

CN: sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual violence



Safety & Dignity at Work Information Pack

WWW.YOGATEACHERSUNION.CO.UK

CN: sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual violence



Sexual harassment - a union issue?

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1 out of 2



Women have experienced Sexual Harassment at work

4 out of 5



Don't report Sexual Harassment to their employer

Source: *Still just a bit of banter?* TUC Report , 2016



1%



Report to their union reps

Source: *Still just a bit of banter?* TUC Report , 2016



"Since forming the Yoga Teachers' Branch, whose original focus was around pay and precarity, we've recorded over 30 disclosures of sexual abuse and violence. This ranges from grooming and coercion by celebrity and well-established teachers, stalking by students, to rape, and in the most extreme cases, trafficking and torture."

ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT
WORKING GROUP - YTU, IWGB



IW*GB

Direct correlation between casualisation and SH

- Laws provide little protection for many
- Less likely to be union members and have employment rights
- Work in isolation. Safeguarding and avenues for reporting are often inadequate or non-existent

Source: *Still just a bit of banter?* TUC Report , 2016



Part of a Wider Societal Issue



Though the tools used by perpetrators may differ from one industry to another, Sexual Harassment and Abuse exists throughout society and no industry or workplace is immune.



Women (particularly young women and women with disabilities), non-binary people, LGBTQI, Black and people of colour are the most common targets of sexual harassment by perpetrators who are most commonly men of a higher status



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LEGAL DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT





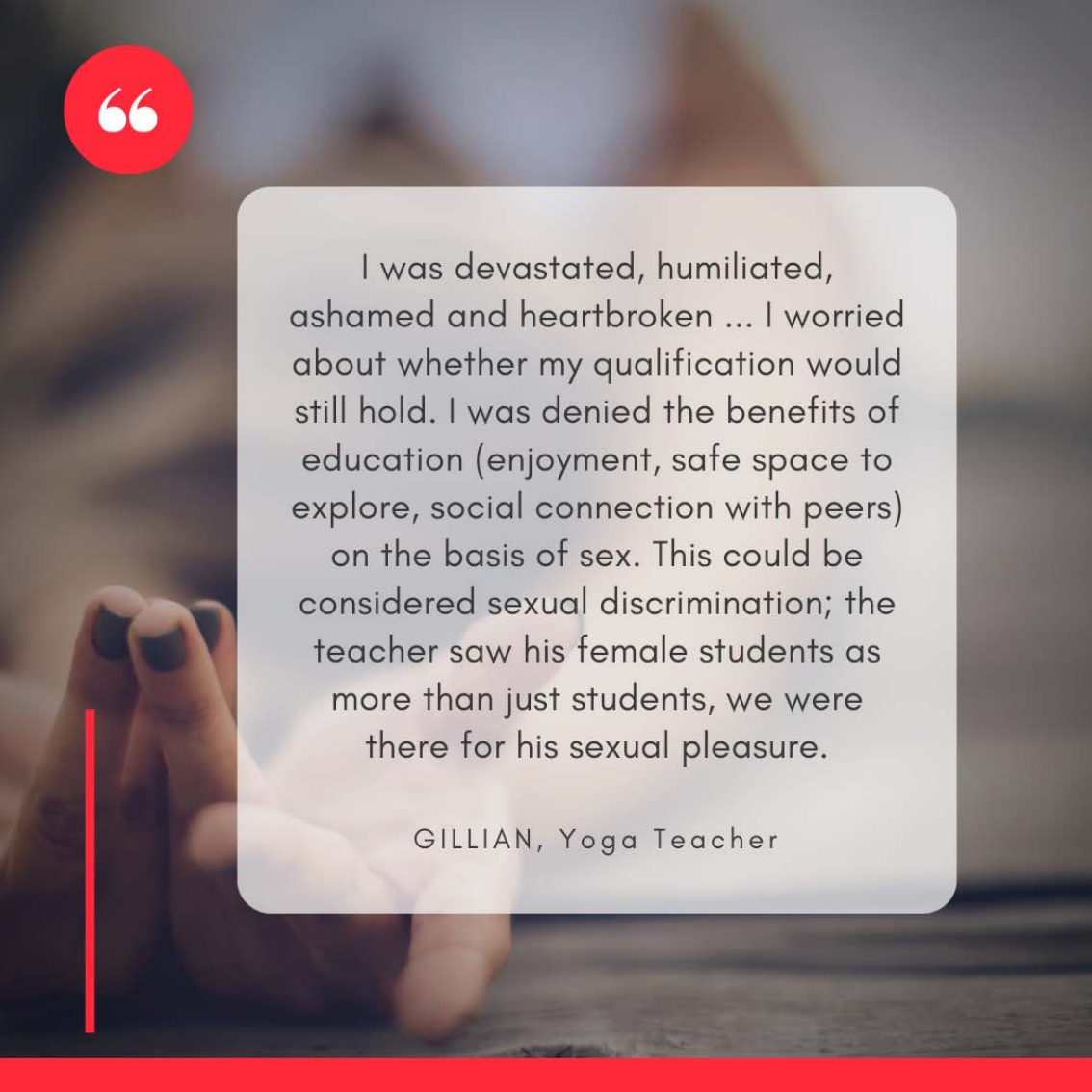
Under the Equality Act (2010), sexual harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of either:

