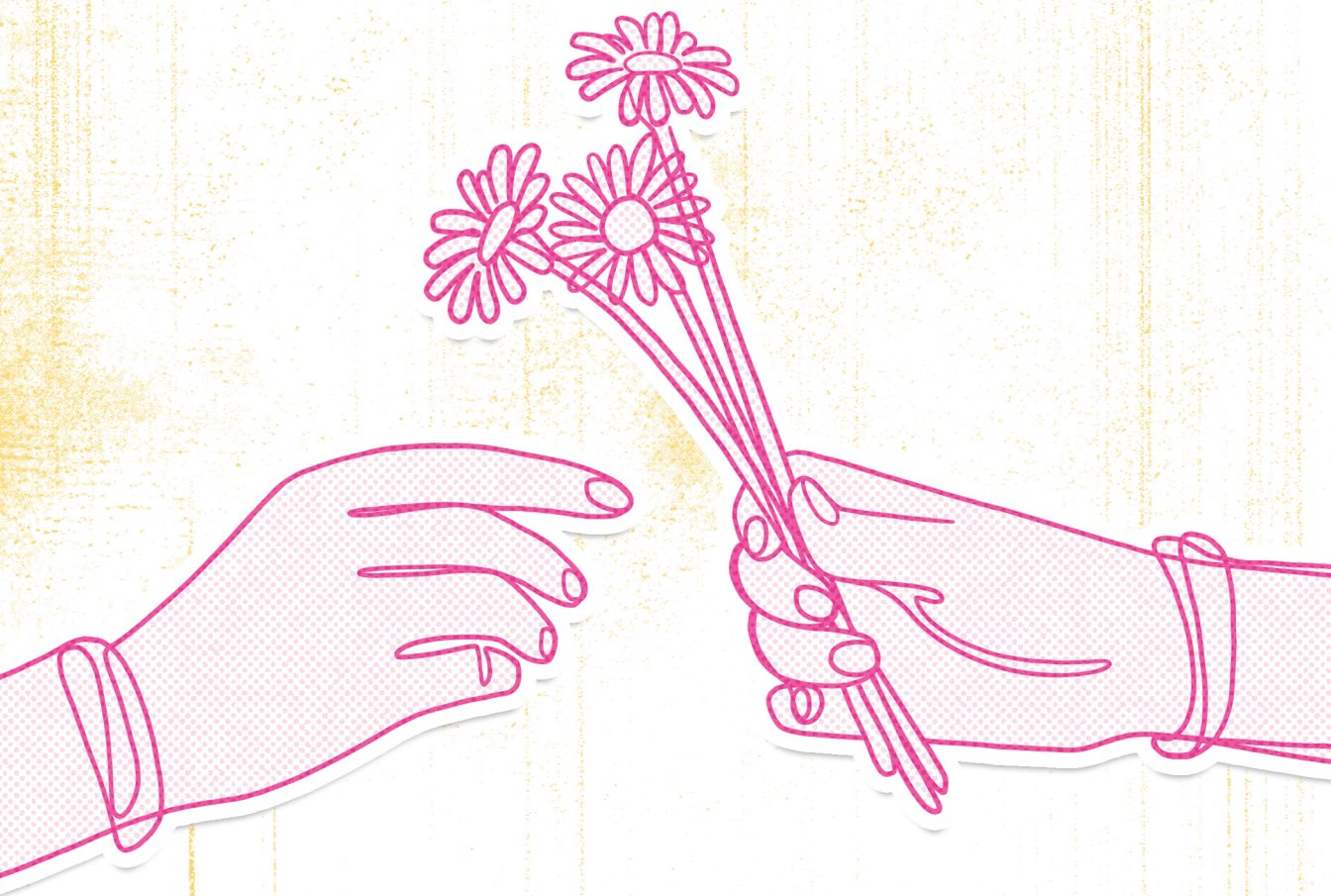


Queer Love as Revolution:

A By-Youth-For-Youth Zine Showcasing
Queer Relationships in Nova Scotia



Introduction

2SLGBTQIA+ young people are more vulnerable to experiencing dating violence and abuse in relationships than their cisgender/heterosexual counterparts. A lack of intersectional healthy relationship education or positive examples of queer relationships contributes to this increase in vulnerability. With formal sex education rarely including 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives, and an overall lack of positive queer relationships in media, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are unaware of what healthy relationships look like or feel like, thus increasing their likelihood of both experiencing and perpetrating dating violence.

Through the creation and the publication of this zine, we hope to reduce youth dating violence in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities by showcasing and celebrating healthy examples of the diverse queer relationships to our community. This pocket-size booklet features a collection of art pieces created by our community members to highlight healthy relationship dynamics, information on building healthy relationships and signs of unhealthy or abusive relationships, as well as a resource list for youth experiencing dating violence to quickly access.

This zine was created as part of **Do You Mind? Safer Dating for 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth**. A program run in partnership by the Community Based Research Centre and the Halifax Sexual Health Centre. Funding for this program is provided by Health Canada.

We thank everyone's contribution to the creation of the zine, including artists who shared their artworks, input and advice from the Multi-Level Stakeholder Intervention Team, and the design of the zine done by Shannon Long, and the participants of the Do You Mind program. The creation of the zine would not have been possible without all of the valuable inputs and contributions from everyone.



Title: "I'm In Love With The Garden Nymph"

Name: Margaryta

Age: 19

When you grow to deeply understand someone, you will find reality failing to catch up with who they are. Who you know them to be, suddenly, does not compare to what this world might have to offer at the moment. When those you love outgrow the definitions at hand, it will be up to you to make a place for your loved ones, and it is a privilege and a joy to be that architect. To be queer — and to love at all — is, perhaps, to imagine further, and plant the gardens where those you love can grow into themselves.

I think about the way
my heart fit into hers
The quiet way
we settled together.
Moving towards a togetherness
of the future
that we uncovered.
Always there, as if destined.

Title: "Kismet"

Name: Ella

Age: 29

A pair
finally united.
At peace.



I wrote this about my wife, long before we got married. I was inspired by the feeling of rightness and peace that permeated our relationship from day one. By the moment of "oh, this is what it's supposed to feel like" when I realized that I had found my person. By the sense of home that she has always brought me. By the knowledge that this was the love of my life, for the rest of my life.



