

# SAFER WOMEN

## A Handbook For The Safety of LBTQ Women



Queer women's safety and security handbook was created for the LBTQ womxn in Nigeria.

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THE INITIATIVE FOR  
EQUAL RIGHTS



Hey Sugar...

Hey yourself...

What are you doing today? Would you like to have a drink or more with me at Jinx Bar? Is 8pm good by you?

Yes, 8pm is great. See you!

Woohoo! I have a date!!!

Good for you. I hope you've taken the right precautions.



## Physical meetings are fun and exciting. Discovering new places and activities to do in those places with someone new is great. However, physically meeting new folks can be scary especially when you live in a homophobic environment.

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**If you decide to meet up with your bae-in faith, here are a few security tips to consider before meeting folks for the first time.**

- Make sure you are meeting in a public place and during the daytime. Always insist on meeting in a neutral place. Ask your trusted friends and network about the place ahead of your meeting.
- Make sure your phone is fully charged or have a power bank as back up before leaving your house.
- Give your trusted friend the full name, phone number and address of the person you're going to meet. It's okay to ask them for their full name and details if you don't have it. Don't worry, this will not ruin the vibe (wink). Explain to your date that you prioritize your safety and they should too, and be ready to provide them with your details when they request for it.
- Turn on your phone's location services, then share your live location with a trusted friend. WhatsApp location share and Google map location service can be used to locate you if something goes wrong
- When you get to the scheduled location, be aware of your environment and surroundings.
- Identify entry and exit points once you visit any location, including offices, hotels, motels, restaurants, and bars.
- If you people end up in a hotel room, remember to double lock your door from inside. However, DO NOT go to a hotel room unless you want and choose to. Remember CONSENT is SEXY!
- Always have an emergency number of a trusted person on you. This number can be the number of a family member, a close friend or colleague. The number should be memorized in case you lose your device. Ensure your emergency contact knows where to access urgent help if you need one.
- Wear smart outfits in case you have to run.

If you get there and figure out the person you went to visit is not who they claim to be, then use the following tips to get yourself out of the location FAST!

- **Remain calm and keep your attention on them.** Let them know you are interested in what they have to say while taking note of identifying features that will help the authorities locate the attacker.
- **Listen carefully,** focus your attention on the person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say. This is supposed to keep them talking.
- **Speak simply, slowly, quietly, and confidently.** Remain conscious of how you are delivering your words.
- **Do NOT confront or challenge them** as this might make them angry and violent, except you have some form of fight training.
- **Use delay tactics and silence as a calming tool.** For instance, you can choose to bring up the things you both bonded on while you were chatting; you can feign sick and excuse yourself to the restroom. Use this time to find a clear path to the exit or search for a friendly face who may intervene.

Given the level of homophobia and transphobia in Nigeria, do not easily trust people you do not know.

**Remember YOU are your own security! Once you see an opportunity to leave, take it and run.**

**DO NOT LOOK BACK!!!**



### Here are a few tips and things you can do if you're facing your attacker:

- Make a scene, scream as loud as possible. Do not be afraid to scream on top of your voice shouting HELP!! Feel free to do so in any language you think the bystanders will understand.
- If the attacker is pulling or dragging you, fall to the ground and roll.
- Keep trying to tell your story to bystanders. Single out anyone with a camera and keep speaking into/towards the camera. The video might just be your saving grace.
- If the attacker grabs your bag, purse, or other belongings, DO NOT resist. Throw the item to the ground several feet away from the thief and run in the opposite direction, screaming.
- Run to the nearest safe place, a safe office, or an open store.
- Call the one of the LGBTQI+ organization immediately and report the incident.
- In the case of stolen IDs and documents, make an official report to the authorities.

**NEVER EVER chase a thief.**



You can probably recognise the obvious signs of mental and emotional abuse. However, when we are in the centre of it all, it can be easy to miss the undertones of an abusive behaviour.