(a) violating the complainant's dignity; or

(b) creating a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the complainant



“



I was devastated, humiliated, ashamed and heartbroken ... I worried about whether my qualification would still hold. I was denied the benefits of education (enjoyment, safe space to explore, social connection with peers) on the basis of sex. This could be considered sexual discrimination; the teacher saw his female students as more than just students, we were there for his sexual pleasure.

GILLIAN, Yoga Teacher



The situations which are most relevant for yoga teachers and students are:

- (a) where the victim is a worker and is harassed by their employer or a colleague;
- (b) where the victim is accessing services and is harassed by the provider;
- (c) where the victim is harassed by a membership association; and
- (d) where the victim is harassed by a trade organisation (i.e. an organisation which exists to allow members to carry out a trade or profession)

- *Adam Ohringer, Employment Barrister*



The most important thing I have realised through becoming a yoga teacher myself is that it was his responsibility to not touch me sexually during meditation and savasana, not my responsibility to respond in a way that makes any sense. Although at the time I felt it had become a relationship of sorts, how could it ever have been when it began by such a predatory abuse of trust

ANONYMOUS, Yoga Teacher



Examples include:

Sexual comments
or jokes

Physical behaviour, including
unwanted sexual advances,
touching and various forms of
sexual assault

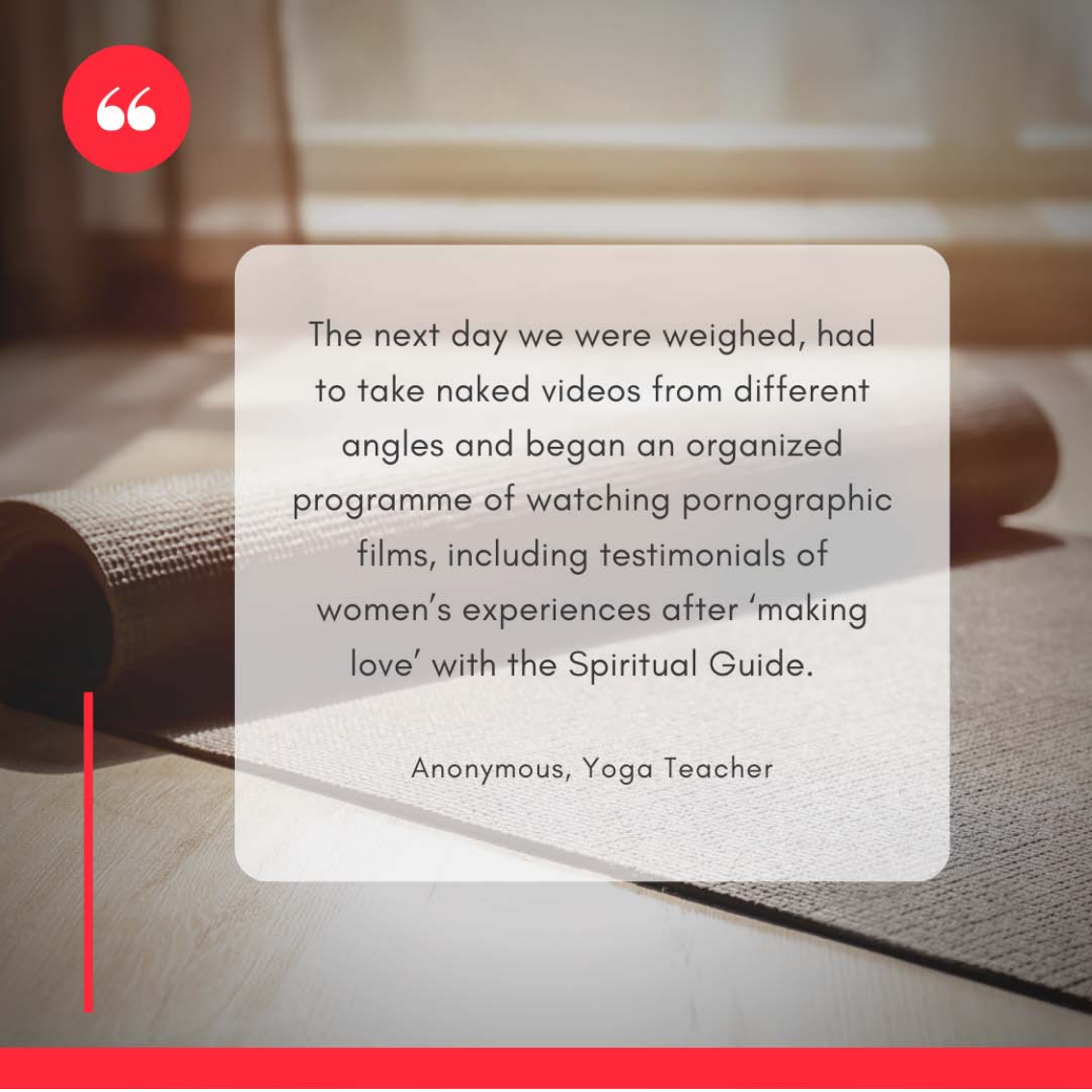
Displaying pictures,
photos or drawings of a
sexual nature, being
forced to watch porn

Revenge porn


Sending emails and
text messages with a
sexual content



“



The next day we were weighed, had to take naked videos from different angles and began an organized programme of watching pornographic films, including testimonials of women's experiences after 'making love' with the Spiritual Guide.



Anonymous, Yoga Teacher

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CN: sexual violence, abuse, torture



