

CSW67: SWIPE LEFT FOR DATING VIOLENCE AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS: DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK ON PREVENTION, DATA COLLECTION AND ERADICATION OF GENDER-BASED CYBER-VIOLENCE

Eva Colledani

I'm from an organisation called NESEHNUTÍ and I'm going to talk about our preventive workshops for young people on the topic of dating violence which include cyber violence.

We must understand that there's no distinction between the online and offline world for young people. If we just tell them they shouldn't use Instagram or talk to strangers on the internet the only result will be that we lose their trust, and they'll stop talking to us about their online activities.

Approaching young people from the position of power is not an effective prevention of online violence. We need to empower them so that they can make informed decisions about their lives.

In NESEHNUTÍ We choose the path of respect. Respect towards others but also towards ourselves. Young people need to know how to set boundaries. How to notice someone is crossing their boundaries, so called red flags. And most importantly they need to know how to stand up for themselves.

In our workshops our goal is to show ordinary situations that young people using new technologies may encounter and how to face possible pitfalls.

We try not to lecture our participants. We rather use personality tests and funny quizzes. This is a random question from our quiz. What percentage of people lie in their dating profile? What do you think is the correct answer? Up to 80 %.

Most of the time we're using fake illustrative stories or interactive storylines where participants chose the paths of main characters, like this story of Valentina who's dating online. Our participants discuss about what happened, share their own experiences and compare their views on every situation. We as lectors share our own experiences as well, we even tell them few facts here and there, but mostly we just guide them by asking questions.

Let's move to a practical example. We know that more than 40 % of young people who are in violent relationships experience an extreme form of jealousy. And more than 30 % experience controlling behaviour through new technologies. The perpetrator might read their partners messages, tell them who they can or can't talk to or even use a location tracking app.

We put all of this together to create a story of Lisa and Ron.

Ron asked Lisa to install a location tracking app so he can always see where she is. Lisa is ok with sharing location with him. But then Ron starts to ask her about why she went to a pub and why she was there for so long. He says he feels insecure, because of his previous dating experiences and proposes they'll share their passwords. Lisa is not hiding anything, but she doesn't like this idea. She feels under pressure.

Discussion follows:

1) *Do you use or did you ever use a tracking app? Why would anyone use it?*

There are many good reasons to use these apps. But I'd always think about if the usage is consensual and enjoyable. Did you consent to it? Does it bring you benefits? Did you feel pressure? That maybe you'd lose your relationship with that person if you said you won't use it? Can you at any point say that you want to stop using this app? I'm not going to answer, I don't have the answers, but those are the questions you should ask yourselves. Not only about location tracking apps. About most of the things in your relationships.

2) *Do you share your passwords with anyone?*

Questions you can ask young people: How long do you need to know a person to share a password with them? What passwords are no go for you? Did you feel pressured into sharing? By you partner or even just by the fact that other people do it and it seems to be a norm?

3) *Why is there a tension between Lisa and Ron? What do they need from their relationship?*

They have different needs and expectations. Participants often say that Ron needs security, but he shouldn't bring his past traumas into his new relationship. Lisa needs freedom and she shouldn't let Ron cross her boundaries.

4) *What are the possible solutions of Lisa's and Ron's situation? What endings might there be?*

Participants usually suggest that they should talk about their feelings openly. If it doesn't work, they should find counselling (either just Ron or both together - it's often easier to not to go to therapy alone). There's a possibility that Ron doesn't want to get professional help and then young people often say that Lisa should leave. Lisa needs to protect herself and can't try to help someone who doesn't want to be helped. One of the messages of this story is that it's not your duty in a relationship to fix the other one.