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# sexual violence prevention and response in the dance industry

An Informational Zine



Promoting Awareness | Victim Empowerment  
survivors.org  
shatteringthesilence.org  
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Baik n. kut kehidu masalah y ngan dunia masa-masa kerja yang membutuh yang kuat c Kemanc langsung sukses tid dalam me Kemandir sarnya dan oranc sel

# a bit about pave

"PAVE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit creating a world free from sexual violence and building communities to support survivors."

- PAVE "works both to prevent sexual assault and heal survivors through social advocacy, prevention education, and survivor support"



## a bit about pave

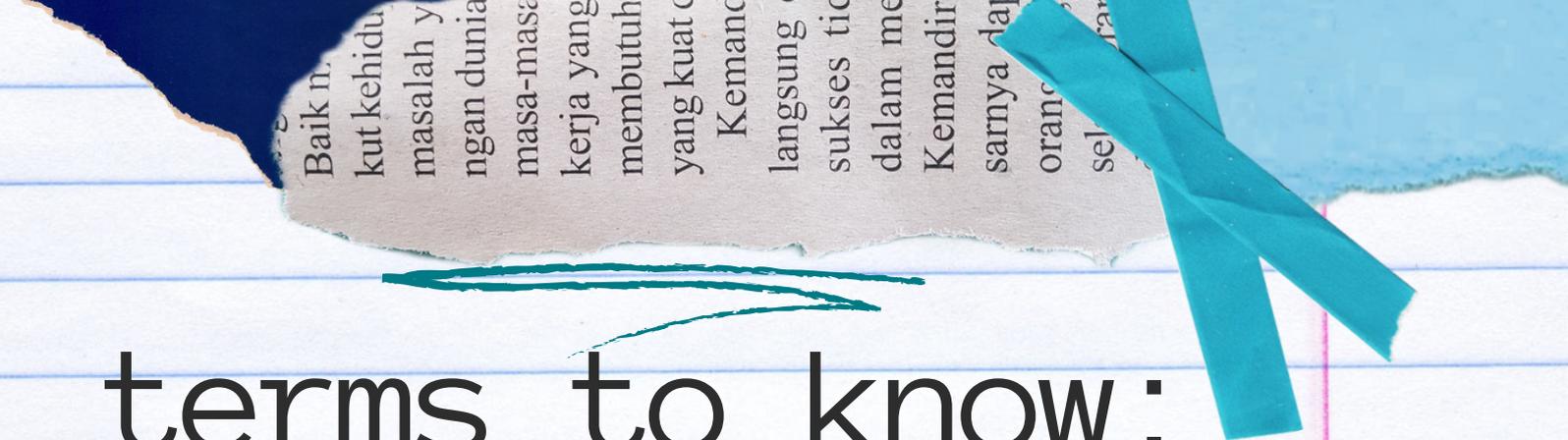
PAVE also runs a website called [Survivors.org](http://Survivors.org), which is dedicated to leading survivors to trauma-informed healing resources, including, but not limited to, counseling centers, legal assistance, and support groups.

PAVE is looking to expand this guide to include partnerships for survivors in the arts, including dance studios!