Title: "A Day in the Sun"

Name: Noah

Age: 19

As a trans artist myself I strive to create art that highlights the humanity of queer and trans relationships. Through this piece I wanted to create drawings of trans people sharing intimate moments to reinforce the narrative that they are deserving of finding and building meaningful relationships.

Key Aspects of Healthy Relationships

Listen and seek to understand your partner(s). Building an understanding of respect and mutual interest keeps relationships healthy and fun. Each person should be able to communicate their wants and needs without feeling put down or putting others down.

Proper boundaries are important for connection.

Boundaries are not about limiting the other person(s) — they are about keeping you comfortable and safe. Stay curious about your partner(s)' boundaries and check in on your own routinely. Fully and freely consenting relationships are not only the most healthy, but the most fun too!

“Anyone who truly cares for you will respect your boundaries.”

Disagreements are natural. Just like you may have things in common, you may have differences between you and your partner(s). This often encourages growth and learning, which can be one of the best parts of relationships. Remember to respect the individual interests, wants, needs, and desires of your partner and expect respect in return.

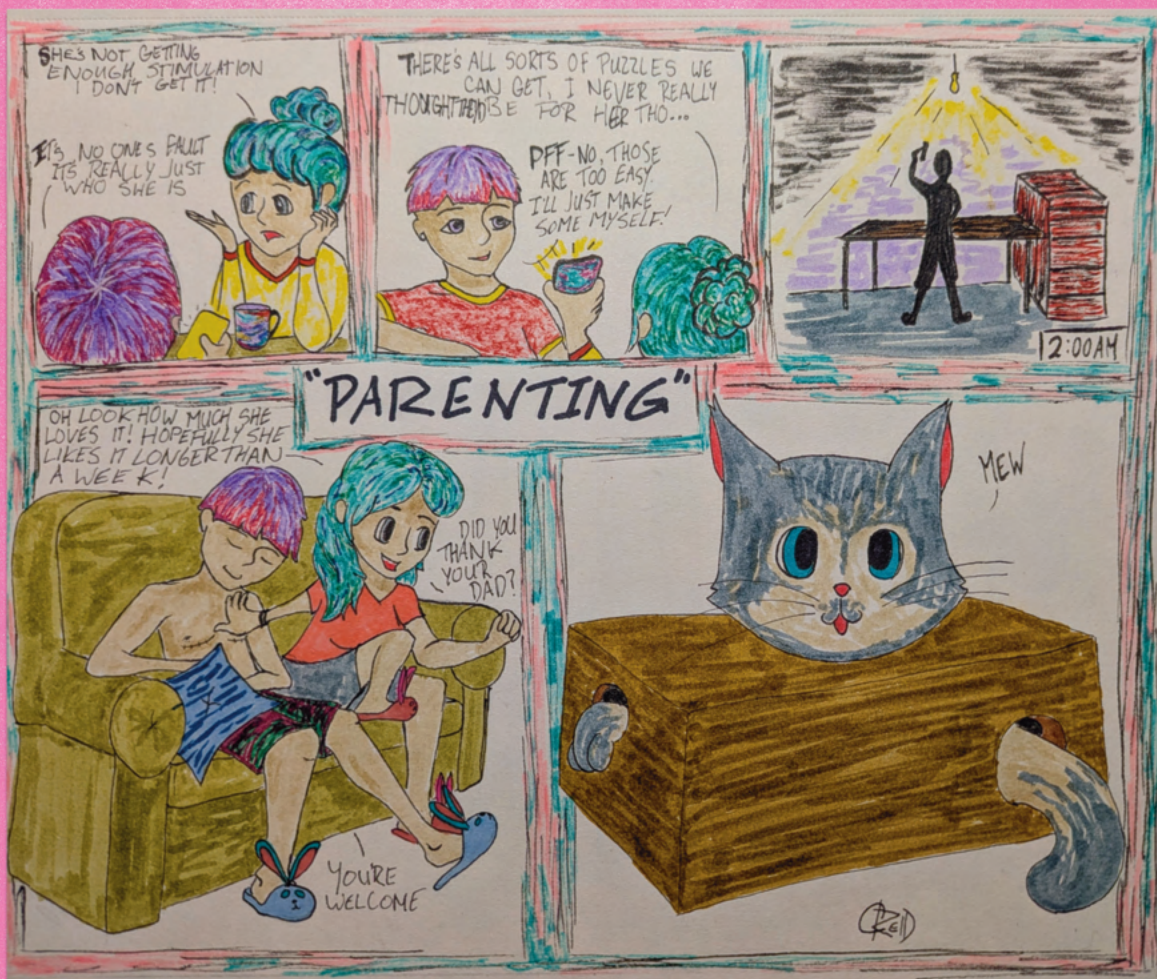
Be your own person. Make sure to maintain relationships with other people in your life — family, friends, etc. but also yourself. Check in and ensure you are still engaging with your own, separate hobbies, dreams, ideas, and spaces.



Teamwork makes the dream work. You and your partner(s) are responsible for ensuring your own health as well as the health of the relationship. Relationships are made of more than one person: you, and any partner(s) involved, need to work together to make them safe and enjoyable.

Be proactive about your sexual health. Have open communication with your partner about how you will protect each other from unintended pregnancy and STIs.





Title: "Parenting"

Name: Carlin

i carry memories of you like
smoothened stones in my pocket -
shaped by the passing days,
never asking to be useful, only to be held.

beside them, new dreams unfold,
soft and unfinished,
like fresh snow that hasn't learned
what it will become once footsteps arrive.

with you, i feel
the whole weather of being human -
the quiet ache of longing,
the sudden lift of joy,
the heavy days,
the bright ones that spill over.

nothing is wasted.
nothing is lost.

there is care between us -
given, received, and returned.
a steady exchange,
wild and abundant, like the sun
offering itself each morning
without asking who deserves it.

Title: "tuesday"

Name: Nat

i see us walking through seasons -
Spring Awakening,
Sunburn,
October,
If Not, Winter.
eternal cycles of creation and consumption.

Pacific Dogwood, flor de Mayo -
two children of nature -
still growing buds, still burying roots.
still finding each other in unexpected places.

