

## **A YOUNG WOMAN'S CRY FOR HELP**

This powerful skit shows how hard it might be for a youth experiencing dating violence or abuse in a relationship to get help.

Although abuse can happen to girls and boys, this skit is based on a young woman's experience. She turns to many people, but they do not understand the abuse or know how to help her.

Eventually, the skit shows us how things could turn out differently if everybody recognized abuse and could suggest ways to end it. This skit was adapted by the Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick for the New Brunswick Silent Witness Project from an educational play of the same name.

The NB Silent Witness Committee encourages youth, and those who work with them to freely use and/or adapt the play and present it in their own schools or communities.

Adapted  
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# **Skit Instructions**

## **Materials**

- Script
- 11 White Bed-sheets
- 11 Index Cards in two sets - Scenario #1 and Scenario #2 (use different coloured cards)

## **Roles**

- Narrator (This may be a youth)
- Youth to be Jane – (this person goes under 11 sheets – so they can't be claustrophobic!)
- 2 people to place sheets on Jane. (Note: One sheet goes on Jane every time someone reads a card from the first set of Scenario cards. Later, one sheet is taken off Jane every time someone reads a card from the second set of Scenario Cards.)
- 11 volunteers from the audience to read the Scenario Cards #1.
- 11 volunteers from the audience to read the Scenario Cards #2.

## **Getting Started**

### **Hand out first set of Scenario Cards to People in the Audience**

- The Narrator should explain to the audience that the play is interactive and you need volunteers from the audience to read some scenario cards.
  - Ask the Audience for 11 volunteers readers
  - You may ask them to raise their hand – or just have the students circulate in the audience handing out cards.
  - When it is time to read the cards, ask the volunteers to please stand to read theirs
  - The person playing Jane should sit on the chair with two young people on either side
  - When the skit is about to start, ask the audience not to talk during the skit
  - Explain to the audience that this play can bring on strong emotions and that if anyone wishes to speak to a counselor or a teacher afterwards, there are people available.
- (The Narrator can explain these things or another person introducing the skit)**

## **Performing the Skit**

### **PART I – audience hears about Jane and Kevin's story**

#### **Narrator Reads the Script**

- The Narrator starts to read the script – the story of Jane and Kevin
- At the appropriate times, the Narrator asks the volunteer from the audience to read the scenario card (cards #1 through #11).
- As each card is read, place a sheet over the female youth who represents Jane. Those placing the sheets should whisper to “Jane” periodically to see if she is okay and reassure her that you are looking out for her.

## **BETWEEN PART I & PART II – after all the sheets are on Jane**

### **Narrator Interacts with Audience**

The Narrator should now ask the audience questions about what they have just seen. Let people shout out answers or point to people who have raised their hands. For example,

- What do you remember about the young woman under the sheets?
- What did she look like?
- How do you think she is feeling?
- Do you think she can hear people?
- Do you think it's lonely or frightening under there?
- Is that how somebody might really feel if they were being abused?

The Narrator should explain that although each young woman's experience and situation may be different, people who experience abuse share many experiences such as feeling alone, confused, and isolated. Many cannot find somebody who can help them or explain the abuse. The sheets represent the effects of the abuse over time. You can see that we have lost track of the young woman.

## **PART II – Second Set of Scenario Cards for a Positive Outcome**

- Narrator begins by asking the audience what would happen if everyone involved in the situation acted accordingly in the Jane and Kevin.
- Narrator asks for volunteers in the audience to read Scenario #2 cards from #1 through to #11. Helpers will hand out the cards to the audience.
- After each card is read, the helpers will remove a sheet from the young woman – Jane.

## **AFTER THE SKIT – HAVE A DISCUSSION**

- Narrator can ask "Jane" questions. E.g. "How did you feel during the skit? The person who was under the sheets will explain what it was like (hot, lonely, hard to breath or hear, etc)
- Ask the audience what they were feeling?
- Ask if they have questions, comments or suggestions for dealing with similar situations.
- Introduce the Youth who have performed the sit
- Give information, statistics on dating violence
- Create awareness of ways to help
- Distribute any handouts, etc.

