



## **Surviving R. Kelly Viewer Guide**

### **TUNE IN**

**Surviving R. Kelly**  
airs on Lifetime on  
January 3-5 at 9/8c

In Lifetime's groundbreaking documentary series *Surviving R. Kelly*, women are emerging from the shadows and uniting their voices to share their stories for what will surely be one of the most talked about television events of the year. The six-part series is an urgent call to families, communities and all those who touch the lives of young people, as well as to fans and the entertainment industry alike, reminding us all that we must work harder to protect girls and women.

Celebrated as one of the greatest R&B artists of all time, R. Kelly's genre-defining career has been riddled with rumors of abuse, predatory behavior, and pedophilia. Yet, for nearly three decades, the "I Believe I Can Fly" singer's history of allegedly abusing underage African American girls has been largely ignored by mainstream media.

*Surviving R. Kelly* has the potential to change that.

For the first time ever, survivors and people from Kelly's inner circle are coming forward with new allegations of sexual, mental, and physical abuse at his hands. With over 50 interviews (including civil rights activist **Tarana Burke**, musicians **John Legend** and **Sparkle**, talk-show host and former **DJ Wendy Williams**, journalist **Toure** and ex-wife **Andrea Kelly**), this docuseries will finally shed light on a secret life the public has never seen.

*Note: This document is just a place to start; we recognize that there is much more work to be done and we invite collaboration and inquiries from those who are interested in partnering with us to do so via [media@ggenyc.org](mailto:media@ggenyc.org).*

*The Surviving R. Kelly Viewer's Guide was designed to help audiences process and discuss the themes discussed in this powerful production and identify ways to stand with survivors, while also providing resources for those who may need support. Please share it with your networks and join the conversation on Twitter before, during and after you watch using the #SurvivingRKelly hashtag.*

**-Joanne N. Smith**

Founder and President, Girls for Gender Equity



# **#SurvivingRKelly**

# SELF-CARE FOR SURVIVORS

Self-care begins by making sure you have the things you need to make sure you feel like your best you. Though it can often feel like a luxury or something that one needs to earn, self-care is for everyone! It can be uncomfortable or hard to practice, as it requires one to participate in some level of personal reflection, as well as self-appreciation and love-- things that have not always been afforded to survivors, nor Black women and girls. However, it is important to attempt to engage in acts of self-care as a means of healing and safety.

Consumption of disturbing or graphic forms of media can impact a viewer's physical and mental well-being. As such, we have prepared the tips below to help those who may be triggered by the themes discussed in *Surviving R. Kelly*.

*Here are a few suggestions for self-care while viewing this program:*

- Be gentle with yourself! It is normal for individuals who have experienced harm to harbor feelings of self-criticism, shame, guilt, and a number of other difficult emotions, particularly while consuming media that centers sexual violence. If this rings true for you, try to identify these feelings as they arise. When do feelings of judgment come up for you and how can you work towards quieting your inner critic? Remember, healing is a non-linear process that looks differently from one person to the next.
- If you need to take a break or turn away, allow yourself to do so. Watch the docuseries on your own time and press 'pause' if needed.
- Be mindful of trigger warnings during/before shows like this one, as well as your body's own trigger warnings and reactions.
- Trust your body's cues for food and hydration while remaining mindful of stress eating and over consumption of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Identify your sources of support (i.e. trusted family/friends who can hold your story and professional support-- therapist, crisis counselor, spiritual counselor, healing practitioners, etc.) and engage them before, during and after viewing this series.
- Plan out ways to decompress and regroup after consuming heavy content; this may mean spending time alone or amongst community, processing out loud, or doing something completely unrelated. Do whatever you need to ease some of the physical, emotional, and psychological tension as it arises.
- What are the tools and objects in your possession that make you feel more comfortable? Some examples may include sensory toys, pillows or blankets, healing crystals, aromatherapy oils, etc. Keep them close while viewing the docuseries and use them as needed.
- *For more tips/ information on consuming media for survivors, visit <https://www.rainn.org/articles/tips-survivors-consuming-media>*

