

Harmful practices

Date

Rules for the Session



Stopping violence in our lives
and in our communities.

- **Be respectful of others opinions**
- **Non-judgemental**
- **Listen to what others have to say**
- **Anything discussed in this space should remain confidential (unless there is a concern about your safety or the safety of others)**

What is culture?

Celebrations

Food

Identity

languages

Religion

Traditions

Values

Dress



The dictionary definition: “ The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time” (Cambridge Dictionary)*

*<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>

What is culture?



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- Our cultures and our traditions form crucial parts of our identities, which should be celebrated
- The problem arises when certain violent practices and behaviours become traditions
- In simple terms, a harmful practice can be considered to be a 'tradition that causes violence'
- All traditions are hard to break and this is especially true with harmful practices. Challenging these traditions can not only put you in physical danger, it can lead to total isolation and ostracisation from your community

Culture and the patriarchy



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- The policing of the female body is not exclusive to any culture, race or religion.
- It is present in the way we discuss women in the media, for example, or in how we victim blame and slut shame women openly.
- Women who are viewed as being 'too sexual' or promiscuous are often shunned and discriminated against. These women are deemed 'dirty' and 'easy,' with their personal worth and value directly correlating to their sexual history.
- We cannot view harmful practices as a case of 'us versus them' and be naïve enough to think that these things don't happen here. The beliefs that allow harmful practices to occur are present in all societies – it's just a case of the patriarchy manifesting itself differently.

What is a Harmful Practice?



Harmful Practices are forms of violence committed primarily against women and girls for so long that they are considered acceptable cultural practice by the victim and/or the perpetrator. Victims and perpetrators are not confined to one ethnic/religious group or gender.

The ones we will be focusing on are:

Forced Marriage

So Called 'Honour' Based Violence

FGM – female genital mutilation

Types of Harmful Practices

- Female infanticide/ selective abortion
- Forced pregnancy
- Bride price/ Dowry
- Acid Attacks
- Virgidity Tests
- Breast ironing
- **So called 'Honour Based Violence' (HBV)**
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**
- **Forced Marriage**

What is so called **honour based violence**?

Harmful practices are dependent on a so called **honour based value system**. Where a premium is placed on the concept of honour. One's **reputation** is dependent on their actions and the actions of their family.

This so called honour code is established to **punish people** who are accused of committing acts that bring so called **shame** on the family.

What is Forced Marriage?

Arranged Marriage

In an arranged marriage the family of both spouses are involved in finding the partners and arranging the marriage, but the spouses *have the final say about whether the marriage goes ahead.*

Forced Marriage

There is no choice – they have to get married



What is a Forced Marriage?

The main difference between a forced and arranged marriage is **consent**.

- Consent is the FREEDOM and CAPACITY to make a choice

Arranged marriages may not be your personal choice for a relationship, but it is perfectly fine as it is consensual. Either person can say no at any point **without the threat of violence and fear of isolation**.

Forced marriages are not consensual. They are against the law.

Is it **legal?**

The Law takes Forced Marriages seriously, forcing someone to marry can result in a sentence of up to **7 years in prison.**

The FMU (Forced Marriage Unit) operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims of forced marriage as well as to professionals dealing with cases.

Phone 020 7008 0151

Email fmu@fco.gov.uk

What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation is the deliberate cutting of a girl's external genitals (private parts)

Female genital mutilation is nearly always carried out on children, commonly between four and twelve years of age.

In many countries it is carried out by women who have no medical training, using unsterilized knives, blades or sharpened stones, without anaesthetic (pain relief).

Types of FGM

The World Health Organisation has classified FGM into **four types**.

Type I: partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or its prepuce

Type II: the clitoris and labia minora are partially or totally removed, with or without excision of the labia majora

Type III: Where the clitoris, inner and outer lips (labia minor/major) are **cut away** and the remaining skin is **sewn or sealed together** to varying degrees (infibulation). This is the **most extreme form** and constitutes **15 per cent** of all cases. A bridge of scar tissue then forms over the vagina, which leaves only a small opening (from the size of a matchstick head) for the passage of urine and menstrual blood.