## SCRIPT - SCENARIO #1

### NARRATOR

Jane and Kevin have been dating for a month. Both are high school students in a small town in New Brunswick. Jane is 15, a Grade 10 student, and Kevin is 17 and in Grade 11. Jane is pretty and popular. She is well liked by other students. She is very active in school activities and gets high marks. Kevin comes from a well-off family - his father is a doctor and his mother is a homemaker. He is the captain of the high school hockey team and is also very popular. Kevin is Jane's first boyfriend, and he makes her feel special. He cares about her and buys her gifts. So far, they have been very happy together.

One day, they are eating lunch with some friends in the school cafeteria. They start talking about the upcoming student council elections. A girl named Courtney is running against the current vice-president, Rob, for the position of President.

“What a laugh” Kevin comments. “Does she really think she'll get elected, running against a guy? Ha, and even if she did get elected, she'd quit after a few weeks. She could never handle it, especially during **that** time of the month!” A few guys at the table laugh. “But I might vote for her,” continues Kevin, “she's pretty hot.” The guys laugh some more and slap Kevin on the back.

Jane feels a little offended by these comments. “Why wouldn't a girl make a good president?” she says to Kevin. “I think Courtney is just as capable as Rob, if not more so. And her sex has nothing to do with politics.” A few of the girls giggle and Jane smiles to herself.

“You don't know what you're talking about, Jane,” Kevin quickly snaps. “And let me guess, you're going to run for vice?” he laughs sarcastically.

“Well actually, I was thinking about it,” she tells him. Jane's friend Amanda says that she thinks Jane would make a great vice-president.

”Are you crazy?” accuses Kevin. “No offence, Jane, but I don't think a girl would stand a chance – you know you'd be running against the best goalie on my hockey team.”

After lunch, Jane feels uncertain and asks her friends if she should still run for vice-president.

**Card # 1 – Jane’s friends**

Jane’s friends tell her they think that maybe Kevin is right. They tell her to listen to her boyfriend and not do anything that might hurt her relationship.

The next weekend, Kevin decides to take Jane to the movies. Kevin arrives to pick her up a half an hour late and when she comes to the door, he starts making negative comments about the way she looks.

“What’s with the extra make-up? You trying to impress another guy?” he asks.

Jane tells him that he is the only guy she wants to impress.

At the theatre they run into some of Kevin’s friends and decide to go over and sit with them. After the movie, Kevin accuses Jane of flirting with one of them during the movie. Jane laughs and tells him that it’s not true. Kevin suddenly grabs her by the shoulders and pushes her up against his car. “You’d better not be lying to me, Jane! If I ever catch you hitting on another guy we’re through!”

Jane tries to pull his hands off of her. She tells him that she barely talked to his friend. “Just shut up,” Kevin yells. “You know, you’re lucky I go out with you at all. You’re such a slut.” He lets her go, and they get into his car and leave.

Kevin’s friend Sarah is watching nearby and she decides to give Jane a call to ask what happened. Jane explains that it was just a mistake. “Kevin thought I was flirting with one of his friends, and he just overreacted a little.”

**Card # 2 – Sarah**

Sarah tells Jane that guys are like that, especially Kevin, and they are always overprotective of their girlfriends. She should be careful about how she acts around him and his friends and not give him any reason to be jealous.

The next day, Kevin shows up at Jane’s house with her favorite chocolate bar. He apologizes for yelling at her the night before and says it’s only because he likes her so much, and the thought of losing her to another guy scares him. Jane accepts his apology.

Kevin says that she should come over to his house on Saturday night so they can watch a movie together alone. Jane tells him she has already made plans with some of her friends.

“We never get to spend any time alone,” Kevin complains. “You can see your friends anytime. I’m your boyfriend and I need you more than they do.”

Jane replies that she hasn’t done anything with her friends for weeks, and they’d like to do something with her.

“If they won’t let you see your boyfriend they’re not your real friends” pouts Kevin. “They’re just selfish.” So Jane tells her friends that she’s too busy to meet up with them and instead watches a movie with Kevin on Saturday night.

**Card # 3 – Jane’s friends**

Jane’s friends are upset that she doesn’t seem to spend time with them anymore. Some of them think about telling Jane that just because she has a boyfriend she can still do things with other people but they don’t want to pry and decide not to get involved in Jane’s business.