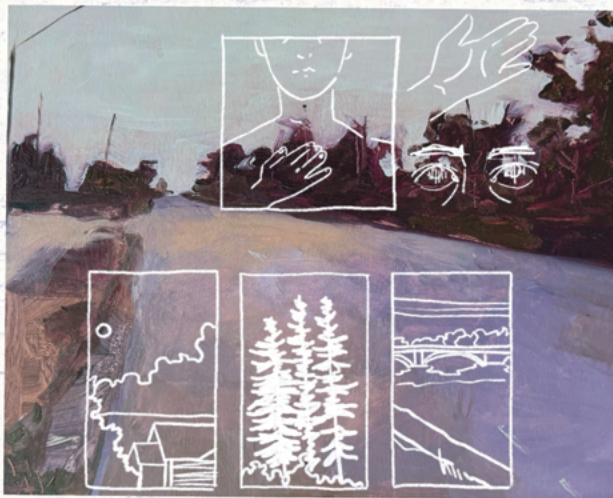
to love you is to choose depth
without conditions -
to let my heart be known, and
to know yours without trying to own it.



This poem is for someone who showed me that there is radical liberation in the active reimagining of intimacy, placemaking, temporality, and the process of becoming. It speaks to our ability to find ourselves in everything. Expressions of identity and partnership are extracted from the art we consume and create, the architecture of our built and natural worlds, and the tangible and intangible aspects of our shared humanity. Queer love asks that we nurture an expansive view of connection, searching for pieces of our stories in things that were not created for us and claiming them as our own anyway.



I'm slowly learning that my asexuality is a gift-



It's not a lack of love, it just manifests differently.

My comic is a reflection on accepting my identity as an asexual person. It's a misconception that asexuals don't experience love- it just appears in our lives differently than most.

Title: "The Gift"

Name: Shay

Age: 26

Boundaries Reflection

It is important in every relationship to have boundaries and to have those boundaries respected. Healthy boundaries as individuals help build stronger relationships. Taking care of yourself and your own well-being will help you be a better partner and may help to protect you from unhealthy or unsafe relationships.

Remember, there are different types of boundaries such as:

- ♣ **Physical boundaries** – Your personal space and physical touch
- ♣ **Emotional boundaries** – How much emotional energy you can give to another person, preventing you from taking on the unnecessary responsibility of other people's emotions.
- ♣ **Sexual boundaries** – Can include touch, comments or discussions that are directly or indirectly about sex or sexuality.
- ♣ **Material boundaries** – How you use or protect your money or possessions.
- ♣ **Time boundaries** – How much time you are willing to spend on something or with someone.
- ♣ **Mental** – How your thoughts, ideas and beliefs are shared and respected. Also, how much mental space you will give to a topic.

Take some time now to reflect on some of the boundaries you have in your relationship.

We encourage you to do this activity with your partner(s). Each of you create your own lists and discuss with each other.

A Hand to Hold

Give me your hand

And let your palm grasp a different side of you.

Give me your hand

As we grow beyond the atmosphere and become the stars we
were designed to be

Give me your hand

And I will make room for you beside me
As you guide me through your eyes
Beyond the binaries of our existence
And beyond the stereotypes portrayed in paint

Take my hand
beyond this rage of poetry.
Take my hand and live
But don't just live
Live beyond the differences you might see and the lies
you may be told

Take my hand and see the world through my eyes as I try to see
the world through yours

Let others have
the privacy of
touching words
and love a loss
of love.

But instead,
Be one with me
And Come hold my hand
Despite our difference



Title: "A hand to hold"

Name: Asiah

Age: 21

He speaks to me, I'd like to hear, and
that's not true for many else
When all sound grates my ears, my brain,
peace is the words on his sweet voice

Title: "His Sweet Voice"

Name: Jane

Age: 21

This is a poem written at a time when one particular person seemed like my only salvation from the torments of life, and who I could listen to talk for hours on end.

Hard Boundaries



Hard boundaries are boundaries that will not change often or will not usually change over time. Like a brick wall, You can move it, but it needs a lot of thought, planning, time, and intention to do so.

Consider: What are some hard boundaries you have in your relationship?

Examples: Sexual activity only occurs when I have consent.
I won't date someone who yells when they are angry.



“Under the Duvets I”

Name: Mara

Age: 29

This work Under the Duvets I is a colour film photograph that captures an intimate moment between my partner and myself, celebrating queer desire, love and queer lives. In exploring the everyday moments in of queer domesticity and partnership, especially a sense of trust, and comfort, we can celebrate radical and precious queer love.



Title: "Healing with Love"

Name: Clifford

My partner was recently in a motorcycle accident and broke 3 bones. I drew this to help cheer him up while he was recovering.

My partner and I are both furries. He is a pansexual maned wolf, and I am a genderfluid transfem fox-dog!

Flexible Boundaries



Flexible boundaries change, develop, and are different for different relationships. Like plastic construction fences, flexible boundaries are meant to be dynamic, they can move, you can stretch the plastic holes, but they are still a fence.

Context is an important aspect of flexible boundaries. In some situations, your boundary might change.

Consider: What are some flexible boundaries you have in your relationship?

Examples: How much time during my day/week will I dedicate to spending time with my partner? Will this change depending on if it is exam season or I have something come up at work?

What pet names am I comfortable with my partner using for me? Is “Pookie” okay when we are alone? Is it still okay around friends or my family, or when I am at work or school?

[illegible]



Title: "Latine Agenda"

Name: Marillia

Age: 23

Social relationships as well as relationships involve centering whiteness relating to queerness. I have often felt like my two identities are split within my loved ones as I have to codeswitch or hide one. But finding a relationship where I can express both and love and be loved for them deeply is the true queer joy I have found.

I fell in love on my university campus. Sitting under the stars,
hands wandering in the cold November grass.

I fell in love in our dorm room. Watching movies on your bed,
laughing until we cried.

I fell in love as you read your poetry. Hands trembling as you
clutched your notebook, while I beamed with pride.

I fell in love in our first apartment. Cooking dinner in our
kitchen, falling asleep on our couch.

I fell in love in the park. Propped up on either side of a bench,
engrossed in our own books.

I fell in love on Citadel Hill. Arms wrapped tight around your
waist, a flurry of snow surrounding our sled.

I fell in love when we danced. Our friends all around us,
bodies swaying to the rhythm.

I fell in love in a cafe. Me with hot chocolate and you with a
tea, splitting a croissant.

I fell in love on the skating rink. My cold hands gripping yours,
giving me the courage to stand.

I fell in love at the movies. Watching the screen with wonder
in your eyes, but all I watched was you.

I fell in love when you held me. My head on your shoulder,
your hands rubbing small circles on my back.

I fell in love when you made me feel safe. When you showed
me I was finally home.

Title: "When I Fell In Love..."

