



# Elephant in The Room Q & A

Ombudsman Northwest

Spring 2023

**\*\*This document can also be accessed at [www.bloom365.org/faqs](http://www.bloom365.org/faqs)**

### Resources:

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

<b>BLOOM365 HelpLine</b>	<b>For free, confidential support:</b> <b>Text/Call: 1-888-606-HOPE (4673)</b> <b>Monday-Friday from 3PM-9PM (MST)</b>  <b>To reach a specific advocate directly, please feel free to contact our HelpLine and tell us who you would like to speak to.</b>
<b>Teen Lifeline</b>	<b>Text or call 602-248-TEEN (8336) for free, confidential support 24/7 relating to suicide, depression, bullying, or relationships.</b>
<b>National Teen Dating Violence Hotline</b>	<b>Text "LOVEIS" to 22522 24/7</b>
<b>National Domestic Violence Hotline</b>	<b>1-800-799-SAFE (7233)</b>
<b>National Sexual Assault Hotline</b>	<b>1-800.656.HOPE (4673)</b>
<b>Suicide Prevention Lifeline</b>	<b>1-800-273-TALK (8255)</b>

**\*Content Warning:** For some, Elephant in the Room Cards are places where they might disclose trauma, violence, or harm. We encourage you to proceed with caution if you have experienced power-based violence or abuse of any kind. If you need support, you can reach out to the Hotlines listed above.

**Q: Student**

**A: BLOOM365 Advocate**

**Q: I don't know how to get over my sexual abuse. I haven't told my mom.**

**A:** We are so sorry to hear that you went through such a traumatic experience. What happened was not your fault. Thank you for trusting us with such a vulnerable experience, we are glad that you reached out to us and are sharing what you have gone through. The decision to disclose abuse or sexual violence is an extremely personal one that is unique to each survivor and choosing to tell your mom is a decision that is ultimately yours to make. We encourage you to explore options that will be supportive in your healing journey and there are times where sharing our experiences with trusted people in our life like parents or friends can be very helpful in that journey. Healing from sexual assault will look different to each survivor. We encourage you to reach out to an advocate from RAINN to receive free non-judgemental support and resources that can be supportive to you on your healing journey.. BLOOM365 advocates are also here to offer support in the healing journey, you can reach out to us at our HelpLine at the information above. You are not alone and we are here for you!

**Q: I don't wanna talk**

**A:** That is understandable! Talking, especially about tough topics like the one discussed in the doses, may not feel comfortable or appealing to some. If you are ever in a place where talking about what you're thinking or feeling feels like the right thing for you, please know that our advocates are here to listen and support you. You can always find us at our HelpLine at 1-888-606-HOPE.

**Q: My boyfriend is big on gender roles. He believes that a man should not talk or show his feelings & should be the one buying everything for me instead of 50/50. What should I do?**

**A:** Gender roles or norms can sometimes be an uncomfortable thing to discuss with others because of how embedded they can be. Unhealthy gender norms are very common in our society and have historically been passed from generation to generation. We know that rigid belief in unhealthy gender norms contributes to power and control in our relationships so we can understand your concern regarding your boyfriend. If it feels safe to do so, it could be helpful to initiate an honest and open discussion with your boyfriend about the gender roles/norms that you see in your relationship and how they make you feel. "I" statements can be a healthy communication tool in initiating these conversations.

This can sound like, "I feel (emotion), when (situation/behavior). Could we/can we (solution)"

This method of communication can be beneficial in sharing how you're feeling without directly placing the blame on the other person while asking directly for your desired outcome. If you find that your boyfriend isn't open to communicating about this concern or if things do not change despite open and healthy communication, it may be helpful to consider whether or not this relationship is one that is compatible with your values and one that you'd like to continue. This can be a difficult situation to wade

through. If you'd like to talk more about this, our advocates are here to support you! You can find us at the HelpLine information above.