**Survivors.org**

Helping Survivors Thrive After Trauma





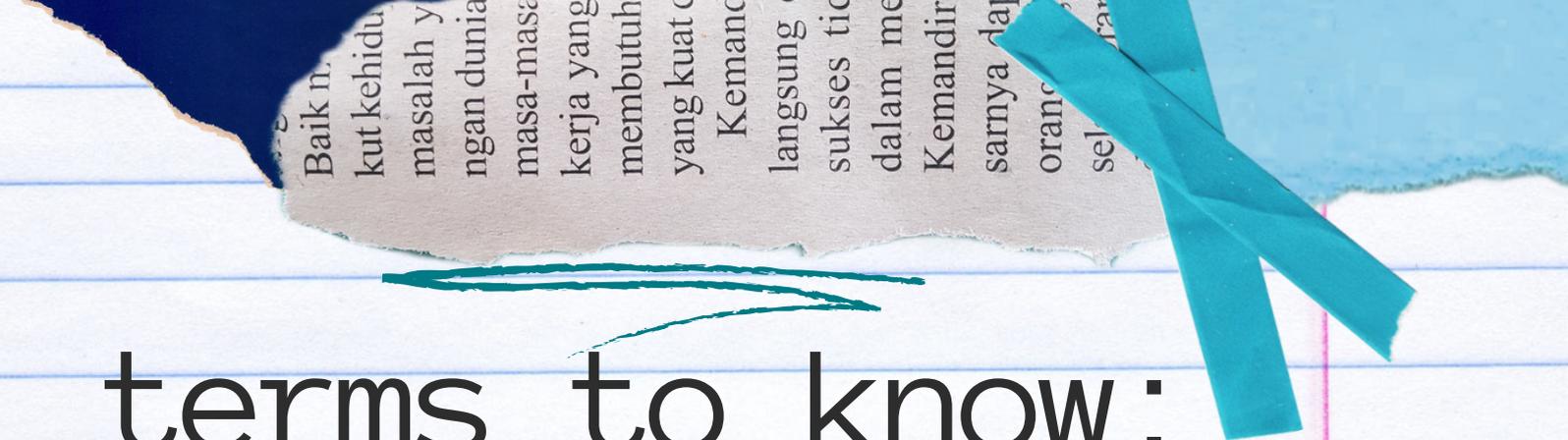
# terms to know:

Child Sexual Abuse: a wide range of physical or non-physical sexual behaviors that take place between a child and another child or adult.

Coercion: The act of using pressure, threats, alcohol or drugs, or force to engage in sexual activity with someone

Grooming: when a person gradually cultivates a trusting relationship with an individual of any age to abuse or exploit them with their participation.

The abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual.



# terms to know:

Sexual Assault: covers ALL non-consensual sexual contact

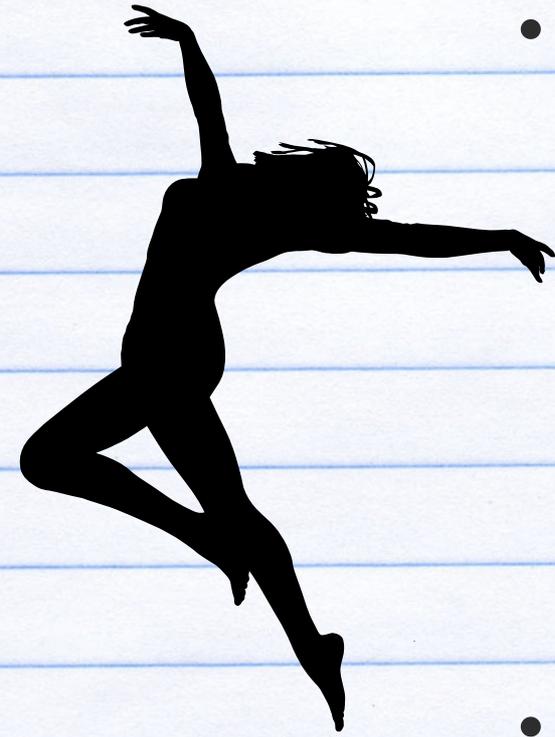
Sexual Harassment: Non-consensual sexual advances, favors, and other conduct of a sexual nature

Sexual Violence: an umbrella term for any kind of non-consensual sexual contact (physical or non-physical), behavior, or aggression

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# why are these topics important in the dance industry?

- Dance often acts as a contact sport, in which people may touch each other for alignment guidance, lifting, partner work, etc.
- Adults are often teaching people younger than them, including children. It is imperative that the power dynamic between teacher and student stays safe



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## why are these topics important in the dance industry?

