images (NCII)** or **image-based sexual abuse (IBSA)**. Consent also applies to manipulated images and sexual deepfakes.

The role of adults and communities

Schools, organisations and youth workers can create spaces where questions are welcome, mistakes are discussed, consent is understandable, responsibility is upheld, and sexuality is not treated as taboo. If the person listening isn't in a position to do this well, they can say so and look together for someone better suited.

Continue exploring with:

[Padlet Sexuality Connect](#) · [Take It Down](#) · [StopNCII.org](#)

^{5†} LEGAL AND SAFEGUARDING REVIEW: for people aged 12 to 18, creating, possessing, receiving and sharing intimate images can carry specific consequences even when sending is voluntary. Check the legislation in your own country and link this information to sources of support, not to punitive threats.



FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

How to use the activities

The ten proposals turn the main content of the course into educational experiences for adolescents aged 12 to 18. Timing, questions and format can be adapted: always keep participation optional, use fictional cases, debrief, and offer a support resource.

Activities 1–3: pleasure, consent and representation

ACTIVITY 1 · Pleasure map

12–18 · 30 min · anonymous sticky notes

What this activity focuses on Broaden the concept of pleasure and observe taboos and resistance.

Step-by-step Complete anonymously: “I associate pleasure with...”, “I also recognise it when...”, “When I talk about it I feel...”. Group the words without ranking them, and discuss that pleasure and desire are neither obligations nor proof of maturity.

Debrief. Which pleasures are legitimised or ridiculed? Who is left out of the most common representations?

Caution. With 12–15 year-olds, prioritise wellbeing, the body and boundaries; don’t ask about personal sexual experiences.

ACTIVITY 2 · The consent continuum

12–18 · 40 min · fictional scenarios

What this activity focuses on Recognise yes, no, doubt, pressure and the possibility of changing one’s mind.

Step-by-step Place short scenarios along a line between “they want it”, “they’re not sure” and “they don’t want it”. For each scenario, identify what questions, timing or check-ins are needed, and rewrite an implicit pressure as a free, specific request.

Debrief. What makes it hard to say no? What makes a yes freer? What do we do with a “maybe”?

Caution. Don’t ask people to take a position based on their own experiences.

ACTIVITY 3 · Visibility and representation

12–18 · 40 min · small groups

What this activity focuses on Analyse how representations and language affect safety and belonging.

Step-by-step Compare two pieces of content from different eras or platforms about gender and orientation: what has changed? Which stereotypes persist? Who gets to speak and who remains invisible? Close by designing a more inclusive representation.

Debrief. Does visibility always mean safety? How can we avoid caricature and tokenism?

Caution. No one should have to explain or defend their own identity.



Activities 4–6: relationships, the body and content

ACTIVITY 4 · Relationship map and the iceberg

12–18 · 50 min · paper and markers

What this activity focuses on Question relationship hierarchies and read what's happening beneath a conflict.

Step-by-step Create circles, networks or pyramids with friendships, family, school and other relationships. Then analyse a fictional conflict: above the waterline, words and gestures; below it, judgements, emotions and needs. Finally, turn a reaction into an observation–feeling–need–request.

Debrief. Which relationships are seen as more important? What creates safety? What repair is possible?

Caution. The map can be entirely fictional; sharing it is optional.

ACTIVITY 5 · Body or idea?

15–18 · 40 min · two columns

What this activity focuses on Distinguish bodily experience, norms and values in discussions of pregnancy and abortion.

Step-by-step Place words such as pain, choice, guilt, responsibility, risk, time, health, morality, religion and control into the “body” and “idea” columns, allowing for overlap. Explain the choices and discuss who should have the final say over a pregnancy, and why.

Debrief. Where does a conviction turn into pressure? How can we support someone without deciding for them?

Caution. Before use, check the information, legislation and setting; no one should have to disclose personal experiences or positions.

ACTIVITY 6 · Content under the lens

12–18 · 45 min · non-explicit content

What this activity focuses on Examine source, representation, communicative code, authenticity and emotional effect.

Step-by-step Each group chooses a science communicator, an influencer or a political commentator and answers: why this platform and this language? Who is represented? Is it reliable? What emotion does it activate? Would you follow them? What will the algorithm suggest next?

Debrief. What's the difference between fact, opinion, experience and advertising? Who benefits from our attention?

Caution. If a piece of content triggers discomfort, you can switch examples without explanation.



Activities 7–10: the manosphere, pornography, grooming and sexting

ACTIVITY 7 · From need to message

14–18 · 35 min · groups

What this activity focuses on Recognise the need that manosphere content taps into, and the point where it becomes problematic.

Step-by-step Analyse phrases such as “Men today are weak” or “If you don’t get chosen, it’s the system’s fault”: the emotion or need, the promise, the subtext, and the point where blame and rigidity appear. Prepare a non-moralistic response and an open question.

Debrief. Why can it be appealing? What alternative sense of belonging can we offer?

ACTIVITY 8 · Porn says / Reality check

15–18 · 40 min · no explicit material

What this activity focuses on Make visible pornographic scripts and alternatives grounded in reality and consent.