Name: Chloe

Age: 23



This is a very personal poem, drawing on my experiences
with queer love, as a nonbinary queer college student falling
in love with my (also queer) best friend. It's about the joy of
falling in love for the first time, and how queer love can be a
safe space and make you feel like you're finally home.



Title: "Transcendent"

Name: Jay

Age: 27

I wanted my piece to represent how queer relationships can be as breathtakingly beautiful, expansive, and as brilliant as the stars in the sky. We shine brightest when we have bonds formed with trust, care, and respect as their base elements.

Thank You.

It took me a long time to trust again after coming out. I was worried that I had done something wrong, become unlikable, and unlovable. This is incredibly untrue and I was proven wrong almost immediately. You showed me softness even when I didn't feel deserving, tended to my wounds that you did not create, and loved me back to life so they say. I had never expected to meet you when I did, a flower growing up through the concrete to remind me that life is continuing and beauty is everywhere. Pain can be consuming sometimes, but you held my hand through the darkness as I would for you, and I couldn't have asked for anything more. I was reintroduced to safety, respect, kindness and fun. You showed me why the rainbow was chosen for Pride, why we celebrate even when mourning, why it's so important to take up space in this life. Be loud, be proud, be vibrant. Thank you for being so yourself that I felt comfortable following in your footsteps and allowing joy in, allowing myself to be authentic without fear, and taking up as much space as I need. Safe Queer relationships should not be a rarity and in fact I don't think they are. I think people are afraid to share their joy with the world due to fear so I am here to tell you, be happy, live your life and don't let anyone try to control your narrative.

Title: "Thank You"

Name: Christopher

Age: 23



What it feels like to find acceptance, joy and love all in one person and to remind the reader that we are here, we are Queer and we are all loved.

What is an unhealthy relationship and what can I do about it?

Although the goal of this zine is to amplify and uplift positive experiences of queer people in relationships, we acknowledge that this is not reflective of reality for many queer people currently living in Nova Scotia. It is common for queer people to experience unhealthy relationships, which in some cases can lead to dating violence. Unhealthy behaviours are warning signs that can be discussed between partners, but if left unaddressed can lead to abuse. It is important to share what this might look like and what we can do about it. Below are some strategies to help you identify and address unhealthy relationships and abusive relationships.

Abuse is more than just physical Violence.

Abuse is about more than just physical violence, it more often includes **verbal abuse, mind games, economic abuse, etc.** There are 8 tactics most frequently used to gain power & control in a relationship which are highlighted below. When these tactics don't work to the extent the abuser wants, they can escalate to physical and/or sexual violence to reinforce them.



- **Coercion & threats** - making and/or carrying out threats to do something to harm the other person; threatening to leave, to harm those who are important to the other or commit suicide, etc.
- **Intimidation** - using looks, gestures, actions to make the other afraid; smashing things, yelling, getting in their face, etc.
- **Emotional abuse** - putting the other down, making them feel bad about themselves, reinforcing internalized homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, etc.
- **Isolation** - controlling what the other person does and who they see
- **Denying, Minimizing, & Blaming** - denying the abuse, making light of it, saying it's the other's fault
- **Using Children** - using children to relay messages, threatening to take the children
- **Using Privilege** - deciding roles and duties for each partner in the relationship, using ability to "pass" to discredit the other person, put them in danger, cut off their access to resources, etc.
- **Economic Abuse** - preventing the other person from getting or keeping a job, interfering with their education, making them ask for money, not working and forcing the other person to provide support, etc.

These tactics, including escalations to violence, represent practices of systemic oppression that often include heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia and are used as a way to gain power & control over another person. **Identifying these tactics in your behaviour or someone else's in a relationship is a crucial step in avoiding an unhealthy or abusive relationship and creating a healthy one.** This then allows you or someone else to create boundaries to avoid repetition of the behaviour, or plan an exit strategy.

Warning Signs of Unhealthy and Abusive Behaviours in a Relationship

Unhealthy behaviours can look like:

- ✿ I feel like I can't talk about my sexual desires with my partner
- ✿ My partner doesn't really apologize if I tell them they hurt my feelings.
- ✿ My partner texts me a lot during the day and gets mad if I don't answer
- ✿ I don't tell my partner about my day because I know they won't want to hear about it.
- ✿ My partner will try to make me jealous just to see how I will react
- ✿ I don't feel like I can be honest with my partner, or it feels like they are not always honest with me.
- ✿ My partner gets jealous of other people's comments or likes on my social media

Abusive behaviours can look like:

- ✿ My partner forces or pressures sexual activity, including refusing to use barrier methods when I ask
- ✿ My partner physically hurts me or threatens to hurt me or someone I love
- ✿ My partner controls where I go, who I see, how I dress, or how I spend my money
- ✿ My partner threatens to "out" my sexuality, gender identity, my HIV status, or other personal information without my consent.
- ✿ My partner keeps me from getting a job, or frequently causes me to do badly at work or school.
- ✿ My partner hits the wall or throws things when they are angry
- ✿ When there is a disagreement, my partner uses silent treatment or blocks me on social media.

Signs that your friend might be in an unhealthy relationship:

- ✿ Their physical appearance changes (e.g. stops wearing makeup or starts wearing a lot more, starts wearing baggier clothes, frequent bruising, or evidence of self-harm)
- ✿ Their partner constantly checks in with texts or asks them to send photos to prove where they are
- ✿ Their partner always puts them down by calling them names, purposefully misgenders them, or outs them without their permission
- ✿ Their partner is extremely jealous of them, leading to isolation from friends
- ✿ They are often late for plans outside of school
- ✿ They are less able to concentrate, are passive, compliant or withdrawn
- ✿ They start acting out more, are angrier and meaner to other people

Be careful though! These signs could indicate other things going on in their life too, such as mental health struggles. Think of these as warning signs to start a conversation and check in with your friend.



Strategies for addressing unhealthy or abusive behaviour in a relationship

There is overlap between behaviours in unhealthy relationships and behaviours in abusive relationships, so these lists are meant to provide a guide for these behaviours. But, it can still be difficult to tell the difference between unhealthy behaviours and abusive behaviours, so the following strategies can help address both:

Strategies for addressing unhealthy or abusive behaviours in my own relationship

- **Talk to someone you trust**, like a friend, a family member, a trusted adult, or a trusted authority figure. Even if you're not ready to leave the relationship, talking to friend about your situation is helpful
- **Read resources** such as this one, or any of the resources listed later in this zine
- Know that **these behaviours are not okay and that it is not your fault**. There is no excuse for any kind of abuse
- **Make a safety plan** with someone you trust (see THANS resources for help on making safety plans)

Strategies to help a friend who may be experiencing an unhealthy or abusive relationship

- **Believe them!** The most important thing you can do is to listen to them and tell them that you believe them and that this is not their fault.

