

Flirting and harassment, where is the line?

FABIHA AFIFA

Cancel culture has many shortcomings, and one of them includes blurring the lines between flirting and harassment. Screenshots and unproven allegations can be posted at any time, and there always seems to be a mob of keyboard warriors ready to interpret situations differently.

How someone feels about a certain interaction they've had is valid and can't be questioned, but for the sake of fairness to both the accused as well as those who've gone through harassment, there should be clear baselines to separate flirting and sexual harassment.

The first one's quite obvious: consent. Flirting is consensual and conscious. Even when it's not too subtle, a flirt won't come across as demanding or like they expect you to respond positively, if at all. They'll also stop it the moment they are told no or if they sense any discomfort from the other side. Harassment, meanwhile, is obnoxiously persistent. No matter how many times or how directly they are refused, harassers don't stop, with many even thinking the receiver of their advances is acting coy.

Another factor to differentiate between flirting and harassment is power dynamics. This element is most commonly



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abused in professional settings. For example, it's usually difficult for a subordinate to say no to their boss' sexual advances. Similarly, amateurs in any industry are more likely to think they're obligated to take up on inappropriate offers from more established personnel to get a fair chance in the field.

A 2010 study conducted by Northwestern University found people in positions of power to be more likely to view reluctant consent – which is not consent – as

genuine sexual attraction. If anything, this teaches us the importance of being conscious of the other person's perspective when we approach them. We need to understand that being in a vulnerable position makes the concept of consent trickier and seemingly less safe for people.

Last but not least, flirting gives people the space to say no in the first place. In other words, there's a distinct line between being playful and downright inappropriate, and one should always

maintain that. Touching someone without their consent, sending unsolicited sexual texts and pictures, making crude comments – anyone who does one or more of these isn't a straightforward flirt, they're simply a harasser.

It's honestly disappointing. The differences between flirting and harassment aren't too confusing. They are simple and, dare I say, easy to figure out from instincts. But in a world so deeply imbalanced by gender inequality and unfair hierarchies, some find it difficult to tell if they're violating someone's space and some find it difficult to say their space is being violated.

With the rise of social media and cancel culture, the crisis has become even worse. In recent years, there's a herd mentality that often passes punishment without judging the full scenario. As a result, if there ever was a time to be aware of how flirting and harassment differ, it is now.

Reference:

Psychology Today (February 28, 2020). *How Flirting Can Become Harassment*.

Fabiha is secretly a Lannister noblewoman and Slytherin alum. Pledge your allegiance and soul to her at afjafabiha01@gmail.com

The youth needs to consume information in moderation

LAMIA KARIM

Information overload is the new vice of this century. In the age of information, unlimited access to news, content, and media is a priceless asset. Asset, or so young people are made to believe.

There is information about everything at our disposal. As a result, we are all expected to be well-read

individuals. Yet, why do we become overwhelmed when we try to fulfil this criterion?

The problem of feeling overwhelmed does not strike us as a problem at all. Instead, we register it as a personal drawback. The inability to stomach as much news about current affairs as possible is frowned upon. Under the

capitalist system, there is continual pressure to utilise every moment of our lives to make the resources available to us profitable.

Things that the advent of the internet did to the availability of data is more impactful compared to television or newspapers. And the effects of it are still very fresh.

Information as a resource is undoubtedly very valuable. A certain amount of exposure to the news is necessary. Naturally, it has developed into a social expectation to consume as much of it as possible. This is the reason we fail to identify it as an issue.

Does infinite resource equal infinite profit? Profit rears its ugly head when people eventually have to cope with debilitating confusion, anxiety and stress which results in delays in making decisions and evaluating information. Additionally, blaming oneself gives rise to feelings of hope-

lessness. We are entities with finite capabilities after all. Acknowledging the absurd nature of

this social expectation is the first step to fighting the issue.

So, how should we fight this monster? The key is intentional consumption. Mindless scrolling of YouTube shorts, Tiktok videos, and Instagram reels is the first thing that must be cut off significantly. The nature of the delivery of information there is designed to flood the mind rather than enrich it. That is only one example but all forms of media whether it be books, music, games or film can be mind-numbing when one overdoses on them.

In order to not feel like a scatterbrain, it is crucial to give ourselves time to digest all the information that we consume each day. Therefore, we should expose ourselves to it in a way so that we have spare time to stop and think. News should be read consciously. Doing a "brain dump" on a piece of paper is also very helpful in managing an overwhelmed state of mind. Above all, setting boundaries between one's sanity and the endless flood of content is what will save you from brain fog. As the wise man's words go, everything is healthy in moderation.

Lamia is currently very overwhelmed. Give her meditation tips and crystals at lamiaakarimxd@gmail.com

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