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COMMON LAW DUTY OF CARE AND ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION





Common Law Duty of Care

Duty of care refers to the circumstances and relationships which the law recognises as giving rise to a legal duty to take reasonable care.

A failure to take such care can result in the defendant being liable to pay damages to a party who is injured or suffers loss as a result of their breach of duty.*

*<https://www.e-lawresources.co.uk/Duty-of-care.php>



“

As I entered into the journey of becoming a yoga teacher it became clear to me that as teachers we have a duty of care to our students. I left the organisation after realising that I could never recommend a student of mine to go there, because I didn't believe they would be safe.

In the 2 years that followed, as I began to understand the levels of abuse that had occurred within the school and that are still occurring, I became very aware that there was nowhere to go to report this and that I had no idea how to even begin to put an end to it. As it stands, anyone looking for yoga in my city could still be unknowingly recruited into a network of abuse.

- ANONYMOUS YOGA TEACHER



Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The provisions of this Part shall have effect with a view to—

- (a) securing the health, safety and welfare of persons at work;
- (b) protecting persons other than persons at work against risks to health or safety arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work



“

I was molested by a celebrity teacher at a Career and Personal Development (CPD) workshop. The adjustments were so hands on and invasive. My bum and breasts were groped and I wasn't given any opportunities to consent.

I felt lots of shame and didn't return to the rest of the weekend workshop, which I'd paid a lot of money for. At the time I thought it was because my body was too rigid, and I wasn't "open enough" for the practice. Looking back, I recognise that I was assaulted, and my response was a trauma response.