- ✿ **Talk to someone!** If you are unsure if a friend is experiencing dating violence, it may be helpful to talk about what you are seeing with another trusted friend or adult. Do not go directly to authorities unless you have permission from your friend or your friend is in immediate danger.
- ✿ Encourage your friend to **do some research** about dating violence, or **provide them with some resources**. Be careful not to leave anything at their house or have this conversation saved in their phone (as a text message or email) in case their partner finds it and harms your friend. Make sure they know how to delete their search and browser history.
- ✿ **Offer to go with them to seek out help.** Or, if they have kids, offer to watch them while they seek help.
- ✿ **Support and reassure your friend.** It is ultimately their decision to leave the relationship. If they deny any abuse or are not ready to leave the relationship, remind them that you are still their friend and that you are a safe person to talk to if or when they are ready.
- ✿ **Help them make a safety plan** if they acknowledge that there is abuse in their relationship. See THANS resources for help making safety plans!

Unhealthy behaviours can pop up in a relationship, they should be discussed and addressed between those who are in the relationship. No matter where you are on the relationship spectrum, you can work to build healthier relationships. Sometimes though, leaving is the healthiest choice you can make. If you are experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence, it is important to try **not to confront an abuser, especially if you are attempting to leave**. Doing so exponentially increases the likelihood of experiencing increased violence. Instead, it is safer to **create and execute a safety plan** when attempting to leave an abusive relationship.

Could I be behaving in unhealthy or abusive behaviours?

We can also perpetuate unhealthy relationships, sometimes without realizing it. The following behaviours may be a sign that you are causing harm to your partner:

- ✿ Control what your partner does with their time or who they spend time with
- ✿ Repeatedly criticize and/or demean your partner
- ✿ Are mistrustful of your partner and can't be open and honest with them
- ✿ Control what your partner wears or how they behave
- ✿ Pressure your partner into sexual activity, ignore physical boundaries and/or inflict pain (intentional or not)
- ✿ Are extremely jealous and/or insecure about your partner or the relationship
- ✿ Experience extreme mood swings in the relationship, such as being very happy with your partner and then suddenly very angry with them

It can be helpful to talk to friends, family, or another trusted individual if you are unsure about your behaviour in a relationship. Abusive behaviour is a choice, if you recognize they are using abuse, you can choose to change your behaviour and learn to become supportive partners. There are resources out there to help you do so. (check out these resources).

Reminder: This is designed to be a starting point of learning about healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships. If you would like to learn more about the different unhealthy behaviours in relationships, check out our Resources page. If you or someone you know is experiencing violence in a relationship, we have more specific resources available for people experiencing dating violence in Nova Scotia on page or call or text the Provincial Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-855-225-0220.

Sources

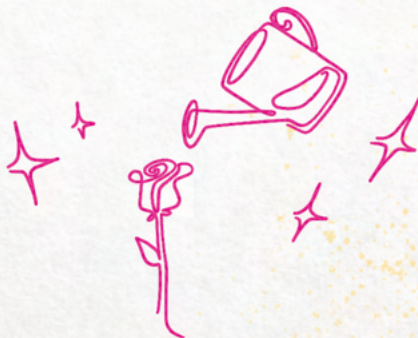
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Title: "afternoon together"

Name: anonymous

how wonderful it is to be loved by you ♥

Stretching out across the concrete, we find ourselves surrounded by objects symbolic of seven years shared. There's the mint and rosemary we meant to pot days ago but curled into each other instead. The strawberry plant dropped off by your mom, gifted without us asking for it. What small signs of acceptance; brief tokens of community.

The smell of lilacs just past our balcony, blooming late-spring, each annual renewal reminding us of the immeasurability, the consequences, of our choices. Deliberately planting roots all those years ago, witnessing now their durability, cultivating contentment and aspiration.

It wasn't long ago that we yearned for those minute acts: family that doesn't think twice; neighbours who no longer deem us roommates. Love that surpasses the world we once begged for a glimmer of. I think of my youth, an expansive future stretched out in front, unsure of what might bloom. Etched with uncertainty, more fearful than fortified. It's not to say we're void of this, but that you make those unknowns easier, safer, simpler. Survival and sustenance no longer tied to individuality. We're now met with the fluidity of companionship, outlined by those who surround us, embrace us, and celebrate us.

The warm infiniteness of tending to this garden.

Title: “The Cultivation of Love”

Name: Claire

Age: 29



This piece of short-form writing considers healthy queer relationships through the symbolism of a garden. It examines the work, dedication, commitment, and growth that is expressed through long-term partnership and queer love. A mix between poetry and a letter to my queerness, this piece aims to amplify the hope, beauty, and tenderness that can emerge when queer relationships, queer love, and queer individuals are given space to grow and flourish.

On Openness: Love and the Breeze

I am 18. My boyfriend, a boy I love so much I feel it might consume me, says "I love you, but I'd never even kissed a boy before you. I want more experiences." I am scared. Scared he'll leave me.

A month later, I kiss a boy at a party. Again, scared. This time, that my boyfriend will think I don't love him. He isn't mad. He thinks it's hot; how nervous I am is sweet. I want more. I realize, this is not a trap.

It was never about me not being enough. We were standing in a room full of windows, and he simply wanted to open them, to let in air from the outside because the breeze would feel so, so good.

When he has sex with another man, I expect pain and find instead something new. Joy. He holds me after, and we laugh. The air is fresh, and he whispers that he loves me.

No one told me love could be like this. Welcoming the touch of a friend. Knowing the boy you love will come back to you. He always has. Where I was told there would only be superficiality, there is fresh air and deep breath.

A decade later, my boyfriend is now my husband. Long gone are boys of 18, now men built together. A new boyfriend is cuddled against me, another thing I thought impossible. I am so glad I felt the breeze.