**Psychological abuse involves a person's attempts to hurt, manipulate, frighten, control, or isolate you. It's the deliberate use of words and non-physical actions and the persistence in these behaviours. The abuser could be your romantic partner, your business partner, your parent, or a caretaker.**

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**No matter who the abuser is and your relationship with them, you don't deserve it and it's not your fault. Here are a few signs of abuse you should look out for:**

**Calls you names.** They will always call you derogatory names or use awful words on you, sometimes they call you derogatory pet names and claim that's their language.

**Assassinates your character.** They may try to insinuate that you're not good enough and pick offense whatever you try to do something nice for them.

**Shouts at you.** Abusive people sometimes shout, scream, and swear at you to make you feel small and intimidated. This might be accompanied by throwing things and/or fist pounding.

You do not have to wait for all these to happen, once you notice any of these signs, it's time to put yourself first and protect your mental health.

**Publicly embarrasses you.** They may pick fights with you in public and cause a scene that makes you look like the bad person. Sometimes, they expose your secrets and make fun of your shortcomings in public.

**Dismisses your concerns.** When you express concerns about things important to you, they say it's not important or "it's not that deep". (Sigh)

**Insults your appearance.** They always tell you that your outfit is ugly and may insist you change it, or that your gender expression is "too much" for them so you should "tone it down".

**Belittles your accomplishments.** Your abuser will most likely tell you that your achievements mean nothing. They may even imply that your job is not as important as theirs or at all.

**Crush your interests.** They may convince you that your hobby is childish, and you shouldn't be engaging in such activities. They can claim it's a waste of money or insinuate that you are out of your league.

**Pushes your buttons.** They keep doing things that annoy you even when you have expressed severally that you do not appreciate that. They find every opportunity to bring it up just to see your reaction.

Sometimes, the abuser's controlling behaviour comes off as sweet in the beginning when they are in your business checking up and checking in to see what you're up to or where you are.

**However, after a while, you begin to realise that they need that information to control you. Here's a few controlling abusive behaviours to look out for:**

**Constantly threatens you** They constantly threaten to leave and end the relationship at every misunderstanding and chance they get. They make you believe they are doing you a favour by being with you and threaten to harm themselves if you try to leave them.

**Monitoring your whereabouts.** They always want to know where you are and insist that you respond to their calls or texts immediately. Sometimes, they may show up just to see if you're where you're supposed to be.

**Spying on your digital activities.** They might check your Instagram, TIKTOK, Twitter and other social media activities. They police your activities especially your comments. Sometimes they may check your texts, and call log. They may even demand your passwords.

**Making solo decisions.** They may make important decisions about your lives without consulting you or considering your feelings and expect you go along with them.

**Financially control you.** They may use money as a controlling tool especially if you are not financially independent. They may even threaten to take back things they bought for you.

**Silent treatments.** When they tell you to do something and you do otherwise, they punish you with silent treatment and/or malice.

**Treat you like a child.** They tell you what to wear, what and how much to eat and drink, or which friends you can keep. They will consistently question your ability to make decisions so that you start to depend on them to decide for you.

**Pitch others against you.** Your abusers will most likely report you to everybody and claim to be your victim. They actively work to turn everyone against you and make them think you're crazy and inconsiderate.



**Often, abusers will want to cut you off from your support system. They can do this by doing the following**

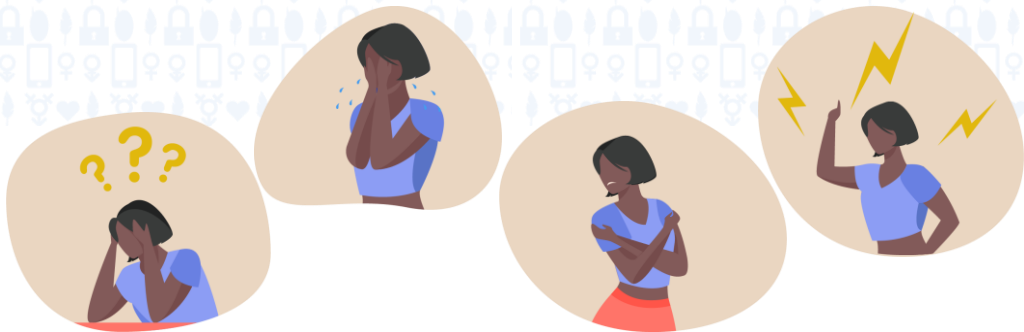
**Keep you from socializing.** Whenever you have plans to go out without them, they come up with a distraction or beg you not to go or convince you your friends don't really like you the way they do.