- ANONYMOUS YOGA TEACHER



Human Rights Act: Article 3 Prohibition of Torture

No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Torture occurs when someone deliberately causes very serious and cruel suffering (physical or mental) to another person.

Inhuman treatment or punishment is treatment which causes intense physical or mental suffering

Degrading treatment means treatment that is extremely humiliating and undignified.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-act/article-3>

“

I sat, semi-naked, in a single bedroom with 3 other women for 2 days; eating expired food (we were told it was bad karma to throw food away) and watching movies. I had no idea what time it was apart from when there was sunlight coming through the edges of the blackout curtains.

I did not feel that any of what I saw was the behaviour of a so called 'enlightened master'. Yet the stakes were high (if i hadn't gone through with it I could have been shunned by the whole community, I was told my spiritual progress was contingent on this) and my cognitive dissonance was strong. The sexual initiation was cold, coercive, and left me feeling depressed and very confused.

- ANONYMOUS YOGA TEACHER



Why is the Common Law Duty of Care and Associated Legislation Important for Gig Economy Workers?

“

Even within a largely unregulated gig economy there ARE laws in place to protect people from harm and abuse.

- Adam Ohringer, Employment Barrister

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LEGAL
Q&A WITH
ADAM OHRINGER,
BARRISTER



Legal Q & A Specific to the Equality Act and Sexual Harassment

Q. As teachers, what is our responsibility?

A. If we allow a sexually degrading environment to develop in our class - we may be complicit in any harassment that is taking place.

Q. What happens if a teacher is harassed by a student?

A. The teacher has the right to bar the student from attending class.

Q. Who would the claim be against - perpetrator and/or venue?

A. Claim is against perpetrator but the venue is also liable unless they've shown that they've taken reasonable steps to safeguard/protect.

Legal Q & A

Q. What about historical cases?

A. In terms of the Equality Act - as a worker or member of a trade organisation - a complaint against the centre of trade or trade organisation needs to be made within 3 months;

As a customer or client or member of a membership association - usual deadline is 6 months.

Dependent on specific circumstances, but often can be extended for cases of sexual abuse even if it happened many years ago.

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Safety and Dignity at Work

Support and Signposting

#saferyogaspaces

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**LONDON
SURVIVORS
GATEWAY**

THE HUB FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES



0808 801 0860



<https://survivorsgateway.london/>



**Southall
Black Sisters**



0208 571 9595



<https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/need-help/>



0808 801 0660



<https://www.wgn.org.uk/our-services/advice-and-helplines>



0800 999 5428



<https://galop.org.uk/>



Oxfordshire Sexu
Abuse & Rape
Crisis Centre



0800 783 6294



<https://www.osarcc.org.uk/>



RIGHTS of
WOMEN
helping women through the law



info@row.org.uk



<https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice/sexual-harassment-at-work-law>



0808 802 0300



<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/national-stalking-helpline/>



solace



0808 802 5565



<https://www.solacewomensaid.org/>

EnCourage

Survivors of Cults and Abuse



01433 639032



<http://www.encourage-cult-survivors.org/>



**anti-
slavery**



020 7501 8920



<https://www.antislavery.org/what-we-do/uk/>



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WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT

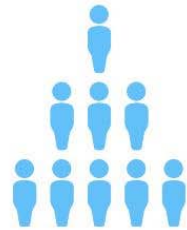


Cults and Coercion

SOURCE: CULTS AND COERCIVE
CONTROL - DR ALEXANDRA STEIN

IS IT A TOTALIST (CULTIC) SYSTEM?

