**Sexual Coercion**

**WHAT IS IT?**

Coercion is the act of persuading or coercing a person into engaging in unwanted sexual activity through physical force, threat of physical force, or emotional manipulation.

**IN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP:**

- People should be equal partners in a relationship.
- There should be a balance between give and take.
- A relationship should take some time to develop.

**TYPES OF SEXUAL PRESSURE**

Emotional Pressure is when one person pressures another person to have sex by making them feel bad about themselves, or by threatening to end the relationship.

Possible emotional pressure tactics:

- If you don’t do it with me, I’ll find someone who will.
- Everyone else is doing it.
- I know you really want to.
- If you really love me, you will do this.
- If you don’t want to do it, why are you dressed that way?

Manipulation is a method used to unfairly convince someone to do something he or she is not comfortable doing. It is used to make a person feel that they have little choice in the decision.

Possible manipulation tactics:

- You are the only one who understands me; I can’t live without you.
- I’ve never felt this way about anyone before.
- You are so special.
- I’d never do anything to hurt you.
- You can trust me; I’ll take care of you.

Imbalance of power is when one person in a relationship has more power than the other person. When two people are several years apart in age, there can be a power imbalance.

An older person may have more power because he/she:

- Has more money or a car.
- Knows more, has more information.
- Knows how to argue to get what he or she wants.
- Is bigger or stronger.
- Has freedom to do more things and make his or her own decisions.

**AVOID BEING PRESSURED**

- Examine your feelings regarding sex and set sexual limits ahead of time.
- Talk with your partner about your personal limits.
- Be consistent in your use and definition of the words “yes” and “no.” However, you do have the right to change your mind about what you want to do at anytime.
- Be aware of what messages are being sent by your posture, clothes, tone of voice, and eye contact.
- Good communication is the only way your partner will know how you feel about a situation. Remember that people are not mind readers.
- Trust your instincts. Always stay alert to what is happening around you and to you.
- Do not use drugs or alcohol, especially with people you don’t know.
- Do not allow anyone you don’t know to drive you anywhere.
- If you feel uncomfortable with someone, or if you do not feel safe in anyway, go to a public place immediately.
- If a date has been drinking or using drugs, do not let that person drive you anywhere. Always have a backup plan for getting home. Carry a cell phone or enough money for a phone call and a cab ride home.

Learn how you can protect your health at: [www.adagiohealth.org](http://www.adagiohealth.org)