**Call you needy.** When you're down and reach out to them for support, they'll tell you you're too needy or that they are too busy to attend to you or accuse you of trying to manipulate them.


**Withhold affection.** They refuse to touch you, hold you or hug you. They may even refuse to have sex with you to punish you or to get you to do something.

**Come between you and your family.** They'll convince you to give your family members an excuse and not attend family functions.


**Dismiss or belittle your feelings.** Whenever you share your feelings, they'll say you're wrong to feel that way or that's not really what you feel at all. They may also see you hurt or crying and do nothing.








...WOW!! This sound like a lot of people's behaviour. Are you saying everyone is an abuser??



...Not at all, some of us were born into an abusive system and are not aware of their abusive behaviours. However, some people are aware of their abusive tendencies and refuse to unlearn such habits



...What do I do if I notice my partner is abusive?

If you're being physically, mentally, or emotionally abused, trust your instincts. Know that it isn't right, and you don't have to live this way. If you are scared of immediate physical violence, call your chosen family, trusted friends, or one of the listed organizations to take you away from that environment

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In addition, you should consider doing the following:

**Accept that the abuse is not your fault.** Don't try to save your abuser. You may want to help them, but they are unlikely to break this pattern without professional help. That's their responsibility and their journey to undertake.

**Exit the relationship or situationship.** Make it clear that it's over and don't look back. If possible, cut all ties. Decide that you won't respond or get sucked back into old patterns and stick to it.

**Start your healing process.** Give yourself time to heal. Speak to a professional who will help you through the process. Reach out to supportive friends and family members because you need all the support you can get and most importantly, you don't have to do it alone!

Your abuser might also try to control you through your digital platforms so, your digital security is also as important as your physical and psychosocial security. Securing your devices and your online activities will reduce the level of online threats you'll be exposed to.

### Use the following tips to secure your digital space

Secure all your devices and accounts with a strong password. Use at least 10 characters or more and combine alphabets, numbers, and special characters. Your password can also be a passphrase in your local dialect, that will be harder for intruders to guess.

Use PINs or Passphrase to lock your devices instead of pattern lock.

Do not use the same password across many platforms. If one of your account gets hacked, the others will be compromised.

Use a password manager to generate and store passwords. You can download KeePassX, KeePassXC or LastPass from their website or from your Android play store or Apple store.



Enable 2 factor authentication across all platforms. E.g., WhatsApp, Signal, Instagram, Facebook, Messenger, TikTok, Emails etc.

Make your accounts private so you can control who views your post. Make use of the close friend list across the social media platforms to share videos and pictures privately with select followers. Read up on the security features available to you and use them to suit your needs.

Remember to unfollow, block, or report inappropriate accounts.

If you notice any activity that you did not authorise in your account, change all your passwords immediately.

Your abuser might also try to control you through your digital platforms so, your digital security is also as important as your physical and psychosocial security. Securing your devices and your online activities will reduce the level of online threats you'll be exposed to.

Always verify a person's profile before you agree to initiate a conversation with them.

You should google them and ask your mutual friends about them. Try and verify their credibility through the various community networks.

Don't send unsolicited nudes and videos of you to people, as this amounts to harassment.

When people ask for your nudes and you want to share them, don't put your face or distinguishing features about you or your location in the picture.

Ensure you trust whom you send nudes to as, you can't control what people will do with them.




When people share their pictures, you can verify these pictures by uploading them on Google reverse image search or [www.tineye.com](http://www.tineye.com).

Do not share your confidential information with anyone online. This information can be your NIN, BVN, ATM pin, CVV, house address, family history etc. Your bank will NEVER ask you share this information through online mediums.

