Go Digital for SAAM 2025 Webinar

RECAP, RESOURCES & TOOLS

Part 1: Digital Bodily Autonomy

Because so many of us now live our personal, professional, and romantic lives online, our bodies exist in both physical and digital spaces. We routinely share images and videos of ourselves - some intimate, some not - either privately with friends, family, or partners, or publicly through social media. Once those images are shared, they don't exist solely in the virtual world; they become extensions of ourselves, and we have the right to protect them the same way we do our physical bodies.

This section introduces the concept of Digital Bodily Autonomy (DBA) as a comprehensive framework for education, prevention, and response to image-based sexual abuse and other forms of digital violence.

Traditional definition of bodily autonomy:

> "Bodily autonomy is the concept that we, as individuals, have the right to control what does and does not happen to our bodies."

Digital Bodily Autonomy extends this definition:

> "Digital Bodily Autonomy is the concept that we have the right to control what does and does not happen to images, replicas, and digital representations of our bodies."

Just as consent and respect are fundamental to physical interactions, they must be equally respected in digital spaces. When someone's digital representation is used without their consent—whether through non-consensual image sharing, deepfakes, AI manipulation, or other means—their digital bodily autonomy is violated.

Why Digital Bodily Autonomy Matters

Image-based sexual abuse and digital violations can cause serious and long-lasting harm:

- **Psychological impact**: Trauma, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation
- **Social consequences**: Damage to reputation, relationships, and social standing
- **Economic harm**: Job loss, difficulty securing employment, and financial stress
- **Safety concerns**: Increased vulnerability to stalking, harassment, and other forms of abuse

We must also remember that digital violence has unique characteristics that can amplify risk and compound trauma for victims:

- **Permanence**: Once online, complete removal of images or abusive posts is nearly impossible, meaning that victims may spend months or years managing the impacts of the violence.
- **Scale**: Images shared online can spread instantaneously and be seen by individuals anywhere in the world.
- **Public exposure**: Image-based abuse occurs on a public stage, meaning that a victim's most private and vulnerable moments may be seen by anyone.
- **Repeated victimization**: Each view and share constitutes a new violation, meaning that the victim may be retraumatized again and again.

Implementing Digital Bodily Autonomy in Prevention Programs

We don't need to reinvent the wheel in order to prevent sexual violence online. We can adapt our current safe sex and healthy relationships education models to include practicing consent, empathy, and respect in digital spaces.

1. Integrate DBA into Existing Frameworks

Add digital bodily autonomy alongside traditional bodily autonomy in:

- **Sexual Health Education:** Approaching intimate image sharing from a harm reduction perspective.
- **Consent Education:** Communicating boundaries and consent through text-based conversations.
- **Healthy Relationships Programs:** Exploring dating apps, social media, and shared accounts as the new sites of intimacy and romance.
- **Violence Prevention Initiatives:** Teaching accessible and practical skills for recognizing online violence, supporting victims, and preventing harm.

Tips for **Practical Implementation:**

- **Update Existing Language:** Modify current materials to add "digital body" whenever discussing bodily autonomy.
- **Side-by-Side Examples:** Use analogies or create comparison charts to show how consent principles apply to both our physical and digital bodies.
    - **Example:** Compare someone choosing to be naked with a partner in person to someone choosing to share a nude image with a partner through texting. How could that person communicate their boundaries and needs in each of those situations? How could their partner demonstrate care, respect, and kindness both in person and through text?

