



# Elephant in The Room Q & A

VH Lassen High School  
Fall 2019

\*This document can also be accessed at <https://www.bloom365.org/faqs>\*

### Resources:

*\*For additional resources, please visit [bloom365.com/resources](http://bloom365.com/resources)\**

<p><b>BLOOM365 Advocacy Line and Support Groups</b></p>	<p>Text or call a BLOOM365 advocate for free, confidential support.  <b>Text/Call: 1-888-606-HOPE (4673)</b>  <b>Advocacy Line Hours of Operation:</b>  <b>Monday-Friday from 3PM-9PM (MST)</b></p> <p>To reach a specific advocate directly, please feel free to contact our advocacy line and tell us who you would like to speak to.</p> <p>Join us on Monday, Tuesday, and/or Thursday evenings for one of our drop-in support groups (Holidays excluded)! Visit <a href="http://bloom365.org/peersupport">bloom365.org/peersupport</a> for specific dates and times.</p>
<p><b>Teen Lifeline</b></p>	<p>Text or call 602-248-TEEN (8336) for free, confidential support 24/7 relating to suicide, depression, bullying, or relationships.</p>
<p><b>National Teen Dating Violence Hotline</b></p>	<p>Text "LOVEIS" to 22522 24/7</p>
<p><b>National Domestic Violence Hotline</b></p>	<p>1-800-799-SAFE (7233)</p>
<p><b>National Sexual Assault Hotline</b></p>	<p>1-800.656.HOPE (4673)</p>
<p><b>Suicide Prevention Lifeline</b></p>	<p>1-800-273-TALK (8255)</p>

**Q: Student**

**A: BLOOM365 Advocate**

**Q: Are we going to learn about how alcohol makes people act?**

**A:** While this is a great question, the effects of alcohol on people's behavior is outside of our area of expertise. One thing that we *can* say for sure, is that legally, someone who is under the influence of alcohol cannot give consent. Also, being under the influence of alcohol does not excuse abusive or violent behavior. If you'd like to talk more about this, we encourage you to reach out to our advocacy line at the number above.

**Q: Can we learn about kinks?**

**A:** While this topic is a bit outside of our area of expertise, we can add that consent is an essential component of all sexual activities. Consent may look different for everyone, however, consent should look like FRIES:

- **F**reely given. Consenting is a choice you make without pressure, manipulation, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- **R**eversible. Anyone can change their mind about what they feel like doing, anytime. Even if you've done it before, and even if you're both naked in bed.
- **I**nformed. You can only consent to something if you have the full story and are fully prepared. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and then they don't, there isn't full consent.
- **E**nthusiastic. When it comes to sex, you should only do stuff you WANT to do, not things that you feel you're expected to do.
- **S**pecific. Saying yes to one thing (like going to the bedroom to make out) doesn't mean you've said yes to others (like having sex).

If you'd like to talk more about this, we encourage you to reach out to our advocacy line at the number above. We can offer you additional resources and free, confidential, anonymous, non-judgmental support.

**Q: If you haven't seen your sibling since October 15th how would you cope with it?**

**A:** It can be difficult to live far apart from people who are important in our lives. It might be helpful to find a way to keep in touch with them regularly, whether that be through texting, writing, calling, facetime, social media, etc. Staying connected with family who live far away can help us to maintain these relationships and give us a sense of joy and connection when we are apart.

We recognize how important it is to feel like you have a support system where you are, and how lonely it can feel when we feel like we don't have that. A great way to make friends is to find people who have similar interests as you. For example, if you like listening to a certain type of music and playing video games, you might try sparking up a conversation with someone who you've heard talking about video games or the same type of music. Another great way to make friends is by joining clubs, organizations, or a sports team that you are interested in. Stepping outside of our comfort zones can allow us to grow and develop new friendships. If you'd like to talk more about this, we encourage you to reach out to our advocacy line at the number above.

**Q: How long have you been doing this program?**

**A:** Our founder, Donna Bartos, began this work in 2006 as the Purple Ribbon Council to Cut Out Domestic Abuse and from there grew and in 2010 developed the “Blooming or Wilting” tool. For more information, check out [our website](#) or contact our advocacy line at the number above.