Type IV: Includes **pricking, piercing or incision** of the clitoris and/or the labia; stretching of the clitoris and or the labia; **cauterisation or burning** of the clitoris and surrounding tissues, **scraping** of the vaginal orifice or cutting (Gishiri cuts) of the vagina and introduction of **corrosive substances** or herbs into the vagina.

Consequences of FGM



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Depending on the degree of mutilation, FGM can have a number of short-term health implications:

- severe pain and shock
- infection
- urine retention
- injury to adjacent tissues
- immediate fatal haemorrhaging

Long-term implications can entail:

- extensive damage of the external reproductive system
- uterus, vaginal and pelvic infections
- complications in pregnancy and child birth
- psychological damage
- sexual dysfunction
- difficulties in menstruation
- cysts and neuromas
- increased risk of Vesico Vaginal Fistula

In addition to these health consequences there are considerable psycho-sexual, psychological and social consequences of FGM.

Is it **legal?**

The FGM Act (2003) makes it illegal to help, support or arrange for FGM to be performed on a girl either in the UK or abroad. The offence can be punished by up to 14 years in prison, a fine, or both.

FGM Unit on 0800 028 3550 or email
fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

**" NO ONE
SHOULD
TOUCH
MY BODY "**



Case Study: Kam and Tina

What are they afraid of?

What are they at risk of?

How do we talk about **harmful practices?**

- Our discussions on harmful practices often make room for racist and discriminatory beliefs
 - It is important we challenge our own preconceived ideas and privilege
- e.g. only minority groups have forced marriage, FGM only happens in Africa, honour-based violence doesn't impact *us*

Mind your language

- **Accountability:** Place responsibility solely on the killer, which means avoiding speculative “reasons” or “triggers”, or describing the murder as an uncharacteristic event. Homicides are usually underpinned by a longstanding sense of ownership, coercive control and possessive behaviours: they are not a random event.
- **Accuracy:** Name the crime as domestic violence, instead of “tragedy” or “horror”, and include the National Domestic Violence Helpline at the end of the article: 0808 2000 247.
- **Dignity:** Avoid sensationalising language, invasive or graphic details that compromise the dignity of the dead woman or her surviving family members.
- **Equality:** Avoid insensitive or trivialising language or images.
- **Images:** Avoid using stock images that reinforce the myth that it’s only a physical crime.

What stops someone from **seeking help?**

Some people face **additional barriers** when accessing support that it is important professionals take into consideration

These can include:

- Racism and islamophobia from statutory services
- Isolation from communities due to beliefs and orientation
- Lack of support systems
- Homophobia and transphobia
- Any other forms of discrimination
- Fear of being judged

What is a **specialised service**?



Everyone experiences oppression differently.

Marginalised people need safe spaces to express themselves freely, without the fear of discrimination and increased oppression. It is important for survivors to speak to people who look and sound like them, who can speak their first language, who have shared lived experiences and genuine cultural understanding

Specialist services offer this type of support e.g BME specific, LGBTQ+ charities, services run by and for disabled people.

Support Services



- National Domestic Violence Helpline
- Women and Girls Network
- Solace Womens Aid
- Ashiana Network
- Rape Crisis
- Victim Support
- Forced Marriage Unit
- Galop – LGBT services
- Respect – male survivors and perpetrators of all genders
- Men's Advice Line

Types of support

- **Counselling and psychotherapy** – speaking about what you went through to help you heal
- **Support groups** - sharing space with other survivors
- **Medical help** – seeing a doctor, sexual health clinic, hospital
- **Helplines** – one off support and signposting
- **Case work** – having 1-2-1 support through a difficult situation
- **Legal support** – sorting out legal and financial issues between people
- **Housing** – refuge and shelters for people fleeing emergency situations
- **Advocacy** – a representative to understand you and help you fight for your rights
- The list is extensive. More **tailored support** is available if you feel you want to talk to someone who understands other aspects of your identity (religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, etc)



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Thank you for your time

What's one thing you feel you've
taken away from today?