

## Handling Conversations of a Sexual Nature

The number of conversations of a sexual nature seem to be increasing as culture supports a less biblical view of sex. These can be very sensitive and even embarrassing for both the volunteer and the seeker. As we see more and more men and women bringing issues of pornography, masturbation, extra-marital affairs and pre-marital sex to the conversation, we are reminded that a majority are coming with an appreciation that these things are wrong and desperately seeking help. In those cases, we do not need to spend a long period of time explaining God's perfect design for sex but rather need to help them approach these issues with honesty, transparency and accountability.

Conversations of this nature are often highly sensitive and emotional topics. We also often are speaking to someone who has never shared this information with anyone else. We unfortunately also may be speaking to someone that has a deeper issue and is not seeking help or Jesus Christ but some perverse enjoyment from such a conversation. This means we have to be that much more discerning about what is being said. We encourage you to look for and see the difference between someone broken, hurting and in need of help and someone pushing the bounds of common decency and respect.

The ministry never wants to put you in a situation where you are feeling manipulated or harassed.

Please know that you are in control of every conversation that you have. You should always be prepared to set clear boundaries and let the seeker know you are unwilling to continue if those boundaries are not respected. The first sign of any sexual harassment or sexually inappropriate language should be met with a strong response letting the seeker know that you will not engage or remain on line if they continue to use such language. You should never feel as if you are being held captive in an inappropriate conversation of any type. You can immediately end any conversation if it crosses the line of common decency.

Here are a few additional helpful tips for managing these conversations:

- Feel free to transfer someone of the opposite sex to a volunteer of the same sex if the topic requires or you simply believe it would be more appropriate.
- If you know you are speaking with someone under 18, be extra careful and encourage them to reach out to their parents, school counselor or youth leader for a more appropriate source of help.
- Remember that we have resources you can send to help those with specific sin issues like pornography. These reading plans can be very helpful in bringing change but they are a starting point and do not substitute for real accountability. We want you to encourage people to not just read the plan but do each step.
- Recognize that Satan likes to use shame and guilt to keep people buried in this type of sin. He wants us to try to manage our own way out of these sin issues and knows we are more likely to fail without the help and encouragement of others. Let seekers know this is a recipe for failure and being honest and transparent with someone in their life is necessary no matter how difficult that may be.

If a conversation crosses the line, then you can alert the ministry team through two different methods (**Flag Conversation** or **Block this User**). You will first still go through the normal steps of closing a conversation by selecting an outcome, adding topic tags and including comments where helpful. Before selecting **Save** and closing the record, you can also do two more things.

You will see two different drop-down menus available. The first is under the section **Flag Conversation**. You can click on that and select **For Review/Feedback** and this will send the ministry team an alert and copy of this conversation so we can see what occurred.

The second drop down can be found by clicking the down arrow/carrot at the top of the screen and the first option is **Block this User**. If you select this option then the IP address used to have that conversation will be blocked in Echo from chatting again for 24 hours. We review those blocked conversations to determine if a longer block is necessary. You can also send us an email or text message in those cases so we can act on those even more quickly.

We recognize that some of these conversations can be awkward. Our prayer is that you would approach them with a light touch and after listening well turn them back into how Jesus can help us live in a way that honors Him and is good for us. As with all types of conversations, the more you handle, the more equipped you will feel about engaging seekers. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions or desire to discuss this further.