Part 2: Consent Education for Digital Spaces

We can apply our current consent models to be used in digital spaces. Here, we use the popular FRIES model (Freely-Given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic, Specific), but these concepts can be applied to any model you prefer to use:

- **Freely-Given**: Consent must be given without pressure, coercion, or manipulation - whether it's behind a screen or face-to-face.
- **Reversible**: When it comes to intimate images, we must understand the challenges of digital permanence and set clear agreements about how images will be sent, stored, and deleted.
- **Informed**: Partners must communicate clearly, honestly, and frequently about any risks or boundaries around intimate image sharing, including how images will be saved, who else might have access to them (cloud sharing), or what might happen to the images after a breakup. .
- **Enthusiastic**: Partners must tune into each others' needs and desires by reading "digital body language" through text, emojis, and response patterns (see more in the section below).
- **Specific**: Consent must be constantly considered and communicated throughout a relationship. What a person wants in one digital interaction may not apply to what they want in any future interactions.

Reading "Digital Body Language":

One of the common challenges people find with digital communication is the lack of context. It can be hard to understand what someone is truly saying when we can't see their face, hear their voice, or read their body language. But think about it - we send all sorts of non-verbal cues to each other when we text! We communicate our feelings through:

- Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling
- Response timing (immediate responses, long delays, etc.)
- Emojis, gifs, and memes
- Situational cues, like what time of day the message was sent or how long or short the message is

We can talk to young people about how they communicate through texts, and how they might use their partner's digital body language to determine how enthusiastic they are about sexting or sharing intimate images. By using this model, we can meet young people where they are, empower them to speak about their experiences in their own words, and discuss consent in a way that feels relevant to their lives.

Interactive Activities:

- **Message Analysis:** Does "yes" always mean yes? Show sample text conversations and ask participants to identify signs of enthusiasm vs. hesitation.

    - Example:
        - Yes.
        - Yes!
        - Yaaaaaaaaass!
        - Yup
        - ….. Yeah.
        - Yeah…..
    - Example:
        - Love you!!! See you soon!!! Xoxoxo
        - Love you, see you soon.
        - … see you soon
        - See you soon.
- **Emoji interpretation Game:** Does this emoji mean to me what it means to you? Display different emojis and ask students to write down how they interpret them. Have students share out their ideas and discuss what their different interpretations might mean for practicing consent.
- **Response Time Scenarios:** What does it mean to be left on read? Compare situations where someone responds to a message immediately and where it takes a long time to respond. What might be inferred from those different response times? Share model language that can be used to talk to partners about the timing and pacing of text conversations. Here are some useful examples of how to proactively communicate healthy boundaries:
    - Are there any times of day when you need to be unavailable by text?
    - What pacing feels most comfortable for you?
    - I usually respond to texts as soon as I see them, but I don't look at my phone while I'm in class or when I'm at work.
    - I don't feel comfortable sexting during the day when I'm in public, but I'm more open to it at night when I'm alone at home.
- **Role-Playing Exercises:** Practice having text conversations where students ask each other for something specific (this doesn't have to be sexual, you can use a more neutral example, like meeting up to study). Have the student who is responding to the request try to communicate how enthusiastic or hesitant they are without using explicit language. If the student making the request senses hesitation, have them practice starting a conversation about consent by asking how their partner is feeling.
    - You can let all participants follow along by displaying the conversation on a large screen at the front of the room. You can protect participants' personal phone numbers by having the conversation in a private group chat on an encrypted platform like WhatsApp or Signal.

Part 3: Response and Support Frameworks

Image-based abuse happens in many forms - obtaining or distributing images without consent, threatening to share images (sextortion), sending unsolicited images (cyber-flashing), or using AI to create or manipulate intimate images without a victim's knowledge or consent. In order to

safeguard our digital spaces, we must teach community members how to recognize these forms of violence, support victims, and prevent future harm.

1. Victim-Centered Approach: Image-Based Sexual Abuse

Many victims of IBSA choose not to disclose or report their experiences due to feelings of fear, shame, or helplessness. As advocates and response professionals, it is crucial that we receive disclosures of digital violence with understanding, empathy, and respect.