**Q: How do you know when your friend’s being rude or mean?**

**A:** It can be useful to look at the blooming and wilting flowers to help you to determine whether a relationship is healthy or unhealthy. Healthy relationships involve both partners respecting the rights of the other. In a relationship, you have the right to: Make decisions together (equality), have opinions, express your feelings, choose activities (freedom), be yourself (individuality), and safety. You also have the responsibility of respecting these rights of your friends and your friends’ boundaries. Healthy relationships are stemmed in equality and freedom and exhibit the words seen in the center of the blooming flower. If you feel that your friendship might be unhealthy, the red flags checklist in your workbook or on [our website](#) can be a useful tool to evaluate your relationship and identify red flags. Feel free to contact an advocate at the number above if you’d like to discuss further!

**Q: When you’re stressed is it bad for your health?**

**A:** High stress levels can have negative health impacts. However, stress can affect everyone in different ways. That’s why it’s so important to practice self-care and healthy coping techniques during times of high stress. It’s also important to take care of yourself both mentally and physically. If you’d like to talk more about this, we encourage you to reach out to our Advocacy Line at the number above for free, confidential support.

**Q: Relationships can be healthy with talking**

**A:** It might be useful to look at the blooming and wilting flowers to help you to determine whether a relationship is healthy or unhealthy. It’s also important to remember your rights and responsibilities within relationships. In a relationship, you have the right to: Make decisions together (equality), have opinions, express your feelings, and choose activities (freedom), be yourself (individuality), and safety. You also have the responsibility of respecting these rights of your partner and your partner’s boundaries. Healthy relationships are stemmed in equality and freedom and exhibit the words seen in the center of the blooming flower. The red flags checklist in your workbook is also a great resource to identify signs that a relationship may potentially be unhealthy or abusive. If you believe you may be in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, please know that support is available! Feel free to reach out to an advocate above for free, confidential support.

**Q: Why is abuse a thing?**

**A:** There are a number of root causes that we explored during Doses 3 and 4 for why someone might choose to use power and control over someone else. Some people may be abusive to others because they were exposed to violence in their homes as a child and taught that this behavior was normal or acceptable. Rigid beliefs in gender norms can also play a role in perpetrating abuse. Insecurity is another root cause. If someone lacks confidence, they may try to gain power or control over their partner in an attempt to feel better. Remember, though, that even though these root causes may increase one's risk of becoming a perpetrator, each individual can still make the deliberate choice to have relationships

based in equality and freedom. BLOOM365 and the Bloom It Up program exists so that teens like yourself have the skills and knowledge to build and grow healthy relationships, free from abuse and violence.

**Q: Why is it important that we love ourselves?**

**A:** We believe that having a healthy self-esteem and being able to love yourself is important when building and growing healthy friendships and relationships. Insecurity can be a root cause for unhealthy relationships as it can sometimes cause people to bring others down in an attempt to feel better. When we have healthy self-esteem, it can be much easier to have relationships that exhibit trust, love, and emotional respect rather than jealousy, isolation, or verbal/emotional abuse

**Q: What would happen if someone was getting abused in school?**

**A:** No one should ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe at school. We encourage you to speak to your teacher or another trusted adult at home and/or on your campus to see how they might be able to support you and address this situation. If you would like an advocate to assist you, please feel free to text/call the number above.

**Q: Why do we need to learn about dating? Related submissions: Why do we have to learn about dating?; Why are we learning about this?**

**A:** Even if you are not currently dating, this information is still relevant to you both now and in future relationships and friendships. Knowing how to develop a healthy self-esteem and how to build and grow healthy relationships with healthy communication and conflict resolution skills are important life skills. Social relationships of all kinds can impact mental, emotional and physical health in both the short-term and long-term. Negative or wilting relationships can contribute to stress, loss of self-esteem, depression, and physical illness. Positive supportive and healthy relationships in which you can fully be yourself can contribute to happiness, increase in self-esteem, and longer life! We believe it is important to know how to prevent power and control within your own relationships, and know your rights and responsibilities within relationships. Healthy relationships impact us on an individual level, leading to healthier communities, and eventually healthier societies.