- **Leadership:** Charismatic, authoritarian
- **Structure:** Isolating, closed, with steep hierarchy
- **Ideology:** Absolute, total, exclusive
- **Processes:** brainwashing techniques, coercive control, though reform, radicalization
- **Outcome:** Controllable (deployable), exploited followers



Source: Lifton (1999), Arendt (1948), Schein (1961)

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Trauma bonding (disorganised attachment) to a totalist group:

- Group meets need and provides source of comfort.
- Alternate attachments are gradually stripped away.
- Group becomes only safe haven
- Threat emanates from group.
- Runs towards group as 'safe haven' from threat, forming a strong disorganised attachment



SOURCE: Cults and Coercive Control, Dr Alexandra Stein

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BALANCED



EGALITARIAN



UNBALANCED

AUTHORITARIAN



Two way communication



Both sides accepted and considered worthy of mutual support

Mutual trust and opportunity to add value

even in 'unequal' relationships such as parent/child, teacher/student

Top down communication



One assumes inferiority of other, who must change to suit their own criteria

Authority figure possesses all power, control and answers

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WORDS TO KNOW



precarity

[noun]

a state of existence in which material provision and psychological wellness are adversely affected by a lack of regular or secure income:

The precarity that defines this socially vulnerable demographic cannot be ignored.

consent

[verb]

Freely given – without coercion, pressure, persuasion or manipulation

Reversible – anyone can change their mind at any time

Informed – it's only consent if you have the full picture

Enthusiastic – consent is mutual and everyone needs to agree, it's not a 'maybe' or a 'not sure' or something you do because you're expected to

Specific – just because you've said 'yes' to one thing, doesn't mean you've said 'yes' to anything else

DARVO

[verb]

Deny
Attack
Reverse **V**ictim and
Offender

DARVO

[verb]

a common and alarmingly effective tactic used by those who have been accused of abuse to present themselves as the real victim, by utilising social and/or financial capital, and existing psychological and cultural conditioning to victim blame to redirect sympathy and empathy towards themselves.

himpathy

[noun]

the inappropriate and disproportionate sympathy powerful men enjoy in cases of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, homicide and other misogynistic behaviour

institutional betrayal

[noun]

"When trusted and powerful institutions act in ways that visit harm upon those dependent on them for safety and wellbeing"

"Institutions have the potential to either worsen post-traumatic outcomes or become sources of justice, support and healing"

institutional betrayal

[noun]

Examples:

- Failure to prevent abuse
- Difficult procedures and inadequate responses
- Supporting cover-ups and misinformation
- Punishing victims and whistleblowers



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**HOW TO
REPORT SH**



Report

Call the police via 999 in emergencies; 101 for non-emergencies; or via crime-stoppers if you wish to remain anonymous/don't feel safe contacting the police directly



Call local Victim Support Services. They act as intermediaries and will ensure you are aware of your rights and are directed towards the necessary support



Report to venue manager or owner if it feels safe. They have a duty of care to protect you against discrimination and harassment in the workplace





Record



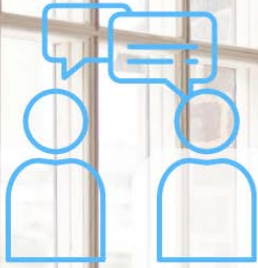
Email yourself and/or a trusted friend as soon after the incident has happened as possible.



Include the details of the experience AND how it made you feel.



This is a reliable, time-stamped record of the event and will support your claim if at any point you choose to take action.



Support



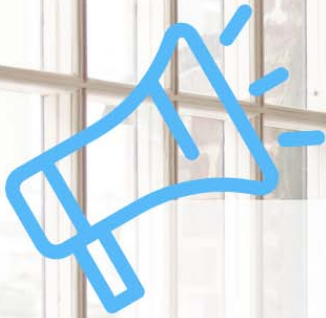
Talk to a trusted friend, peer and/or family member.



Seek support from professional support services. National and local helplines are available to all survivors of SH and SA



Professional support services are also available to those who are supporting survivors and taking disclosures



Organise

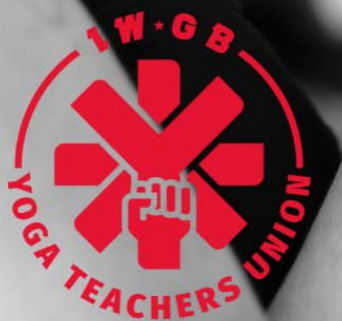
- ◆ If you're eligible to be a member of the YTU - join the movement!
- ◆ If you want to support the Yoga Teachers' call for change - take action!
- ◆ Share, amplify, ask questions!



