

PFA Tips

Healthy Relationships: Consent 101

You've heard the word "consent" in the doctor's office or while completing legal paperwork. While consent is essential in formal settings, it's also important in our everyday interactions. To maintain healthy relationships and to honor other's boundaries, asking for consent is necessary. This includes asking before hugging, kissing, and even touching someone's shoulder. Consent should be enthusiastic; "maybe" is not consent. If you feel pressured to say "yes", then that's not consent. Your body, your choice. You are always allowed to say "no" and allowed to revoke the consent at any point.

"No" is a full sentence, you don't need to explain yourself

At times, people want to know why you said "no", but you do not owe anyone an explanation. They may feel the need to convince you to change your mind or that your reasoning is not valid. Decisions in regard to consent are personal and are an individual's decision. Saying "no" may be difficult and you may even feel guilty, however, anyone who cares for you will respect your boundaries.

You can change your mind at any point

Consent can be revoked at any time. It is essential to respect another's decision when they change their mind. Our boundaries should be honored in all settings, including professional and personal. During sexual or intimate moments, even if you initially said "yes", you can change your mind. You can consent to a medical procedure and change your mind once you enter the doctor's office. Consent is not a permanent decision.



If you feel someone did not respect your boundaries, let a trusted adult know

If someone ignores your boundaries, please be aware of the signs of harassment and abuse. Touching someone or having an intimate moment without their consent is unacceptable and potentially illegal. Children are too young to give sexual consent and folks who have had alcohol in their system may also be too intoxicated to give consent. If you are unsure about whether you provided consent during an encounter, have a discussion with a trustworthy adult.

Repeat positive self affirmations daily to yourself

Saying "no" to someone you love or trust can be a hard task. We want to please the people around us, however practicing self-love is a daily task. Try saying positive self affirmations such as "I am smart and I am strong" to yourself each morning in the mirror. Little moments like those help you grow your confidence.

An infographic with a yellow background and a torn paper effect at the top. The title is "WHAT DOES ASKING FOR CONSENT SOUND LIKE?". Below the title are several speech bubbles containing different ways to ask for consent: "HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT...", "CAN WE...", "WOULD YOU LIKE IT IF I...", "MAY I...", "IS IT OK IF...", "ARE YOU OPEN TO...", and "IS IT ALRIGHT IF WE...". In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the text "LEARN MORE AT NOMORERI.ORG".

continued on back



Over time, your boundaries can change and evolve

People’s comfort level evolve over time. Two years ago, a lot of people liked to shake hands with new people. But now due to COVID-19 and social distancing, some do not like to touch others. And that’s okay! Some people like to kiss their romantic partner and others don’t. And that’s okay! As long as the parties involved give consent, that’s what matters.

P.S. “Yes” is yes. “No” is no. No response is “No”.

CONSENT IS NOT:

Assumed Coerced

Implied Convinced

#GotConsent?

Consent Is:	Consent Is NOT:
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed Freely-given Coherent Ongoing Sober Enthusiastic Clear Specific Essential Comfortable Active Reversible/Changeable Based on equal power Breaking away from gender “rules.” Any partner might want to take it slow. And, it’s not one partner’s job to initiate the action all the time. <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flirting Silence Dressing sexy The absence of “no” Being in a relationship Accepting a ride or a drink, etc. If you have to convince them Having had sex with the individual before 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. Consent is not a free pass. Saying yes to one act doesn’t mean you have to consent to other acts. Each requires its own consent. <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> </div> </div>

Additional Resources

PFA Tips: Romantic Relationships
<https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/social/pfa-tips-romantic-relationships/>

PFA Tips: He Said / She Said
<https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/social/pfa-tips-dating-he-said-she-said/>

Consent imagined as a cup of tea
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU>

Legal Role of Consent
<https://www.rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent>

Written by Baya Mohamed-Osman, Kennedy Krieger Institute, Employment Training Specialist, Project SEARCH mohamedo@kennedykrieger.org
Trained by Elevatus Training, Sexuality Education

© 2021 Pathfinders for Autism