**Q: Thank you for teaching me the difference between abusive and anger**

**A:** We are glad that you have a better understanding on the difference between anger and abuse after going through the 7 Doses. Anger is a natural human emotion, however, anger becomes abuse when someone makes the choice to use power and control over someone else or others. If you have any other questions or would like to talk more about this, we encourage you to reach out to our advocacy line at the number above.

**Q: Can we call the cops for the abuse of a friend or fight the abuser?**

**A:** We encourage you to do what will make you comfortable and safe. If you or someone else is in danger, it might be best to call 911. Direct intervention can be dangerous and we encourage you to prioritize your own safety first. To discuss a specific situation and which ways might be best to confront an abuser, you can reach an advocate at the number above.

**Q: How can you make sure that your girlfriend is safe and is not being abused by anyone?**

**A:** The only way to know without witnessing the abuse is to ask your girlfriend if she is safe or being hurt by anyone. The most important thing we can do in these situations is to let our friend or partner know that we are there for them when they are ready, make sure they are safe, and let them know that they are not alone. If you believe your girlfriend (or anyone else) is in serious danger, it's important that you reach out to a trusted adult to ensure their safety. On [our website](#), you can find a list for "How to Help a Friend." This list can provide some helpful tips for starting a conversation with your girlfriend if you expect she might be experiencing abuse.

**Q: If I am going through something do you or anyone else think it's a good idea to go to BLOOM365?**

**A:** Depending on the situation, it might be helpful to utilize the services provided by BLOOM365, or it might be best to talk to a trusted adult in our life or possibly even law enforcement. At BLOOM365, our goal as Advocates is to remove help-seeking barriers for young people experiencing or witnessing verbal, emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence. Through individual advocacy, peer support groups, and text/chatline digital advocacy, we enhance healing, safety, self-esteem, social connectedness, stability, well-being, validation and support for young survivors. If you'd like to talk more about your individual situation or to discuss if BLOOM365 services are right for you, feel free to reach out to us at the number above.

**Q: I feel like I'm going through depression; Related Submission: Q: I am depressed**

**A:** We want you to know that you are not alone, and we are glad that you reached out for support. Some red flags of depression include: Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed, withdrawal from friends/family, and sleeping too little or in excessive amounts. If these symptoms are present for more than two weeks for most of the day, this may be a sign that it's more serious than just feeling sad. Although we do not specifically work with teens experiencing depression, we are always here to listen! We do work alongside a few organizations that specifically help youth experiencing depression, including Teen Lifeline. You can contact them at the number above for free, confidential support. School social workers and counselors are a great source for information on dealing with depression or helping someone who is. BLOOM365 advocates are also always available by texting or calling the number above for a listening ear or if you would like additional resources.

**Q: How would you define the flowers?**

**A:** The flowers are a great tool that we can use if we are ever concerned that a relationship might be unhealthy. It can be helpful to look at the blooming and wilting flowers to see which one looks like a better representation of the relationship. Does the relationship look more like power and control or equality and freedom? Healthy relationships are stemmed in equality and freedom and exhibit the words seen in the center of the blooming flower. It's also important to remember the rights and responsibilities we have within relationships. In a relationship, you have the right to: Make decisions together (equality), have opinions, express your feelings, and choose activities (freedom), be yourself (individuality), and safety. We also have the responsibility of respecting these rights of our partner and our partner's boundaries. The red flags checklist in your workbook or on our [website](#) is another great

tool to identify potential red flags that a relationship might be unhealthy. If you'd like to discuss this further, we encourage you to reach out to an Advocate at the number listed above.

**Q: This is important but uncomfortable**

**A:** We understand that these topics can be uncomfortable to talk about. But you are right, these conversations are super important. It is always our intention to let students know during Dose 1 that our program is a safe space for all. We highly encourage utilizing self-care not only during the program, but every single day of your life. Everything we've talked about from the very beginning and all the way through Dose 7 is applicable to relationships of all kinds; from friendships and relationships with family members to dating relationships. We hope you know that the information you've learned over the 7 Doses will be beneficial for you in both your current and future relationships! If you'd like to talk more about this, feel free to reach out to our Advocacy Line at the number above.