The next week, Jane stays after school to work with a study group because she plans on entering a provincial math competition. She is supposed to meet Kevin at 4 o’clock but she loses track of time and is 15 minutes late. When she meets Kevin at the front doors, he is very angry. He grabs her arm and pulls her into his car. “Why are you so late?” he yells. “Did you forget you were meeting me? You’ll never win that stupid math competition anyway, so don’t keep me waiting again.”

“I just lost track of time” cries Jane. “You know I love math and my parents would be so proud if I did well in the competition.” Kevin grabs her arm again and begins to twist it, saying, “Don’t do that to me again”.

“You’re hurting me!” cries Jane. Kevin quickly lets go and apologizes.

“I didn’t mean to hurt you. You know how much you mean to me Jane.”

When Jane goes home that night she tells her mother that she has decided not to enter the math competition. Her mother says that’s her decision. She notices the bruise on Jane’s arm.

**Card # 4 – Jane’s mother**

Jane’s mother doesn’t question her decision not to enter the math competition. But she has become aware that Kevin seems to be controlling Jane and she is worried about the bruises she has been seeing on Jane. She is about to discuss this with Jane when her pager starts buzzing and she has to rush off to work.

A few days later Jane wears a short skirt to school. When Kevin sees her in the hall he shouts, “I told you not to wear sleazy clothes!”. Jane explains that her mother did a laundry that morning and she had nothing else to wear.

But Kevin is furious and he starts calling Jane names. By this time, quite a crowd has gathered around. Jane is in tears and embarrassed that everyone is watching. She tries to calm down Kevin. “It’s ok. I can wear my jacket over my skirt. There, see, its fine, I’m sorry.”

For the rest of the day Jane wears her jacket wrapped around her waist. She can’t understand why Kevin gets so upset sometimes since he’s usually such a great boyfriend. But the littlest things throw him off. Jane feels it must be her fault and that things will change if she tries harder to be a better girlfriend.

But the only person changing is Jane. She stops hanging out after school and getting involved in activities. She hardly ever does things with her friends any more. She doesn’t smile like she used to and she looks distracted and nervous at school. And she is always trying to hide small bruises on her arms and face.

Her best friend Amanda has had enough and she decides to talk to Jane and get to the bottom of this. But she’s shy and decides she needs help, so she turns to their other friends.

**Card # 5 – Jane’s Best Friend Amanda**

Amanda tells her friends that she thinks something is wrong with Kevin and Jane’s relationship and that they should do something or tell someone. But her friends are concerned that they will embarrass Kevin if they say anything. He’s a star athlete and everyone in the school looks up to him. They tell her that Jane should feel lucky to be with him.

Another month passes and Jane is spending all her free time with Kevin. She stops thinking about her friends, her family or doing well in school. All she seems to care about is making Kevin happy and keeping him calm.

But no matter how hard she tries, Kevin only becomes more possessive and controlling. He is always putting her down - even in front of his friends. When he thinks she's not listening to him, he grabs or slaps her and Jane is always covered in small bruises. She tries to hide them, but lately her friends are giving her funny looks when she makes up excuses for what happened. At school, Jane notices a poster on the wall about Dating Violence and decides that maybe she should talk to the school counselor for advice about her relationship with Kevin.

**Card # 6 – School counselor**

Jane goes to speak with the school counselor. She explains that she really likes Kevin, but she's finding it hard to make him happy. The counselor doesn't seem to be paying attention. Jane is about to tell her about the abuse but the counselor interrupts her and says her that teenagers go through rough times and that she should just work harder at getting along with Kevin.

A couple of weeks later, Kevin's friend tells him that he saw Jane visit the school counselor. Kevin decides that maybe he should keep a closer eye on Jane so he starts following her around the school. He makes her tell him where she's going to be and who she's going to be with at all times. One day after class, Kevin sees Jane in a classroom with another student, Joe, and they are laughing. Kevin calls her into the hall and accuses her of being a slut. He slaps her across the face so hard that Jane is knocked to the floor.

**Card # 7 – Joe – Classmate**

Joe sees what happened and he knows that something is not right. He feels that he should go and get help but he's scared of Kevin. Jane is his friend but Kevin is the captain of the hockey team and might hurt him if he says anything. Joe decides to leave and not say a word.

Later that week, Kevin apologizes for hitting Jane and promises her that he'll never do it again. He tells her that he loves her, and he doesn't want to lose her. By now, Jane would like to break up with Kevin but she is scared about how he will react. She feels completely trapped and helpless.