#WEWILLNOTBESILENCED

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**WHAT CHANGES
DO YOU
WANT TO SEE?**



”

I want to give a voice to people who have suffered sexual harassment in yoga settings and in all industries. I want silencing and secrecy to become things of the past.

I want people to know how organisations can manipulate and harm others by mis-representing yoga. My yoga is mine, my belief is mine, no one should think they can make it about them or use it for their agenda...

”

...I want all people to feel, and be, safe practicing and teaching yoga. I'd love an Anti Sexual Harassment policy and code of conduct to be on the wall in all yoga venues, so that others can be better informed and protected than I was.

- Miranda

Demand #1

We need every venue to
have a clear, visible
sexual harassment policy

”

I want someone to take responsibility
for this.

I want it to be a clear process for
someone who has gone through this
kind of thing

.

I want all people to receive better
education on how they might hold a
power advantage over someone else,
and take responsibility for it.

- Femke

The background of the slide is a photograph of a wooden floor. There are several blue mats laid out on the floor, and the legs of metal chairs are visible, suggesting a classroom or meeting room setting.

Demand #2

We need the awarding bodies to make trainings on consent and sexual harassment mandatory.



Pedagogical relationships should come with certain responsibilities. Students' education should not be derailed by teachers' romantic and sexual appetite.

The yoga industry, including teacher trainings, should centralise boundaries between teacher/student - as is found in psychotherapy training.

- Gillian

Demand #3

We need the awarding bodies and membership organisations to implement clear reporting mechanisms, so when something happens we have somewhere to turn.



Accountability

Clear reporting structures

Better awareness of rights and
access to legal support where
needed

Collective strength and power

To feel safe

- Laura

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Call to Action



CN: sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual violence

It has taken 20 years for me to talk about it publicly. At the time I saw it as just a 'relationship gone wrong', but I now see that he was my teacher, and also my employer and that this relationship was abusive.

GILLIAN

It seems every angle gets blocked, puts the victim at risk, and/or protects the offender. ...Who takes responsibility for this?

FEMKE

I thought I was imagining it.

ANONYMOUS



A bright, minimalist room with white walls, two windows, and a potted plant. The room is empty except for a large red rounded rectangle in the center containing text.

**Does your place of
work/practice have a
clear, visible SH policy?**

- Download a
poster and policy
and email them



I thought about reporting the sexual harassment I received from a BWY Teacher to the BWY and even discussed with the perpetrator what would happen if I did.

He told me nothing would happen, no one would be interested. When I looked at the BWY website and could find no clear avenues to report, I was led to believe that he was right and this wasn't something that would be taken seriously.

- ANONYMOUS

**Are you a member of
IYN, BWY or YA?**

- Use our template letter and demand clear reporting mechanisms





We're still at such early stages of our collectivising journey. The lessons are steep, the challenges great,

But then, we have this incredible strength, confidence and knowledge building within this group of survivors who are supporting each other and exploring every avenue possible to dismantle this current imbalance of power and in doing so beginning to collectively realise the safety and dignity we deserve, and have always deserved.

- Laura



**Are you eligible to be a
member of the Yoga
Teachers Union?**

- Join
- Organise for
#SaferYogaSpaces

it filled me with hope that finally we
can actually do something about this.
And I feel safe now because of the
strength in numbers

SUPI

Organising around the
issue of sexual
harassment and respect
at work has not been
easy but it has been
empowering

GEORGIE

The YTU has been the first
glimmer of hope. I hope that
by sharing testimonies,
education and **by**
organising, we can put an
end to a culture of abuse
in our industry as a whole.

ELISE



I want all people to receive better education on what these power dynamics feel like when you're in it, and how to assertively remove yourself from unsafe relationships early on.

FEMKE

Organising around these issues feels empowering. So many of us have our voices silenced, or silence ourselves, in different ways.

We are all powerful change-makers and we all deserve to be heard.

MIRANDA

As a survivor...taking action and working towards change is part of the healing process.

ANONYMOUS





**We, the workers, ARE the
Union
Add your voice
AGM on 28th July**