- Sexual misconduct has been a recurring problem in the dance industry, affecting minors and adults.
- Allegations of adult dance teachers and choreographers taking advantage of younger dancers have made national news.
- Some studios have been hiring dance professionals with sexual violence allegations to work with their students, and it puts them in danger.

## how does grooming often happen?

1) Target the Victim perpetrators often target people they have easy access to who respond well to their attention.

2) Gain Trust perpetrators targeting children often try to seem like a "cool adult friend."

3) Play a Role perpetrator begins to play a role in victim's life. The victim is made to feel special and that they are lucky to be chosen as a confidant.

4) Isolate Victim victim becomes reliant on the relationship and begins to actively seek out the relationship.

5) Secrecy perpetrators give the illusion that the victim is responsible for the relationship and must keep it a secret.

6) Begin Exploitation established friendship manipulates victim into sexual violence or exploitation.

7) Control victim goes from being the "center of the universe" to being rejected by the abuser.

# What can grooming actually look like in the dance community?

Grooming can manifest in various ways in the dance community, such as...

- bestowing oversexualized choreography on students from a young age, thus normalizing age-inappropriate sexual behaviors
- making students wear revealing costumes under the guise of showcasing body lines

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# What can grooming actually look like in the dance community?

- Making unnecessary comments on students' bodies and appearance
  - Arranging students to receive guest choreography disregarding background checks
  - Teachers presenting authority to students in such a high degree that they do not feel comfortable voicing their needs
  - Competitions awarding choreography by alleged predators
- ...and more.

Watch PAVE's Webinar  
"Grooming 101" by Michelle Denault

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## How do aggressive dance environments contribute to this issue?

Aggressive instructional environments, even if the aggression is not sexual in nature, contribute to power dynamics that may lead to sexual assault and silence survivors. Aggression, including, but not limited to, frequent yelling, arrogance, antagonism, and lack of respect for students' boundaries, can cause students to not feel valued and makes them less likely to disclose important information to others about their health and safety, including sexual violence.

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## How do aggressive dance environments contribute to this issue?

Hyper-competitive dance environments can also perpetuate antagonistic power dynamics between students and teachers based on the value of winning no matter what.

This is not to say that dancers should not be disciplined and have rules for safety and technical progression in the classroom. Dancers should respect their teachers, but teachers also need to respect their students, as it is a two-way street.

# How can dance studios combat this issue?

## Support survivors

- If a student discloses that they may have experienced sexual misconduct, listen and believe them.
- Remind them that whatever occurred is not their fault.
- Practice active bystander intervention.
- Practice active listening.
- If you see behavior that suggests sexual misconduct or grooming, say something as soon as possible.

# How can dance studios combat this issue?

Make your studio a safe place for dancers.

- Ensure that those working with children have background checks, including in-house teachers and guest choreographers.

Take advantage of third-party safety training and education!

- Youth Protection Advocates in Dance
- Nonprofit Education and Advocacy for the Movement Arts
- Dance Education Equity Association
- Dance Masters of America

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## What do I say if someone discloses an experience of sexual violence?

Here are some important messages to convey:

- "This was not your fault."
- "How can I support you best?"
- "You are not alone."
- "I am glad you told me."

If this situation comes up with one of your dancers, do your best to take care of yourself as well, as finding out such information is emotionally taxing.

# What can your studio do with PAVE?

- Become a PAVE Affiliate
- Share PAVE's resources and Survivors.org with both dancers and parents at your studio.
- Take PAVE University's online modules--they are free, short courses about consent, survivor support, and bystander intervention.
- Continue the conversation with your studio community!
- Reach out to [lisa@pavingtheway.net](mailto:lisa@pavingtheway.net) if you are interested in learning more or partnering with PAVE!

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Learn more:

ShatteringTheSilence.  
org/SVPR-dance

Questions?

PAVE would love to answer any questions you may have about this initiative. If you have any questions or are interested in learning more about partnering with us, please contact [lisa@pavingtheway.net](mailto:lisa@pavingtheway.net).



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