Step-by-step Two columns: “Porn says...” and “In reality...”. Start from desire, performance, bodies, consent and pleasure; add what’s missing and a non-judgemental question to ask peers.

Debrief. What is representation? What isn’t shown?

Caution. Check age, vocabulary and setting; do not show pornography.

ACTIVITY 9 · Alex’s case

12–18 · 40 min · fictional case

What this activity focuses on Recognise how trust is built, along with isolation, secrecy and coercion.

Step-by-step Analyse four messages from the case: a contact made while gaming; the devaluing of friendships; a gift to be kept secret; a threat linked to photos or chats. Identify the need being tapped into, the power imbalance, the shifted boundary, and a possible response from a trustworthy adult.

Debrief. What might feel pleasant at first? When does the pressure appear?

Caution. Do not role-play the interrogation or contact with the suspected person.

ACTIVITY 10 · Digital consent workshop

12–18 · 45 min · action cards

What this activity focuses on Extend the idea of consent to receiving, storing, screenshotting, editing and sharing.

Step-by-step First round with generic images, second round with intimate images described but not shown. For sending, receiving, saving, showing, forwarding or editing, identify what consent is needed and rewrite a blaming phrase in terms of responsibility.

Debrief. Was the consent specific? Who is responsible at each step?

Caution. Check legislation and the safeguarding protocol; do not use real images.



WORDS WORTH REVISITING

Working glossary

Brief definitions to orient yourself and review. They do not replace clinical or legal definitions, which can vary between sources and countries.

Term	Working definition	Term	Working definition
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education: integrates the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality.	Sexting	Exchange of sexually explicit texts, images, videos or audio.
Sex positivity	An open, non-judgemental approach grounded in information, consent, pleasure and self-determination.	Grooming	A manipulative process of building trust with a minor in preparation for exploitation or abuse.
Bodily autonomy	The right to make decisions about one's own body free from coercion, violence or discrimination.	Manipulation	Hidden or deceptive influence that exploits a power imbalance to steer thoughts or behaviour.
Consent	A free, informed, specific, current and revocable agreement; it applies to every stage and action.	Gaslighting	A strategy that leads a person to doubt their own memory, perception or sense of reality.
Gender education	A pedagogical approach that questions stereotypes and rigid norms and values plural gender experiences.	Love bombing	An initial excess of attention and affection used to quickly create attachment or dependency.
Gender identity	One's internal sense of one's own gender, which may or may not coincide with the sex assigned at birth.	Catfishing	Creating a false identity online to deceive other people.
Gender expression	The ways a person presents or communicates gender; it does not determine identity or orientation.	Manosphere	An ecosystem of online communities and content aimed at men and boys, sometimes marked by anti-feminism and gender hierarchies.
Sexual orientation	The direction or pattern of sexual attraction; it may be named or left unlabelled.	NCII	Non-consensual intimate image sharing: distributing intimate images without consent.
Romantic orientation	The direction or pattern of romantic attraction; it may differ from sexual orientation.	IBSA	Image-based sexual abuse: sexual abuse based on creating, threatening to share, or distributing images.
Non-binary	An umbrella term for identities that don't fit exclusively as man or woman.	CSAM	Child sexual abuse material: material depicting the sexual abuse or exploitation of minors.
Intersex	Natural possibilities of sex characteristics that do not correspond to typical male/female definitions.	Doxxing	Publishing personal information to intimidate, expose or harm someone.
Digital identity	Self-representation, belonging, feedback, privacy, visibility and reputation in digital environments.	Victim blaming	Placing responsibility for what happened on the person who was harmed.
Digital consent	Consent applied to sending, receiving, saving, viewing, editing and distributing content.	Secondary victimisation	Further harm caused by judgemental, blaming or inappropriate responses from people and institutions.



MATERIALS AND ONLINE SPACES

Resources to keep exploring

This selection brings together materials used during the course and some additional reliable resources. Before using them with adolescents, check the language, age range, accessibility, last update and current content.

Area	Selected resources
Course and CSE	Padlet Sexuality Connect · UNESCO CSE Guidance · WHO/BZgA Standards
Pleasure and inclusion	What about pleasure · WAS Pleasure Declaration · Disability and Sexuality · la CLIT
Adolescents	AMAZE · Sex, Etc. · Scarleteen
Gender orientation	GenderBread Person · What is Intersex? · Judith Butler · Gender
Relationships	Relationship system Padlet · NVC explained
Gender-based violence	Stand Up training · Istanbul Convention · Guida DONNEXSTRADA/Enilive
Digital identity	Algorithms and Identity · Benefits of social media · AVEN
Manosphere	Why manosphere content appeals · Tradwives · UvA
Pornography	Silva Neves · Erika Lust · video
Grooming	7 Warning Signs · Lanzarote Convention · INHOPE
Intimate images	Take It Down · StopNCII.org · Child Helpline International
Digital citizenship	Council of Europe Handbook

The Sexuality Connect course on HOP

The online course hosted on the **HOP — Hands-on Participation** platform expands on the handbook's topics and offers further resources and interactive digital tools to adapt for work with adolescents. It's useful both for exploring the content in more depth and for designing participatory activities. Access details are available through Sexuality Connect's channels and partners.