That evening, Kevin and Jane stop at the store and Jane waits in the parking lot while Kevin runs in to buy a soda. While she is standing there, her neighbour Billy walks by and asks her what's up. Jane knows that Kevin will not be happy to see her talking to a guy and she tells Billy she can't talk right then. But it's too late. Kevin is coming out of the store and he sees the two of them together. He flies into a rage.

He screams at Jane, "Every time I turn my back you're screwing around on me!" He grabs her hand and twists her arm, turning and pulling her towards the car.

Jane screams in pain as she feels her wrist crack. Kevin realizes that he has injured her. One look at her swollen wrist tells them both that she needs to go to the hospital. On the way to the hospital, Kevin tells her that he'll do all the talking.

"I love you Jane, I just lost my temper. This was just an accident but if people find out I'll be kicked off the hockey team so shut your mouth and don't say a word."

At the emergency room, a nurse examines Jane. "You'll need an x-ray but it looks like your wrist is broken. How did this happen?" she asks. Before Jane can say a word, Kevin jumps in, "She tripped while going down the stairs and I grabbed her hand to stop her fall, but she fell anyway" The nurse looks skeptical.

"Is that what happened, Jane?" the nurse asks. Jane glances at Kevin and then answers "Yea, I'm such a klutz!". The nurse says she'll get the doctor.

Kevin has to leave for a hockey practice, but he catches Jane's eye as he heads out of the room and shakes his head, mouthing the words, "Keep your mouth shut".

The doctor eventually examines Jane's wrist and orders an x-ray. It's broken and she'll be in a cast for six weeks. He has several other patients waiting to see him, so he doesn't have much time to talk to Jane. Neither the nurse nor the doctor have any training in family violence and although they think that there may be more to this story than Jane is letting on, they are not sure what they can do to

**Card # 8 - The nurse**

The nurse calls Jane's parents and tells them she broke her wrist. She explains that Kevin brought her to the hospital, but he had to leave and Jane needs a ride home. Despite her suspicions, the nurse does not mention the possibility of dating violence. The nurse says that Jane fell and hurt herself, nothing more. She tells them they can wait to talk to the doctor.

Once the cast is on, Jane's parents decide not to wait. On the drive home, Jane's mother asks her if she really fell down the stairs and Kevin merely tried to help. Afraid of how Kevin would act if she tells the truth and not wanting to get him in trouble, Jane sticks to the story.

Her mother isn't convinced and once Jane goes to bed she shares her concerns with her husband. "I think there's something going on with Kevin. He seems controlling and I think his behaviour is very aggressive. I wonder whether he hurt Jane? I think we should do something."

**Card # 9 - Jane's father**

Jane's father doesn't know Kevin but he's friends with his father and they are on the same curling team. He has heard that Kevin is a good kid and he doesn't believe Kevin would hurt Jane on purpose. Maybe they were just roughhousing – you know boys will be boys. It's perfectly normal. Jane's mother decides if her husband is not worried, then she shouldn't worry either.

A few weekends later, Jane and Kevin are alone together at his house.

"It's been six months Jane. You know I love you, you know I want you." said Kevin.

Jane knew this moment was coming and she was dreading it. She knew she wasn't ready to be intimate and she had told Kevin that.

"You're my girlfriend. If you love me you'd do this Jane. You know I love you. What more do you want. Things will be so much better afterwards" pleads Kevin.

Although she is afraid that he will fly into a rage, Jane tells him again that she is not ready to have sex. But Kevin pins her to the couch and forces her to have sex with him anyway.

Jane feels angry, confused and guilty that she couldn't stop Kevin but she decides not to tell Amanda or any of her girl friends. She is afraid of what they will think of her. She decides to call her cousin Robin who is at university. She will be able to give her advice.

**Card # 10 – Cousin (Robin)**

Robin tells Jane that boys are like that – they expect their girlfriends to keep them happy. She tells Jane not to make this into a big deal. Kevin obviously loves her. Just make sure you don't get pregnant she warns.

Over the next few months, Kevin's behaviour becomes even worse. He puts Jane down all the time, pushes her around and whenever they're alone he pressures her to have sex. One day, Jane tells him that it's over. Kevin gets really mad and pushes her into a wall. "You can't leave me! You can't break up with me? No one else will ever go out with you Everyone knows you're such a little slut!" he screams.

