

# ONLINE CONSENT

Year groups 7-11

*"I think it's important that this is taught at an age appropriate level throughout school education, so I am happy that school is doing it. My husband is less enamoured with it. Perhaps, as a man he has had to face less issues around verbal and sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape, therefore not understanding the necessity of it." Mother of Faith, Sheffield.*

*"Sexual harassment needs to be (taught) earlier... what is a crime and what isn't... some people ignore when it's rape and when it's not" Student, Sheffield*

*"As religious people we have an obligation to not cause harm to others." Parent of Faith, Sheffield.*

*"I'm worried about sex being explained in an explicit way as we don't allow that kind of talk at home, we not against it but just the way should be more appropriate." Parent of Faith, Sheffield.*

*"The lessons about consent were awkward, as children felt scared to be judged by peers or to talk about what was learnt" Ex-pupil, faith school, Midlands*

Text messaging and social media have become the go-to platforms many of us use to access instant support and guidance from people we know. As a result it's important to ensure young people are offering the *right* advice.

Equally important is an understanding of the ways that culture and faith can influence the advice given, and sensitively reach conclusions where culture and faith are respected, and safety is prioritised, and legality is upheld.

With a recognition of the value and influence of peer support, this creative writing activity is designed to aid your teaching on the topic of 'On the topics of consent'.

Using the worksheets below, encourage your class to give accurate advice and support to a friend who's struggling to negotiate consent and enforce their boundaries within an intimate relationship. Below is a guide on how to ensure this activity is inclusive for students of faith in your classroom.

## Activity 1: The Online Relationship

You receive a worried message from your friend. They have just received a text with an unwanted nude picture. They are feeling uncomfortable because their boundaries have been violated. They are unsure how to react, and are in need of support.

**Write a text message to your friend offering advice on what to do in this situation.**

### Consider how you can support your friend to:

- Understand their legal rights around the sending of unwanted sexually explicit images. It is illegal to send or possess indecent images of a person under 18.
- Identify their boundaries
- Communicate these boundaries with other people





## Activity 2: The Casual Relationship

You check in with a friend after they go on a date. They tell you that it moved too fast, and that they felt pressured to be intimate with the person before they were ready.

Reply to your friend offering support on what to do in this situation. Remember 'going further' doesn't have to mean having 'sex'. It can include any form of intimacy.

### Consider how you can support your friend to:

- Recognise their rights around sexual consent
- Enforce their boundaries without shame
- Keep themselves safe within intimate relationships



## Activity 3: The Group Chat

You receive some messages on a group chat with your friends. One of your friends met up with someone they like, and this is now being discussed with your mates. How would you respond to this conversation?

Send a text message to your friends, on how you think they should navigate this situation and discussion safely and respectfully.

### Consider how you can support your friends to:

- Understand the law around sharing other people's sexually explicit images
- Recognise the importance of respecting other people's rights around sexual consent on and offline
- Reflect on the dangers of peer pressure