Title: "On Openness: Love and the Breeze"

Name: Nic K

Age: 28



The intention of this piece is to reflect on consensual non-monogamy and openness in queer relationships. While these things are quite common among queer folks, increasingly media is presenting the pursuit of non-monogamy as frivolous and based in fears of commitment and queer hypersexuality. I reflect on my first experiences with openness and consensual non-monogamy, my decisions to continue with it, and the ways it has shaped my life and relationship. I explain this through metaphor of the breeze, a movement of new air that comes from the creation of open space.

Healthy Relationship Reflection

Read the following and reflect on your relationship(s), select “yes” or “no” based on your experience.

If you answer “No” to any of the statements, it may indicate some unhealthy or controlling behaviours are happening in your relationship. If you feel unsafe in your relationship, please access the resources provided in this zine.

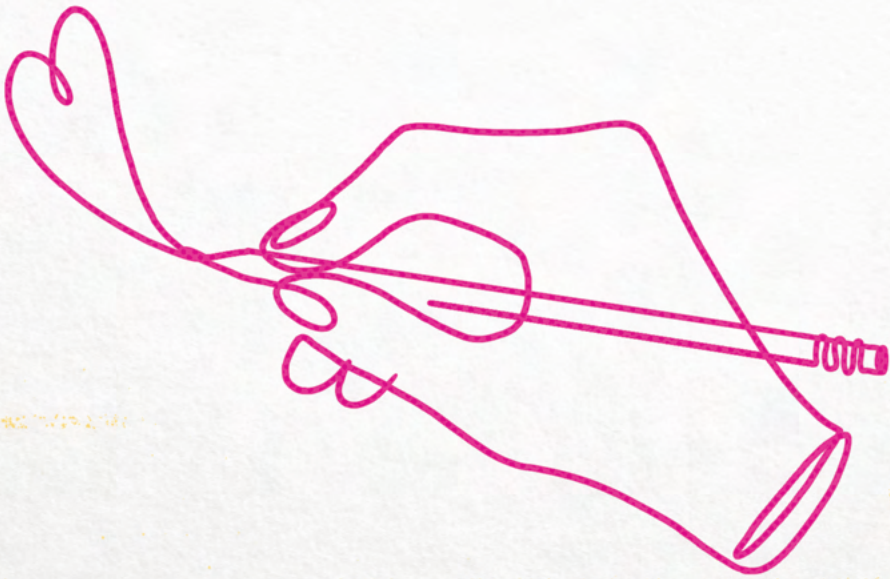
My partner listens to me and respects my opinions.	YES	NO
My partner gives me space to spend time with my friends and family.	YES	NO
My partner does not try to control who I can and cannot see or talk to.	YES	NO
I feel comfortable telling my partner when something upsets me.	YES	NO
I can tell my partner about what I want sexually.	YES	NO
My partner does not use threats or ultimatums (this option or nothing) to get their way.	YES	NO
My partner shows that they are proud of me and my accomplishments.	YES	NO
My partner and I have had discussions about safer sex.	YES	NO

My partner and I have fun spending time with each other.	YES	NO
My partner does not monitor or track my activities, either online or in-person.	YES	NO
My partner understands that life happens and does not become upset or angry if I don't respond to their messages right away.	YES	NO
My partner compliments me and does not belittle my appearance.	YES	NO
My partner respects my choices and opinions, even if we don't always agree.	YES	NO
My partner often blames me for things that go wrong in our relationship.	YES	NO
My partner acknowledges my feelings and helps me when I am upset. They do not dismiss my feelings or tell me I'm overreacting.	YES	NO
My partner respects my decision to stay in or out of the closet, and does not threaten to out me when they are upset.	YES	NO
My partner and I work together to make decisions in our relationship. It is not always one or the other making a decision.	YES	NO

My partner supports my education/career goals and does not prevent me from working or keeping a job.	YES	NO
When I or my partner set a boundary, we make sure that boundary is respected.	YES	NO
My partner and I both have hobbies we enjoy doing without each other.	YES	NO

Total Number of **YES** answers: _____

Total number of **NO** answers: _____





Title: "Lover's Home"

Name: Frank

Being in queer relationships is dreaming for me. We get to imagine what our lives look like and dream it into reality. We don't have to follow a path, but can create a new world that works for us. This collage is what dreaming my current home has felt like. My partner and I have spent a lot of time brainstorming, communicating, and imagining together. The process is never ending and we are always envisioning new realms together.

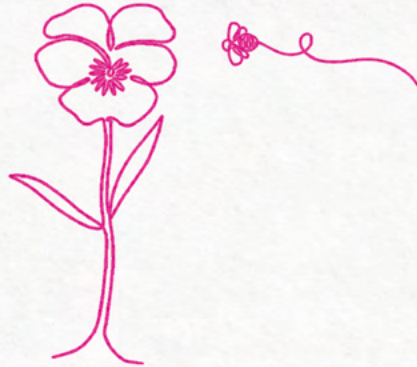
To Those Who Want What They Don't Feel

If I ever find love, it won't be because I'm lured to someone. I won't be whisked off my feet and drawn in, and they won't feel me coming. We won't be magnetized. We will have fallen into place next to each other, and we will fit together like the chinks of a zipper. If I ever search out love, it won't be a matter of attraction, but of interest. It will be like eating with no tastebuds; I may desire flavour but only be able to appreciate the ingredients.

I don't look at pretty people and get a flutter in my stomach. I hear people babble about their lives, passions, convictions, and I think, don't stop talking. I don't have the urge to kiss or sleep with them, but I want to be heart-to-heart close so we can whisper away from the world; I want to make them warm and enjoy their warmth.

We don't have to label it. Platonic, romantic, a hookup. It's okay to want someone to ground you with the weight of their body. To want intimacy, touch, support, commitment, or experience. It's okay to want what attraction grants us, even if you don't feel that pull.

Love without attraction means we choose each other like a favourite season. Attraction, like bees to violets, is poetic and thrilling and precious, but so is the final click of building blocks, fitting together any way they want, not in any way they must.



Title: "To Those Who Want What They Don't Feel"

Name: Sam

Age: 21

Being aromantic and asexual is confusing and lonely, because it can be so hard to explain, and difficult to find others who understand. This piece is a message of support to others on the aro/ace spectrum, and I hope that readers will feel heard and validated while reading it. This message aims to show the beauty of love without label and love without attraction, a concept that is underrepresented and undervalued in society and media. Validating the experience of aro/ace people may help to prevent them from doing uncomfortable things in order to fit in or feel loved.