Sobbing, Jane runs home and tells her parents everything: the abuse, the insults, the injuries and Kevin forcing her to have sex. Her parents are shocked. They can't believe that this has been going on right under their noses.

**Card # 11 – Jane's Parents**

Jane's parents feel humiliated. Although Jane wants them to call the police, they are embarrassed that this happened to their family. What will their friends and neighbours think about them. They tell Jane that she did the right thing breaking up with Kevin and that they should all put this behind them.

## **BETWEEN PART I AND PART II**

**Before starting Scenario #2, talk to the audience. Can they describe the girl under the sheets? See the questions set out in the instructions for some more suggestions.**

### **SCRIPT - SCENARIO #2**

#### **NARRATOR**

What would happen if everyone involved in this situation knew the dynamics of dating violence and acted appropriately? Let's see how friends, family, counsellors and health care providers could create a more positive outcome for Jane and Kevin.

**Narrator: Ask volunteers to read the following cards, one after another:**

#### Card # 1 - Jane's friends

When Jane talks to her friends about what Kevin said at lunch, they tell her she shouldn't listen to his sexist comments and that she should run for vice-president. Jane agrees, and says she'll run for the position whether Kevin supports her or not. Her friends agree with Jane and tell her that Kevin isn't a very supportive boyfriend.

#### Card # 2 - Sarah

After the movie, Sarah tells Jane that Kevin had no right to grab her and yell at her like he did. He had no reason to be so jealous, but more importantly no one has the right to lay their hands on her despite whether they think they have a reason. Even though Sarah is friends with Kevin she says that he was completely out of line.

#### Card # 3 - Jane's friends

Jane's friends tell her that it is important to spend time with other people, not just with Kevin all the time. Kevin should not make her feel guilty for wanting to see her friends. If Kevin does not understand that Jane needs time with her other friends, she should reconsider her relationship.

Card # 4 - Jane's mother

Jane's mother acts on her concerns and talks to Jane about what is happening. She reassures Jane that she can trust her and tell her anything. Once she is aware how controlling Kevin is, she encourages Jane to break up with him.

Card # 5 – Amanda - Jane's Best Friend

When Amanda's friends try to convince her not to talk to Jane, she tells them that friends should support one another. Jane is clearly in a very unhealthy relationship. Amanda talks to Jane and tells her that the way Kevin is treating her is wrong, and that it's having a negative impact on her as a person. She tells her that she deserves a boyfriend who will treat her with respect.

Card # 6 - School counselor

The school counselor really listens to Jane and lets her explain herself fully before assuming this is just teenage drama. Once she discovers there is a problem she informs the principal, Jane's parents, and Kevin's parents. The principal talks to the parents and calls in the police.

Card # 7 – Joe - Classmate

Joe doesn't try to confront Kevin, but he goes directly to the principal's office and explains what is happening. The principal immediately heads down the hall to help Jane. He can see that she has been assaulted and he calls the police and both sets of parents.

#### Card # 8 - The nurse

The nurse has had family violence training and she recognizes the signs of an abusive dating relationship. She realizes that it is her duty to inform the appropriate people despite Jane's protests that nothing is wrong. She and the doctor tell Jane's parents of their suspicions. Because Jane is only 15, they also contact child protection.

#### Card # 9 - Jane's father

When Jane's mother tells her father that she suspects Kevin is mistreating Jane, he takes it very seriously. He encourages Jane to open up about what is happening. He assures her that they both love and support her very much and they are not disappointed in her. She has done nothing wrong. Even though Kevin's father is a friend, he does not make excuses for Kevin's behaviour.

#### Card # 10 – Robin – Jane's Cousin

Robin is glad that her young cousin has confided in her. She recalls the presentation that she at orientation about dating violence. She recognizes that Jane has been sexually assaulted by her boyfriend and that the relationship is one of control and abuse. She tells Jane that it is not her fault and encourages her to talk to her parents and to call the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre for advice and support.

#### Card # 11 – Jane's Parents

Jane's parents believe her when she tells that Kevin has been forcing her to have sex. Despite Jane's guilt about staying with Kevin for the past few months, they understand that she was afraid and felt trapped. They act immediately by contacting the police. Jane and her safety come before their professional and social relationships.