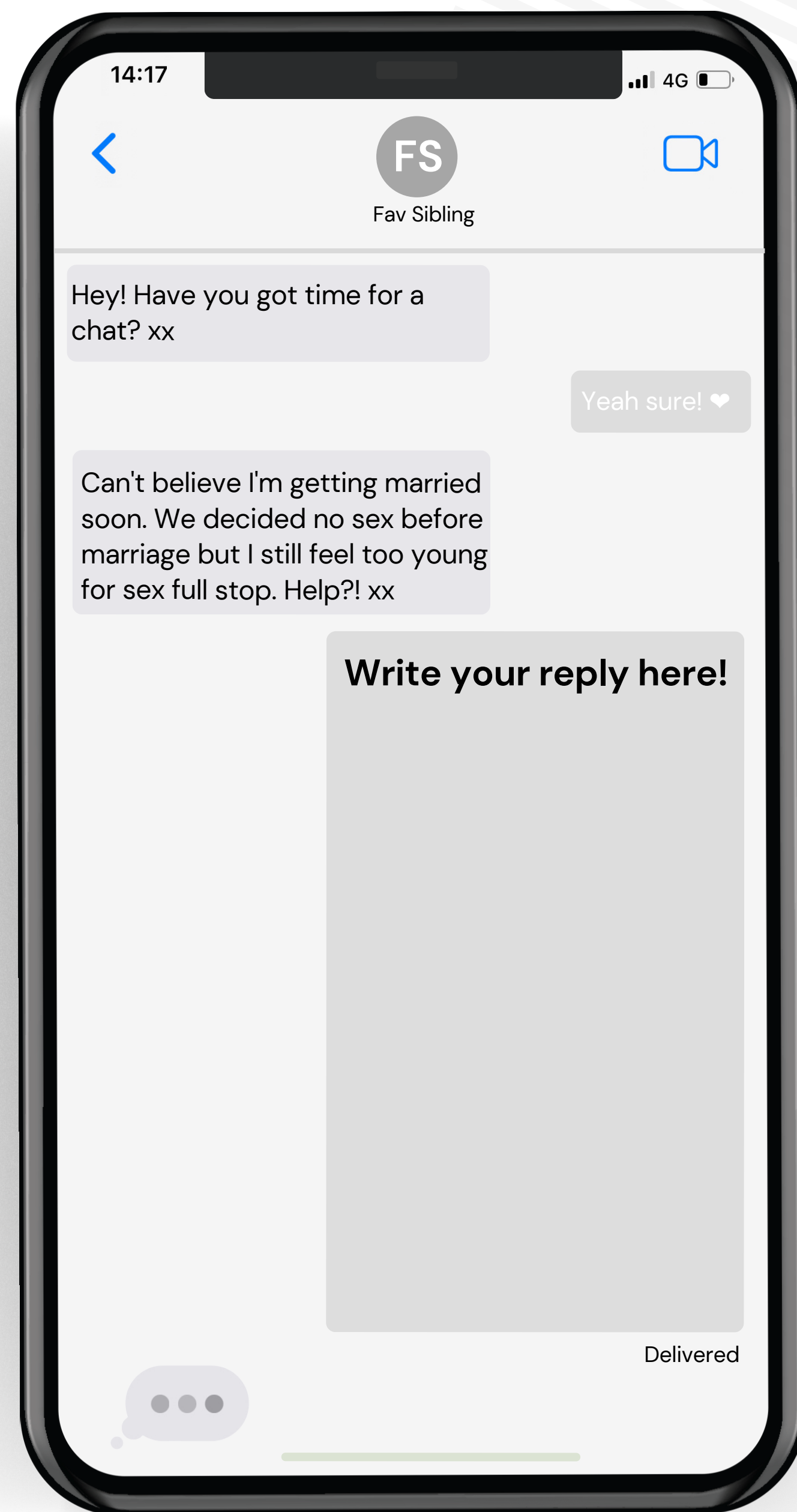




## Activity 4: The Committed Relationship

You receive a worried message from your sibling who is due to get married soon. They are feeling pressure to have sex after marriage, and are worried about expressing their boundaries with their future spouse. They ask you for advice.

**Send a text message to your sibling, advising them on how to navigate this situation safely.**



### Consider how you can support your friend to:

- Understand their right to say no as a spouse or partner within a long term relationship. Non-consensual sex is considered rape even when married.
- Explore different ways of intimacy within a relationship
- Identify their boundaries and feel confident communicating them with their partner

## Teacher's Notes

1. 'Communicating online' covers texting, phone calls, social media apps including Snapchat and TikTok, video chat, email and more
2. Think about using gender-neutral language. Using a gender-neutral term such as 'person', rather than 'girl' or 'boy' allows for students of all genders to situate themselves in the context provided
3. Faith communities have different views on dating. Some members of a particular faith community believe that you should not date before marriage, whereas others believe it is ok to date before marriage.
4. Some people who have their online consent violated for example when pictures are shared without their permission, they may be told that it was their fault. This is a form of 'victim blaming' - assigning responsibility of assault to the person who suffered it.
5. When things have gone wrong, faith communities may be helpful, providing compassionate and well-informed responses to the victim.
6. Some people use online dating because getting to know someone online removes anxiety around having a physical relationship. There are apps for specific religions, orientations and relationship styles.

## Helpful Discussion Points

- **Do all communities/cultures/faiths share the same view on dating?**
  - Explore different beliefs around dating, highlight that some members of the same faith will have differing views on dating. Is dating the same for girls and boys? Some people meet their partner through arranged marriage instead of dating.
- **Who uses online communication to explore relationships?**
  - Consider the differing reasons people access online spaces. Why may people use dating sites? How can a connection be formed online, what are the risks?
- **How can we apply consent when communicating online?**
  - How do we communicate our boundaries? How can our boundaries be crossed? In what ways is it harder to enforce consent online? E.g. the use of emojis instead of words could be misinterpreted. What are the current norms in terms of sharing revealing photographs?
- **Why may a person wish to wait until marriage to have sex?**
  - Consider the influence of faith and cultural beliefs, differing opinions around casual sex.
- **How may a person feel when their consent is violated?**
  - Consider the impact that this may have on their mental and physical health e.g. they may experience anxiety, shame, guilt, fear.