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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT: POSSIBLE RESPONSES

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### What can the victim/recipient do - short term?

1. Confront the perpetrator:
  - a. Develop a list of quick comments to fire back at people (humourous comments work especially well) Make sexual harassment a part of language training. Talk to your teacher and learn the vocabulary and common phrases that local women use in such situations. Know how to use it.
    - i. "Wow, you were sure badly educated"
    - ii. "Shame on you!"
    - iii. "Don't you have mothers or sisters?"
  - b. Embarrass the person - ask local people for advice on the best way this is done.
2. Ignore what is being aimed at you.
  - a. read a book
  - b. refuse to make eye contact
3. Move away from the situation (change your route).
4. Walk like you own the world, like you belong, like you know exactly who you are and where you're going. "I walk five times faster than I did when I first got here."
5. As you're walking down the street, feeling overcome with frustration at the culture, make a list in your head of 5 things you like about where you are.
6. Place your hands strategically in order to deflect unwanted touching and/or carry a bag that covers your hips/behind.
7. When on a bus or in a public place, talk to people. Get their names and the names of their villages. This may make you much less vulnerable.
8. Get to know people in your community or along the route you usually take to work; they are often your best protection.
9. In some Muslim countries, as an unknown woman you are fair game for harassment that would be unthinkable if they knew you. To the extent possible, get to know people you see regularly.
10. In other countries your extended family is your "protection" from harassment. Some volunteers refer to and rely on MCC country-wide contacts or friends in the neighborhood as their "extended family."
11. Bring attention to yourself and the situation - shout, stand up, whatever.
12. Realize that it's ok to lie (about your marital status, where you're going, etc.) Do what you need to do to limit harassment.
13. Pray.
14. Trust your instincts.
15. If walking with someone else, make jokes about what's happening.
16. For women, instead of avoiding eye contact with everyone, focus your eyes on meeting women's faces instead of men's.
17. Remember that it's not your fault. You didn't ask for anything! The other person has always made a choice to harass you.

## **What can the victim/recipient do - long term (prevention or long-term support)?**

1. Prepare yourself. Know what to expect. Educate yourself.
2. Take a self-defense course.
3. Find a support community, people who you can share honestly with about experiences that make you uncomfortable. This should include women from both your host culture as well as your own culture.
4. Get to know your neighbors. They will be your best protection.
5. Avoid dangerous situations.
6. Plan your escape routes.
7. Change your routine regularly (route, time) *or* keep a regular routine so people know where and when to expect you.
8. Find other people to walk with you.
9. Observe and talk to local women.
10. Find the safest mode of transit possible.
11. Review harassment policies with local supervisors upon arrival.
12. If possible, find a dog that can be your walking/running companion. Get one of your own or borrow your neighbor's. Or find some children to walk with.
13. Be extremely careful when entering romantic relationships with local partners.
14. Recognize that culturally sometimes cross-gender friendships are not possible.
15. Find local men with whom you get along and who you respect. Realize that not all men in that culture disrespect women.
16. Some days you may just need to stay home. Let yourself have down days. You don't need to be invincible all the time.
17. Volunteer at a local women's shelter or rape crisis center.
18. Report and document experiences of harassment and assault.
19. Remember that harassment is an everyday part of existence. In North America you've just found ways to deal with it and you've incorporated it into your life so that it's not something you regularly think about.
20. Get things to protect you - a dog, a night watchman, mace.
21. Remember that everyone will experience these things differently. Some women experience very little harassment simply because of the way they look. Marital status, children, and age are also major influencing factors. Some women, for whatever reason, face a lot of harassment. At the same time, for some women, verbal insults are not bothersome, for others, they are extremely disturbing. And you may experience the same thing differently on a different day. Whatever your response, it's ok!
22. Don't get mired down in debates of cultural appropriateness. While it may be culturally appropriate for men in the culture to touch women, it is probably more culturally appropriate that you feel welcome and comfortable in the culture.
23. LAUGH, LAUGH, LAUGH!!! PRAY, PRAY, PRAY!!!