- **Believe Survivors:** With many forms of online abuse, it can be difficult or impossible to obtain incontrovertible proof of the identity of the perpetrator, or sometimes even of the crime itself. It is important to receive initial disclosures without requiring proof or evidence, focusing instead on providing options and support services.
- **Validate the Harm:** Digital violence is often minimized or dismissed, leaving victims of abuse without support. We must recognize that these acts can be just as harmful as attacks in the physical world and validate victims' experiences of harm.
- **Avoid Victim-Blaming**: As with all incidents of violence, it is crucial that we support survivors by avoiding victim blaming and shaming. Focus instead on the actions of the harm-doer and helping the victim process their experiences.
- **Recognize the Unique Trauma** Always remember the specifics of online harm (images shared online last forever, the anonymity of many perpetrators, the scope and scale of abuse, etc.) so we can understand the unique trauma experienced by victims of digital abuse.

2. Practical Support Strategies

We don't need to be tech experts to support victims of IBSA and other forms of digital violence. Here are some practical and effective strategies for responding to abuse and preventing future harm.

- **Evidence Collection Guidance**
    - Save everything: images, videos, website screenshots, URLs, etc.
    - Store evidence in a secure place, such as a hidden folder or a photovault app
    - Recruit advocates or trusted friends to help track down images across multiple platforms (social media, pornography websites, etc)
- **Image Removal Assistance**
    - Each platform has specific reporting policies and procedures to respond to abusive content. Advocates can assist victims by exploring all of their reporting options and safety planning for all potential outcomes.
    - Google De-Indexing: removing specific images, videos, or personally-identifying information from Google Search (this does not remove those images from the internet, but makes them less visible).
    - Using tools like Stop NCII (stopncii.org) to find images and remove them from multiple platforms.

    - NOTE: StopNCII.com connects to a scam website that will falsely promise to remove images from the internet in exchange for an advance payment. The legitimate website is **StopNCII.org**, which does not charge any fee for its services.

3. Bystander Intervention for Digital Spaces

As with many forms of violence and abuse, the best strategy for prevention is to empower community members to protect each other during risky situations. As prevention professionals, we can adapt existing models of bystander intervention education to work effectively in digital spaces.

If someone is being harmed online, we can practice the 5 C's of Online Bystander Intervention:

- **Check in** with the victim directly and privately.
- **Call in support** from trusted friends, family, or professionals.
- **Collect evidence** to establish abuse patterns or support takedown efforts.
- **Challenge the abuse** by communicating directly with the harm-doer or reporting abusive posts to the platform.
- **Change the space** on social media platforms by amplifying positive content and drowning out abuse.

Ready-to-Use Intervention Scripts:

For checking in:

- "I noticed this image being shared. How are you feeling? What would make you feel safe right now?"
- "That image/post seemed like it might be upsetting to you. I'm here if you want to talk."
- "I'm concerned about what's happening to you online. Can I help in any way?"

For challenging the abuse:

- "Sharing someone's images without their consent is a violation of their digital bodily autonomy. Would you ever do that to them in person?"
- "This image was shared without consent andontinuing to share it just escalates the abuse. Think about the effects that image might have on this person's life."
- "Would you want someone to do this with your photos? This isn't a joke - it's abuse."

For changing the space:

- Specific hashtag campaigns to use when countering image abuse
- Example positive posts that can be shared to displace harmful content
- Step-by-step guide for the "Chris Evans Method" - flooding relevant hashtags with positive content to drown out harmful images

Simulation Exercises:

- Group scenario response practice with real-world examples
- Decision trees for different intervention scenarios
- Risk assessment guidelines for digital intervention

Resources

- Stop NCII: stopncii.org
- Take It Down (for minors): takeitdown.ncmec.org
- Without My Consent: withoutmyconsent.org
- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative: cybercivilrights.org
- Google Image Removal: support.google.com/websearch/answer/6302812

This guide was developed by EndTAB as a resource for educators, advocates, and prevention specialists who attended the 'Go Digital for SAAM 2025' webinar. For more information or training opportunities, visit www.endtab.org.