

Harassment Happens

What Can You Do About It?

Confrontation can be an effective technique for dealing with harassment.

In her book “Back Off”, Martha Langelan describes confrontation as a carefully structured technique with a number of distinct elements:

Do the unexpected: name the behavior; whatever has been done, say it, and be specific. For example: “Stop touching me.”

Remember the harasser is accountable for his/her actions. Don’t make excuses and don’t pretend it didn’t really happen. Take charge and let people know what happened. Privacy protects harassers, but visibility undermines them.

Make honest and direct statements. Speak the truth (no threats, no insults, no obscenities, no appeasing verbal fluff and padding). Be serious, straightforward and blunt.

Demand that the harassment stop.

Make it clear that everyone has the right to be free from harassment. Objecting to harassment is a matter of principle.

Stick to your own agenda. Don’t respond to the harasser’s excuses or tactics. The issue is the unwanted behavior. Say what you have to say and repeat it if necessary.

Reinforce your statements with strong, self-respecting body language: eye contact, head up, shoulders back and a strong serious stance. Don’t smile. Timid, submissive body language will encourage the harasser.

Respond at the appropriate level.

End the interaction on your own terms with a strong closing statement: “I don’t want this to happen again. Stop it!”

Don’t feel comfortable confronting the person face to face? Consider writing a letter.

Don’t ignore the behavior; it will probably not go away.

Refuse to blame yourself; someone else's behavior is not your responsibility.

Tell a friend. Get some support.

Tell the person if you can, that his or her behavior is offensive and that you want it to stop.

Write down what is happening. Carefully record the dates, times locations, witnesses and details of the incidents. Document any resulting problems.

Complain to whoever is in charge. It is his or her responsibility to address problems.

Get advice and help from the Human Rights Office at Vancouver Island University.

Remember that you have the right to live and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment.

**The Vancouver Island University
Human Rights Office can assist any
member of the university to
respond to harassment.
Call 250-740-6430**