**Q: can we talk about the LGBTQ Community?**

**A:** That is a great question. Within Arizona, there are laws prohibiting the "promotion of homosexuality" (often referred to as "no promo homo" laws). These laws explicitly forbid teachers from discussing LGBTQ+ topics in a positive light – if at all. Our Lead Advocate, Renee, specifically works with LGBTQ+ youth. To connect with Renee, or if you have any questions or want more information, please reach out to our Advocacy Line for free, confidential support!

**Q: Why do people change themselves for other people?**

**A:** There is no one answer to this question, as people can change their behavior or personalities for many reasons. Some people might not feel comfortable being themselves around certain people or groups for various reasons. Some people might just be having a bad day. However, it's important to recognize if someone continuously treats us differently around certain groups of people or in certain situations. This could be a potential red flag for abuse. For more information, or if you'd like to talk more about an individual situation, feel free to reach out to our advocacy line for free, confidential, non-judgmental support.

**Q: People might feel awkward if you tell them something and you don't know them.**

**A:** That's true. Although we don't know the exact context of your submission, it might be helpful to ask someone if they're able to offer support or a listening ear before you disclose something to them or unload any heavy information, so that they're prepared to hear what you have to tell them. When it comes to BLOOM365 Advocates, we encourage you to talk to us so we can make sure you're safe and can offer some resources or information, even if you don't know us personally!

**Q: I feel like this talk should be individual, I personally would not like to share with everyone. As well, experience judgment after class even though the understand I wouldn't like it publically or a whole group around**

**A:** We understand that sharing isn't everyone's 'thing,' and that's totally fine! We want you to do whatever you're most comfortable with. We encourage you to reach out to our advocacy line at the number above to connect with an advocate for information or support. You can remain anonymous, if

you'd like. We also encourage you to speak to an advocate outside of class when BLOOM365 is on your campus if you'd like to talk in person but don't feel comfortable in class.

**Q: I hate being a man**

**A:** We are sorry that you are feeling that way, and we want you to know that you are not alone. We are glad you reached out for support. We encourage you to contact our Advocacy Line at the number above to talk more about your individual situation. We are here for you!

**Q: What if you realize that you were the monster in the relationship only to realize that it wasn't all on you? Thanks for talking to us!!**

**A:** By acknowledging now that your behaviors might be questionable and taking responsibility for them, you're a step ahead in beginning to correct them. According to author Lundy Bancroft, the following are some changes you could check that could indicate that you are making progress in your recovery:

- Admitting fully to what you have done
- Stopping excuses and blaming
- Making amends
- Accepting responsibility and recognizing that abuse is a choice
- Identifying patterns of controlling behavior you use
- Identifying the attitudes that drive you to abuse
- Accepting that overcoming abusiveness is a long process, not declaring you are "cured"
- Not demanding credit for improvements you have made
- Not treating improvements as vouchers to be spent on occasional acts of abuse (ex. "I haven't done anything like this in a long time, so it's not a big deal")
- Developing respectful, kind, supportive behaviors
- Carrying your weight and sharing power
- Changing how you respond to their partner's (or former partner's) anger and grievances
- Changing how you act in heated conflicts
- Accepting the consequences of your actions (including not feeling sorry for yourself about the consequences, and not blaming their partner or children for them)

As always, it's important to remember that change doesn't happen overnight, it's an ongoing process that takes work and willingness. If you would like to chat with us, our information is listed above. No matter what the situation, our advocates are supportive and remain empathetic.

**Q: i get mad very quickly; Related Submission: Q: I am extremely negative**

**A:** Sometimes, it can be helpful to remove ourselves from the situation for a bit in order to process our emotions. It might also be helpful to try practicing a routine for when you feel yourself getting angry, such as taking 4 deep breaths and taking a walk, or squeezing your thumb into your palm--small actions that can help keep you grounded and focused during times of high stress or negative emotions. Thinking positive and being more uplifting might look different for each person. Some examples of small actions you can take to make a more uplifting or positive change include: telling someone how much you appreciate them, spending time with people who make you happy and are supportive, writing down some things that you are grateful for, and try to focus on the things that make you feel happy or calm. You might also consider spending some time each night thinking of one thing to look forward to the next

day. Practicing ways to incorporate positivity into each day can help to get you into a more positive mindset. If you'd like additional resources or support, we encourage you to reach out to our Advocacy Line at the number above.