Social media profiles, online courses and video content may change or require access. Check the links before each educational use.



RESPONSIBLE USE

Checklist and selected bibliography

Before facilitating

- ☐ I have defined the objective, age range and level of depth.
- ☐ I have checked terms, links and information that may have changed.
- ☐ I have completed the indicated health, legal and safeguarding reviews.
- ☐ I know the internal contact person, the limits of confidentiality, and the referral pathway to services.
- ☐ I have made provision for the right to not participate, anonymous questions, breaks and debriefing.
- ☐ Cases and images represent different genders, bodies, orientations, abilities and cultures.
- ☐ I do not use explicit material or real intimate images, and I do not ask for personal accounts.
- ☐ I have a reliable resource to leave with people and a way to collect feedback.



PROJECT SOURCES AND REFERENCE FRAMEWORKS

- Sexuality Connect, application form KA210-YOU-80056436; ACT2 course programme and teaching materials; the project's pre- and post-course questionnaires.
- UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO (2018), "International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education", revised edition.
- WHO Regional Office for Europe & BZgA (2010), "Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe".
- Council of Europe, "Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" (Istanbul Convention) and "Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse" (Lanzarote Convention).
- Rodríguez-García et al. (2025), "Effectiveness of Comprehensive Sexuality Education to Reduce Risk Sexual Behaviours Among Adolescents: A Systematic Review", *Sexes*, 6(1), 6.

Essential bibliography

- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Easton, D., & Hardy, J. W. (2017). *The Ethical Slut: A Practical Guide to Polyamory, Open Relationships, and Other Adventures* (3rd ed.). Ten Speed Press.
- Fern, J. (2020). *Polysecure: Attachment, Trauma, and Consensual Nonmonogamy*. Thornapple Press.
- Fern, J., & Cooley, D. (2023). *Polywise: A Deeper Dive into Navigating Open Relationships*. Thornapple Press.
- Fisher, H. E., Aron, A., & Brown, L. L. (2005). Romantic love: An fMRI study of a neural mechanism for mate choice. *Journal of Comparative Neurology*, 493(1), 58–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cne.20772>
- Lichtenberg, E. (n.d.). *Relationship Anarchy Smorgasbord*. <https://emilylichtenberg.art/relationshipanarchy>
- Marazziti, D., & Canale, D. (2004). Hormonal changes when falling in love. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 29(7), 931–936. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2003.08.006>
- Porges, S. W. (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Rosenberg, M. B. (2003). *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* (2nd ed.). PuddleDancer Press.
- Serano, J. (2007). *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Seal Press.
- Siegel, D. J. (2015). *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*. Guilford Press.
- Tenenbaum, T. (2024). *The End of Love: Sex and Desire in the Twenty-First Century*. Europa Editions

Using the handbook responsibly

Health and legal information can change and varies between countries. Before facilitating, check up-to-date sources, the safeguarding protocol, the limits of confidentiality, protection duties and the services accessible in your own context.



Operational sheet: first response to online violence or abuse

Scope of this sheet

These guidelines cover, for example, online sexual harassment, grooming, sextortion, threats, sexual deepfakes and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. They do not replace your organisation's procedures, national law, or intervention by the relevant services.

When a young person discloses a situation of online violence or abuse

1. **Stay calm, believe and validate.** *"Thank you for telling me. You did the right thing by asking for help. This is not your fault."* Avoid surprise, interrogation and reproach.
2. **Assess immediate safety.** Ask whether the person feels safe right now and whether there are threats, planned meetings, or a risk of physical harm or self-harm; activate the organisation's emergency protocol when necessary.
3. **Preserve information without increasing its spread.** Don't impulsively delete messages, URLs or accounts; don't ask to have intimate images forwarded, downloaded or reproduced. Only note down what the validated protocol allows.
4. **Connect them to competent support.** Don't investigate or contact the suspected person; involve the safeguarding lead if doing so doesn't increase the risk to the minor, the relevant services, or the authorities, according to national law and procedure. If the person is a minor, don't promise absolute secrecy, and assess whether to involve whoever holds parental responsibility according to the applicable duties and safety considerations: if that involvement could increase the risk, consult the relevant protection service first.
5. **Agree on follow-up.** Define who will get back in touch with the person, when and how; adapt frequency and format to the risk level and to local procedures.

Helpful phrases and phrases to avoid

Helpful	<i>"What do you need right now?" · "Would you like me to stay with you while we get help?" · "Let me explain what I can keep confidential and what I have to share."</i>
To avoid	<i>"Why did you do it?" · "Give me your phone right now" · "I told you so" · promises of absolute secrecy · direct contact with the suspected person.</i>

Guiding principle

Reduce harm and hand back control, without shifting onto the young person the responsibility for the violation they experienced.



SEXUALITY CONNECT

Equipping Youth Workers with Digital Solutions for Inclusive Education

PROJECT PARTNERS



FUNDED BY



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or ANEFOR. Neither the European Union nor the managing authority can be held responsible for them. [Project number 2025-1-LU01-KA210-YOU-000362941](#)