Title: "Mornings"

Name: Autumn

Age: 27

Consent and Power in Creating Healthy Relationships

Consent is key to any healthy relationship. The basis of consent is a combination of respect, mindfulness and care for others. It is an ongoing practice of voluntary communication and collaboration. In sexual relationships, it's important to talk openly about your boundaries, your desires and sex before anything intimate happens and this conversation should remain open and ongoing until that relationship ends. Consent isn't just important when it comes to sexual intimacy either. All healthy relationships are built on consent, whether they are romantic, platonic or familial.

What consent can look like In healthy 2SLGBTQIA+ romantic or queerplatonic relationships:

- ✿ **Not assuming** that someone is okay with being involved in a certain situation without asking, whether it's a conversation, a group outing, a sexual act or financial decision. Always check in with them first to see if it's alright
- ✿ **Not revealing someone else's personal information** without their permission. This avoids the potential harm that comes with accidentally outing someone.
- ✿ **Asking before touching someone**, even in non-sexual contexts such as hugging, tickling or hand-holding. Non-sexual physical touch can be just as uncomfortable as unwanted sexual touch.

- ✿ **Asking before photographing someone.** It is just as violating whether a close friend or romantic partner takes a picture of you without asking as it is for a stranger on the street to do the same thing. Also, asking for permission reduces the chances of accidentally outing someone.
- ✿ Making sure all parties involved are willing to be part of the discussion and never forcing anyone to participate in a conversation they don't want to be in. This includes **allowing people to leave a conversation** if it makes them too uncomfortable.
- ✿ **Not pressuring people to accept any gifts or services.** This avoids the stress of having to feign interest or feeling pressured to keep or do something they never wanted in the first place.

Understanding Nonverbal Consent is Critical. Most people communicate a lot of information non-verbally, like whether we're excited, stressed or uncomfortable. This means we need to learn the sorts of non-verbal cues our partners might offer us and show them what our non-verbal cues look and feel like too. Non-verbal cues tend to differ between people. For some, wiggling arms or fidgeting hands are signs of excitement, like stimming, but for others it could be a cue to stop. It's important to **check in when you're unsure so you're all on the same page.**

non-verbal cues should be discussed before sex begins and revisited during it as needed. You can also apply these cues to situations outside of social contexts so you know if your partner is uncomfortable with a certain conversation, activity, decision, etc. Non-verbal cues are especially helpful when people's ability to use language differs. Deciding on non-verbal cues that signal discomfort and ones that signal active consent with your partner will keep things accessible in and outside of the bedroom.

Accepting Rejections

An important aspect of consent is being able to accept rejection.

Rejection isn't a bad thing. Yes, it can be disappointing and can sting, but it is a facet of life. **Not everyone is going to be on the same page as you and that's okay.** Because of this fact, it's good to learn about rejection resilience and how to plan for it so it doesn't hurt as much.

To start, you need to be able to **identify and reflect** on why you are feeling that way. It's okay to be upset. The important part is to deal with your feelings in a safe and healthy way such as doing an activity you enjoy that doesn't require you to feel 100%, like bingeing a show you like. You can share your feelings with your partner, or with someone you trust. But know that it's not the rejector's responsibility to deal with your feelings.

Try not to take rejection personally. Most rejections are reflections of mismatched visions or schedules, not personal attacks. Focus on positive reframing. For example, instead of saying, "they think I'm worthless," tell yourself, "someone else will appreciate my company." Additionally, **rejection can also mean that your partner feels confident and secure enough to state their boundaries with you,** which is a good thing! Communication can help you compromise and find a middle ground that everyone is alright with, even if it isn't you or your partner's first choice.

How Power Can Impact Consent

Be mindful of how privilege, power, and control dynamics impact your relationship. Canadian law takes power into consideration when it comes to our consent. According to the Canadian Criminal Code, consent cannot be given if there is a relationship of;

- ✿ **Trust:** Is this person in a position of trust over me? Am I in a position of trust over them?
 - Doctors, therapists, religious leaders, social workers, etc.

- ✿ **Authority:** Does this person have authority over me? Do I have authority over them?
Bosses, teachers, coaches, political leaders, etc.
- ✿ **Dependency:** Do I rely on this person for my basic needs? Do they rely on me?
Guardians or caregivers, landlords, drug dealers, shelter workers, etc.

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BUTCH LESBIAN;
Strong, handsome, kind, loving.



Title: "By Definition"

Name: Ryan

My Butch identity means a lot to me, and in this drawing I wanted to show simple love and devotion of being in a butch relationship. Feeling no pressure to change who you are and having the one you care for the most fully understanding you.

lovely hues

just because i don't feel butterflies
or the surge of passion in my core
doesn't mean i'm incapable of love;
love is a complicated thing
and it comes in many hues
whether in the form of a smile
or fitting neatly into the crook of someone's arm
it can be baked into a cake
or shown in a million different ways;
so why do people constantly attribute love
to lust?
you can't trap love under the covers
so why does everyone treat it as such?



Title: "lovely hues"

Name: Riana

The Garden

I have know love that was like fire

Hungry

Consuming

Burning

Alive as long as there was something

Left in me to eat away at

Some part of myself

To tear off

And feed the dying embers

I thought love was meant to burn

That crumbling to ash was just the price

But she taught me love can be a garden

One we grow together

She is like the sun

Giving back after the destruction the fires caused

Warmth and life returns

I will be the earth

Holding the seeds we planted

Nurtured in my embrace

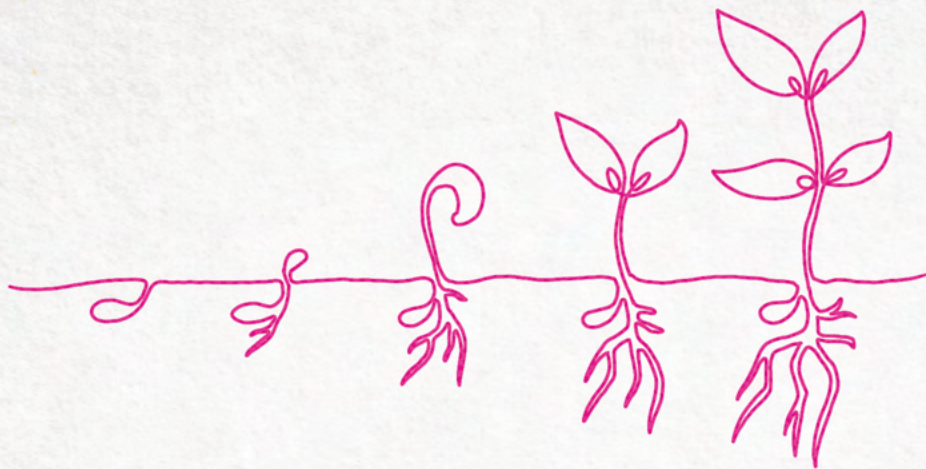
It may take time

But under her welcoming glow

Things begin to grow here in the ashes

With our tending

The garden flourishes



Title: "The Garden"

Name: Sal

Age: 24

An exploration of finding queer love that fosters growth, care, and change after struggling with relationships where you have to sacrifice parts of yourself to maintain them. Love that destroys vs love that nurtures

Resources

The following is a short list of some of the resources available to those experiencing or have experienced dating or domestic violence across Nova Scotia. This list is not an exhaustive list. For more information on resources that are available, call 211 or go to ns.211.ca.