# **DISCUSS**

## **General Questions for Discussion (Before or After Viewing):**

1. What is sexual violence? What does it entail?
2. Describe the process of how intimate partner violence develops over time. Do you think it begins with physical violence? Do you think there are other components involved? If so, what might those be?
3. What is Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)?
4. What does it mean for perpetrators of sexual violence to 'groom' children?
5. What roles do race and gender play in what happens to youth and adults impacted by sexual violence? What about perpetrators of sexual violence?
6. Why is it important for girls, women—and all people—to tell someone when they have experienced sexual violence?
7. Why do you think R. Kelly and others who have been accused of multiple acts of sexual violence are not stopped?
8. What role does power play in sexual violence and why are children and women particularly vulnerable?
9. What is Stockholm Syndrome?
10. Why do you think some girls and women are nervous or scared to report sexual violence? How can these obstacles be eliminated?
11. Imagine a world without sexual violence. What does it look like? What kinds of resources might be needed to create a world like this?
12. What does resilience mean? What are some of the ways that survivors show their resilience?
13. What is consent?
14. How can survivors of sexual violence find healing?
15. Please describe a few things loved ones or friends can do to help someone they think is experiencing sexual violence.

## EPISODES 1&2

In these episodes we learn about R. Kelly's past and pathway to stardom, and hear from women who allege he abused them during this time.

### ONE

In what ways has the entertainment industry served as a "way out" for men? What are the positive and negative aspects of this pathway?

### TWO

How might R. Kelly's past have contributed to his alleged behaviors? Are the traumas he claims to have faced as a child an "excuse," a legitimate part of the story, or something else?

### THREE

What role do journalists/the media play when it comes to impacting events and issues like those raised in this series?

### FOUR

What role should schools play in protecting students from alleged predators like R. Kelly?

### FIVE

How does fame protect people from facing consequences for bad behavior?

### SIX

Why did the entertainment industry fail to hold R. Kelly accountable for his marriage to Aaliyah and other instances of alleged sexual misconduct and abuse?

### SEVEN

How did members of R. Kelly's circle (friends, employees, colleagues, etc.) fail Aaliyah and other young artists he allegedly sexually abused?

### EIGHT

What stops adults from speaking up and protecting Black girls?

# EPISODES 3&4

In these episodes, we hear more from alleged survivors of sexual violence at the hands of R. Kelly and learn about the singer's 2008 child pornography trial and its aftermath.

## ONE

Do you remember when R. Kelly was found not guilty in 2008? What was your reaction? What is it now?

## TWO

Why do you think R. Kelly was found not-guilty in 2008?

## THREE

What are some of the reasons women—and some men—stay in abusive relationships? What resources do they need to escape?

## FOUR

In the docuseries, Dr. Candice Norcott states that women who experienced child sexual abuse are more likely to be victims of sexual violence as adults. How can we as community members prevent further harm to child sexual abuse survivors?

## FIVE

Why are young women often vulnerable? What kinds of support might they need in order to make healthy decisions?



R. KELLY

# **EPISODES 5&6**

In these episodes, we hear additional testimony from families, survivors, and psychological experts who discuss allegations against R. Kelly and events up through today.

## **ONE**

Why are fans hesitant to admit that their favorite celebrities may be dangerous or problematic?

## **TWO**

What are some ways parents can protect their children and teenagers from abuse?

## **THREE**

Black girls and women have historically experienced both intimate partner violence and sexual violence at higher rates than their white counterparts. Why do you think that is?

## **FOUR**

Why are young Black women disproportionately ignored or blamed when they are victimized?

## **FIVE**

Do you think the church is complicit in the sexual violence that takes place in our communities?

## **SIX**

What are some of the ways people heal from sexual violence?

## **SEVEN**

Do you think R. Kelly will be held accountable for his alleged actions? Do you think that he can be?

## **EIGHT**

What would accountability for R. Kelly look like?

## **NINE**

What are your thoughts on the #MuteRKelly campaign?

