

CONSENT GUIDELINES

This is not a manual for proper sexual conduct, but rather a series of guidelines to help you and your partner make safe and healthy choices. Remember, sexual interactions should always occur between two consenting adults.

Some Good Practices

TALK! Ongoing conversation is an important vehicle for consent. Stating your own desires doesn't ensure consent. Both parties should clearly and unambiguously express consent.

CLARIFY: When in doubt, find out! Don't be afraid to ask questions if anything is unclear. The responsibility for obtaining consent lies with the person initiating the sexual act. Avoid ambiguity; be verbal. Without verbal conversation, mutual agreement and understanding is difficult, if not impossible, to reach.

MUTUALITY: Sex is a two-way street. If sex is mutually and simultaneously initiated, then responsibility for communicating consent (agreeing/obtaining/refusing/denying) continues to rest with all involved.

ON-GOING PROCESS: Consent should be understood as an on-going process rather than a one-time, one-conversation, open door to any or all-sexual interactions. Be aware that consent for one act (such as kissing) does not automatically imply consent for subsequent behaviors. Asking "Do you want to have sex with me?" is a good start but not enough. People have different ideas about what sex is.

RESPECT: Consensual sex is best established when both partners can express themselves, be listened to, and have their desires and needs respected.

CHECK-IN: It's okay to check in and see if everyone's enjoying themselves. If you sense at any point that your partner is not fully participating or not completely engaged in sexual behavior or has changed his/her mind, then ask if s/he wants to stop. Mutuality — if you've changed your mind, say so.

NO always MEANS NO, not maybe and ONLY YES MEANS YES: At any point of sexual engagement, anyone has the right to stop any specific act or all sexual interactions. This can be done through verbal statements [e.g. "No." "Don't." "I don't want to do this specific behavior ("kiss", "be touched here", etc.) anymore." "I don't like that." Any use of designated safe word. "Stop"] and/or through non-verbal actions [e.g. pulling and/or pushing away, getting up and/or walking, turning away, etc.]. At this point, check-in because consent has ended and the other person(s) must comply.

Some Poor Practices

SILENCE: Silence and/or non-communication and/or relying on assumptions.

INTOXICATION: According to the laws of some jurisdictions, consent cannot be given when any person is intoxicated (whether by drugs or alcohol), unconscious or asleep.

VIOLENCE: The threat of or use of violence or force negates any previous consent or subsequent assumptions of consent.

COERCION: Like physical force, coercion and intimidation negate consent. (For instance, threatening to shame a person in front of peers; or threats of outing).

DRUGS/ALCOHOL: Giving someone drugs or alcohol with the intent to impair his or her judgment or make them unconscious violates the law.

HARASSMENT: By the very definition, when someone is sexually harassed, the behavior is unwelcome; therefore, any form of sexual harassment is nonconsensual. For instance, masturbating in front of someone without their agreement and/or touching and groping someone at a party is not considered consensual.

HOOKING UP: The less you know the other person, the greater the risk for misunderstanding the wishes and intent of the other person.