Do not put your financial information on sites that are not encrypted or have HTTPS enabled. Look out for the green padlock on the top left corner of your address bar on your browser.


Do not download attachment or click on files sent to you from untrusted sources, either via Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, or email.



...Okay, I will start by changing my password to a stronger one and make my account private. I have one more question?



...Ask away...



You know finding a safe space that queer women can hang out is hard. Women are not safe anywhere talk more of queer women in Nigeria. I guess I would like to know how to identify safe spaces where my queer friends and I can hang out?

## Identifying a safe space for queer women can seem impossible but here are a few tips on how you can navigate this.

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Make sure that it's a place where their service is not discriminatory. You can tell this by the attitude of the service staff when you are there.

Use your networks, ask your LBTQ friends to share queer friendly places they visit with you.

The beach is also a neutral place where queer women can hangout and feel safe. However, make sure you leave for home once it starts getting dark.

Most LGBTQ+ organizations like TIERS and ISHRAI have community spaces that you can hang out in. Find out from the organizations listed about their community space and how you can access it.

## Where can you get help?

There are a lot of non-governmental organizations who are ready to provide you with the help, support, or resources you may need. These organizations are LGBTIQ+ focused and have hotlines you can reach in cases of emergency or to handle violations

| ORGANISATIONS   | HANDLES   | HELPLINE   | STATE         |
|---|---|--|---------------|
| ISHRAI - Improved Sexual Health and Rights Advocacy Initiative    | @ishrai_n (Instagram)<br>@ishrainig (Twitter)             | 08156843504<br>08039663031                         | LAGOS         |
| AHRDI - Access to Health & Rights Development Initiative          | @ahrdinitiative (Instagram)                               | 09074611520<br>08138520093<br>07033466851          | LAGOS & BENIN |
| HAHA! - Hope Alive Initiative                                     |   | 08035970810<br>Bala Muhammed<br>Executive Director | BAUCHI        |
| ICARH - International Centre for Advocacy on the Rights to Health | @icarh_ng (Instagram & Twitter)                           | 08008437279  | ABUJA         |
| THEDI - The Total Health Empowerment and Development Initiative   | @thediNigeria (Instagram & Twitter)                       | 09065509238<br>07065858417                         | BENUE         |
| AGHI - Access Good Health Initiative                              | @aghinigeria (Instagram & Twitter)                        | 09027770808<br>08065187179                         | ENUGU         |
| WHER - Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative                 | @wher_initiative (Instagram)<br>@WHERinitiative (Twitter) | 08186457675<br>07038322298                         | ABUJA         |
| INCREASE  | @increse_nig  | 08065488417  | NIGER         |
| TIERs - The Initiative for Equal Rights                           | @tiersnigeria (Instagram & Twitter)                       | 07011472241<br>08146337128                         | LAGOS         |

## You can also access free mental health services from these organizations.

The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERs) is a Lagos-based NGO working to create a society where human rights are guaranteed regardless of status, identity, orientation, and affiliation. TIERs offers free and LGBTIQ+-affirming therapy sessions with our in-house clinical psychologist.

Visit [theinitiativeforequalrights.org/therapy](http://theinitiativeforequalrights.org/therapy), WhatsApp 08115984370 or email [therapy@initiative4equality.org](mailto:therapy@initiative4equality.org).

International Centre for Advocacy on Right to Health (ICARH), an Abuja-based NGO that promotes the human and health rights of sexual minorities, keep populations, people living with HIV/AIDs and other marginalized people in Nigeria. You can get free mental health counselling physically or by phone on Mondays – Fridays at 10am to 4pm.

Mail [therapy@icarh.org](mailto:therapy@icarh.org), or call their direct toll-free therapy line: 08008437279, or send HI to 08171144447 to access virtual counselling.

Improved Sexual Health and Rights Advocacy (ISHRAI) is a Lagos-based NGO working towards a discrimination-free society through economic empowerment, education, safe shelter, and gender-based violence response and prevention. ISHRAI offers free sessions with their psychologists on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Call 08156843504 to book a physical session or WhatsApp 08039663031 for a virtual session.