# RESOURCES

## **What is GROOMING?**

*"A process of identifying and engaging a child in sexual activity. It involves an imbalance of power and elements of coercion and manipulation. It involves motivation and intent to sexually exploit the child. It is a process of desensitization."* The National Center for Victims of Crime:

[victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/grooming-dynamic-of-csa](https://victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/grooming-dynamic-of-csa)

## **Recognizing signs and symptoms of abuse:**

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

[www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/](https://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/)

## **Tips for supporting a loved one who is a survivor of sexual violence:**

RAINN

[www.rainn.org/after-sexual-assault](https://www.rainn.org/after-sexual-assault)

## **Joyful Heart Foundation**

[www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/6-steps-to-support-a-survivor](https://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/6-steps-to-support-a-survivor)

## **Healing resources for survivors:**

The 'me, too' Movement

[metoomvmt.org/healing-resources-library/](https://metoomvmt.org/healing-resources-library/)

## **Depression and PTSD in survivors:**

Black Women's Health Imperative

[www.bwhi.org/2017/07/31/black-women-ptsd-know-ptsd/](https://www.bwhi.org/2017/07/31/black-women-ptsd-know-ptsd/)

## **Supporting teen and young adult girls with depression**

AAKOMA Project

[www.AAKOMAProject.org](https://www.AAKOMAProject.org)

## **Advocacy resources:**

'me too.' movement

[metoomvmt.org/advocacy-resources-library/toolkits/](https://metoomvmt.org/advocacy-resources-library/toolkits/)

## **Black Women's Blueprint**

[www.blackwomensblueprint.org/ending-sexual-violence](https://www.blackwomensblueprint.org/ending-sexual-violence)

## **A Long Walk Home**

[www.alongwalkhome.org](https://www.alongwalkhome.org)

# #SurvivingRKelly

# CAMPAIGNS

## **#MuteRKelly**

A collective of organizers that have come together to call for a worldwide mute on R&B singer, Robert “R” Kelly, due to his 25 year history of sexual, physical and emotional abuse allegations.

Mute R Kelly

[www.muterkelly.org/whymuterkelly](http://www.muterkelly.org/whymuterkelly)

## **Drop R. Kelly**

Black women and girls deserve to love freely and be loved, to be protected from abuse, and to be taken seriously when we ask for help. They deserve recognition of the full scope of their humanity. It is the obligation of all of us to show up for Black women and girls—and to demand a cost from those who won’t. It is our duty as a community to protect Black girls from sexual violence and exploitation. Color of Change is letting abusers and their enablers know that their time is up, and asking for you to join them in taking action:

Pledge to protect Black women and girls:

[act.colorofchange.org/signup/Blackwomenandgirlspledge/](http://act.colorofchange.org/signup/Blackwomenandgirlspledge/)

Demand that RCA Records immediately #DropRKelly:

[colorofchange.org/press\\_release/color-of-change-rca-must-drop-r-kelly/](http://colorofchange.org/press_release/color-of-change-rca-must-drop-r-kelly/)

## **Stop Violence Against Women**

Lifetime’s Emmy award-winning Stop Violence Against Women Public Affairs campaign brings together leading advocacy organizations, women directly affected by violence and political leaders to place a national spotlight on ending the vast problems of domestic violence, harassment and sexual assault. This initiative provides women with powerful platforms to share their stories and help affect change. Lifetime partners with organizations to spread awareness, empower women, and provide healing tools and support for women of all backgrounds. For more information visit:

[www.mylifetime.com/stop-violence-against-women](http://www.mylifetime.com/stop-violence-against-women)

## **Girls for Gender Equity (GGE)**

works to end gender-based violence and challenges structural forces — racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, economic inequality — that work to constrict the freedom, full expression, and rights of trans and cis girls and young women of color, and gnc youth of color. GGE has partnered with the ‘me too.’ Movement to facilitate national survivor circles that serve as a place to heal from sexual violence and experience joy. To learn more about our work, visit: [www.ggenyc.org](http://www.ggenyc.org)

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