

## Consent

### What is consent?

Consent can be confusing. It is something that you may have heard about, but don't really understand. Let's talk about what it is, and what it isn't.

Consent is generally spoken about when we discuss sexual or physical activity with a partner.

In a healthy relationship, both (or all) partners are able to openly talk about and agree on what kind of activity they want to engage in. Whether it's holding hands, kissing, touching, intercourse, or anything else, it's really important for everyone in the relationship to feel comfortable with what's happening.

You may have heard discussions about the phrase "no means no". While, no means no is important, it puts the responsibility on one person to accept, resist or decline an activity. This can be problematic. It also makes consent about what someone doesn't want to do, as opposed to what they do want to do.

### How does consent work?

People sometimes worry or feel awkward about consent. They feel if they talk about it, it may "ruin the mood" or get in the way. This is furthest from the truth. The mood and activity will be much more positive if both partners feel safe, comfortable and can openly communicate what they want. It is important to talk about what it means to "hook up" or "go all the way". Consider having these conversations before you are engaged in physical intimacy, so both partners are on the same page.

Here are some suggestions about some things to say, if you find yourself in the heat of the moment:

- Are you comfortable?
- Is this okay?
- Do you want to slow down?
- Do you want to go any further?
- Do you want to stop?

### What consent looks like:

- Always communicate every step of the way. Ask what is okay, do not assume anything.
- For example, during a hookup, ask if it's okay to take your partner's shirt off. Don't just assume that they are comfortable with it.
- Consent is a clear, enthusiastic yes!
- Respect that "no" means "no", and even when they don't say "no", it doesn't mean yes

## What consent does NOT look like?

- Assuming that by dressing sexy, being flirty, accepting a ride, socializing, accepting a drink etc, is in any way consenting to anything more. IT IS NOT
- Saying yes (or saying nothing) while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Saying yes or giving in to something because you feel too pressured or too afraid to say no.

## Here are some red flags that indicate your partner doesn't respect consent:

- If you are pressured or made feel guilty about doing things you may not want to do.
- If they make you feel like you "owe" them.
- If they react negatively (with sadness, anger or resentment) if you say "no" to something, or don't immediately consent.
- If they ignore your wishes and don't pay attention to nonverbal cues that could show you're not consenting (ex: pulling/pushing away).

## Get Consent Every Time

In a healthy relationship, it's important to **discuss and respect** each other's boundaries on the regular. Never assume that once someone consents to an activity, it means they are consenting to it anytime in the future as well. Consent must be discussed and given each and every time. Whether it's the first time or the hundredth time, a hookup, a committed relationship or even marriage, nobody is ever obligated to consent to something, even if they've agreed to it in the past.

***Everyone has the right to change their mind and choose to stop an activity at any given time,*** even if they initially agreed to it.

Everyone has a right to their own body and to feel comfortable with how they choose to use it.

Adapted from: <http://www.loveisrespect.org>



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