Emergency & Crisis Resources for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Call 911 if you are in immediate danger.

Provincial Domestic Violence Line – Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS)

Call or text toll free 1-855-225-0220 anywhere in Nova Scotia. For crisis & support assistance, or for expert advice on how to help someone you think may be in a situation of violence.

iHeal

ihealapp.ca or in the app store

a comprehensive resource for women and gender-diverse people who may be experiencing abuse. Free, private, secure via website or phone app. An interactive tool for a personalized approach to staying safe and well, assessing your risk, and figuring out how and whether to get help.

Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centre

Millbrook Family Healing Centre 1-800-565-4741 toll free

We'koqma'q Family Healing Centre 1-800-565-3440 toll free

Nova Scotia Mental Health Crisis Line

Call 1-888-429-8167 toll free

Kids Help Phone

Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868
kidshelpphone.ca

Good2Talk

Call 1-833-292-3698 or text GOOD2TALKNS to 686868
Website: good2talk.ca

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) Programs

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) are registered nurses who have completed specialized education and clinical preparation in medical forensic care for patients who have experienced sexual assault or abuse. Phones are answered 24/7.

For more information on the SANE Program go to the Nova Scotia Health Website: nshealth.ca/sane

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre SANE Program

Call 902-425-0122

- Halifax Infirmary (QEII)
- Dartmouth General Hospital
- IWK
- Cobequid Community Health Centre

VON SANE Program

Call 1-833-757-7263

- Colchester East Hants Health Centre
- Cumberland Regional Health Centre
- Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital

Every Woman's Centre SANE Program

Call 1-844-858-8036

- Cape Breton Regional Hospital
- Victoria County Memorial Hospital
- Glace Bay Hospital

Antigonish Women's Centre & Sexual Assault Services

Call 1-877-880-7263

- St. Martha's Regional Hospital
- Guysborough Memorial Hospital
- Aberdeen Hospital
- Strait Richmond Hospital

Tri-County Women's Centre

Call 1-833-577-7263

- Valley Regional Hospital
- Yarmouth Regional Hospital
- South Shore Regional Hospital
- Roseway Hospital
- Fisherman's Memorial Hospital
- Digby Hospital
- Solider's Memorial Hospital
- Queens General Hospital
- Hants Community Hospital

University Sexual Violence Supports

Acadia

Allison - allison.smith@acadiau.ca

Dal

Education - Dee - dee.dooley@dal.ca

Response - Lyndsay - lyndsay.anderson@dal.ca

Dal Student Union – Jodi - serc@dal.ca

Kings

Miriam - miriam.bonellomacquarrie@ukings.ca

NSCC

Jordi - Jordi.Hepburn@nsc.ca

SMU

Rachel - rachel.field@smu.ca

St FX

Education - Gowry - gkaliyil@stfx.ca

Response - Heather - hblackbu@stfx.ca

Sainte Anne

Sebastien - Sebastien.Dol@usainteanne.ca

Violence Prevention Services and Resources

Bridges Counselling Centre

901-897-6665

bridgesinstitute.org

Specializes in domestic violence counselling and anger management. Also offers a full service counselling centre with a variety of different licensed therapists who specialize in a variety of different therapies.

Also offers two group programs:

Women's Abuse Recovery: The women's abuse recovery group focuses on providing support to women who are either currently in or have been in an abusive relationship.

Abuse Intervention: The abuse intervention groups focus on providing support to men and women who want to learn how to respond to others when they have been harmed and when they harm others.

BGC Greater Halifax – Sexual Violence Prevention – Youth Outreach

Director of Youth Programs – madison.laurin@bgcgh.ca – 782-414-0320
bgcgh.ca/youthprograms/outreach

For youth ages 12–24 who may be at risk of experiencing or causing sexual harm. Programming focuses on healthy relationships, consent, accountability, and safety.

Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse

Call 902-433-2088

Email dg@ffane.ca

Website: ffane.ca

Offre de l'information et ressources en ligne pour sensibiliser et éduquer la population sur des sujets tels que:

- Violence chez les jeunes
 - Violence domestique
- Support aux personnes aidantes

New Start Society

Phone: 902-423-4675

Website: newstartociety.ca

Offers individual and group counselling to people who recognize they are using or experiencing domestic violence and/or abusive behaviour in their intimate partner relationships, and want support to create change to have the healthy relationships they would prefer.

Pictou County Opportunity for Men Association – New Leaf

Call: 902-396-2440

Website: pcofma.ca

Provides group sessions that engage men in meaningful conversations and actions that challenge harmful norms, foster healthy masculinity, and address intimate partner and gender-based violence.

Cumberland County Transition House Association – New Directions

Call 902-667-4500

Website: autumnhouse.ca/services

Offers support and resources for men and gender diverse people who want help moving away from using violence or abuse. Provides support and resources for men struggling with unhealthy relationships.

Resources to Learn More

Nova Scotia Status of Women Office – Gender Based Violence Resources

women.novascotia.ca

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia – Toolkits

thans.ca/toolkits

Download and Printable educational toolkits on various topics related to healthy relationships and addressing relationship violence.

HEAL NS – Check Me Out

checkmeout.ca

An online that aims to promote informed sexual health choices, STI testing routines, and HIV prevention

Avalon Resources

avaloncentre.ca/resources

Avalon Centre has multiple digital resources that can be accessed through their website, covering topics on consent, Queer and trans experiences of sexualized violence, legal aspects of sexualized violence, and support for survivors



do
you
mind!

ça
te
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Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

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