**Q: Most of my relationships have been terrible, more than 3 were sexually abusive towards me; I only went to the authorities (the police) about 1 person, which was the least traumatizing one, but the police did nothing, regardless of my solid evidence AND my witness (he bragged to my best friend about what he had just done). What can I do to get over these events, other than therapy?**

**A:** We are so sorry to hear what you had gone through in your previous relationships and the dismissive response you've experienced from the police. Disclosing sexual violence to another person, especially those in positions of authority, can be a hard thing to do and takes a lot of courage. What happened is not your fault. Thank you for trusting us with such a deeply vulnerable experience. We are glad that you reached out to us. Therapy with a licensed professional can be a supportive tool for processing traumatic events and while we encourage those who may want or need it to access it, we also understand that it may not be accessible for everyone.

Healing from traumatic experiences such as sexual violence is a deeply personal and unique journey that will look different for each survivor. Finding community can be extremely helpful in the healing journey as traumatic experiences can make you feel isolated or alone. Finding people or activities that make you feel supported and connected can be supportive in processing what you have experienced. This could look like spending more time with close and trusted friends, joining a club or group about an interest or hobby that you enjoy, or finding a support group for survivors of sexual assault. Coping skills that allow you to release and process emotions such as journaling, dancing, or even listening to your favorite music are also tools that can be supportive to you. Take some time to find what works for you and know that our advocates are here to support you in this process. You can reach out to us by phone/text at 1-888-606-HOPE. We are here for you!

**Q: How do you get over a nonexistent toxic relationship?**

**A: Moving forward from a toxic relationship, whether it is nonexistent or not, can be a hard process.**

Losing someone you had a connection with can be very painful even if the relationship was toxic. Especially if we have known that person for a really long time. While the ending of a close relationship can be tough, it can also be a great time for growth and self-care. Finding ways to cope and to process what you have experienced can be an important and helpful tool through your healing journey. This can look like spending time and sharing about how you're feeling with close friends, journaling about the relationship and its impact on you, or engaging in a hobby or interest that you enjoy that makes you feel calm and connected. If it is accessible to you and you are interested, talking with a professional such as a counselor or advocate can also be supportive in processing what you have experienced. We all cope with things in different ways and at different speeds. Find what works for you, and always know BLOOM365 is here to support you if needed! You can find us at the HelpLine information listed above.

**Q: The way I grew up impacted me. Now, I've been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. The stigma around BPD is that in relationships, they're abusive or controlling. I'm scared that I'm trying too hard not to be abusive (by not talking about how it feels when my partner/friend do**

**something that sets me off, because it's a me problem, solely) but I am scared that I AM being abusive even though I'm trying hard not to.**

**A:** Thank you for entrusting us with this experience. Sharing about the things we have been through, especially when it comes to mental illness, can be really hard especially with so much misunderstanding and stigma that can exist. The fact that you are open to being self-aware and are willing to commit to the work it takes to not engage in abusive behavior is so important but can be difficult to do on your own. We encourage you to seek the support of a counselor, social worker, advocate, or other trusted adult in this journey of addressing toxic or abusive behavior.

Coping strategies such as journaling, talking with trusted people about your feelings, attending a support group, and using healthy conflict resolution skills along with additional support from a professional can also be useful tools in changing harmful behavior. Creating a safe space within your relationship for your partner/friend to be honest and open about any concerns they may have can be helpful in this journey as well. If you would like to explore any of these options and resources, our advocates are here for you. Please feel free to reach out to us at our Helpline at 1-888-606-HOPE to connect with an advocate. You are not alone!

**Q: Sometimes it's best for me to stay quiet. One thing I taught myself, the loud one in the room who thinks their powerful is the one who needs help. My mind is a rainbow full of emotions and colors, its okay to be sad, some people find comfort in crying and sadness so why not do that? Your not your emotions so please let me ask why you let them control you the way you do or say things and put yourself down or let them dictate your day**

**A:** Thank you for sharing your beautiful words and thoughts with us! We are glad that you have used the EITR cards to express what you're feeling and thinking. While we understand and respect that being quiet may feel more comfortable to you, we also want you to know that your feelings are important and you have every right to express how you feel. If you are ever wanting an empathic ear to listen or support, you can always reach out to us at our HelpLine at the information above.