

# Sexual Abuse

## What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is when a person is forced or pressured into performing sexual acts or activities that they do not want to, or do not consent to.

## Is it illegal?

There are a number of offences related to sexual abuse activities within the Criminal Code Act 1924.

Some of these sexual abuse offences are often seen in the context of family violence:

- It is illegal to threaten or intimidate a person into having penetrative sex, and
- It is illegal to have sexual intercourse with another person without their consent.

## What can sexual abuse look like?

- A person constantly asking their partner to have sex, even when they have said no, until their partner agrees just to stop the requests.
- A person telling their partner that they expect to have sex a certain number of times a week and becoming aggressive, moody or violent if their partner says no when they make sexual advances.
- A person telling their partner that they are required to have sex with them because they are in a relationship.
- A person making comparisons with other people and telling their partner they are not a good partner if they do not satisfy their sexual needs.
- A person commencing or continuing sexual activity with their partner after the partner has already said no.

## Case Study: Maria and John

Maria wanted to take things slow, but John was eager to start having a sexual relationship.

Maria did not feel ready to have sex, and when she said no, John would get moody and upset with her. She wanted to continue seeing John, so after a few weeks of dating, she gave in and said yes.

When Maria and John moved in together, they regularly had sex. Sometimes Maria instigated their sexual activity and John willingly engaged, but mostly it was John who initiated sex. If Maria ever said no, John would say things like “Ted’s missus puts out five times a week!”, or “There must be something wrong with you – you never want to have sex!” Mostly, Maria gave in, and let John have sex with her.

After Maria gave birth to their first child, she did not feel like having sex, but John kept bringing it up, telling her it had been weeks, and that she never showed him any attention anymore. One night, Maria was too tired to argue, and allowed him to have sex with her. Maria was in pain, and asked John to stop because her body wasn’t ready yet. John kept going, so Maria didn’t say anything else because she just wanted it to be over with – she was worried that he would hurt her more if she tried to make him stop.

## Contacts

- **In an emergency situation or if you are in immediate danger, call 000.**
- Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS), phone 1800 697 877.
- Laurel House Sexual Assault Support Service (north and northwest Tasmania), phone 03 6431 9711.
- 1800Respect, phone 1800 737 732.
- Women’s Legal Service Tasmania can be contacted on **1800 682 468**.

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