

Understanding Consent

Sexual consent is an extremely important concept to understand as you begin to navigate how to have healthy and respectful relationships. The four most important guidelines to understanding consent are:

Active - an ongoing discussion and agreement to participate in each sexual act.

Voluntary - given without pressure, manipulation, or force.

Willing - “maybe” or “I’m not sure” are *not* consent. It must be a 100% enthusiastic Yes!

Can be taken away at anytime - You can change your mind and withdraw consent at any time, *even* in the middle of a sexual activity.



A person under the influence of drugs or alcohol cannot receive or give consent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NO

Just as important as understanding how to say NO, is respecting other people’s direct and indirect NOs. If you try to push them, force them, or coerce them into saying yes, *it is a sexual assault.*

Direct No: This is a clear and direct verbal communication: “No”, “Please stop”, or “I have changed my mind”. *You do not need to provide an explanation.*

Indirect: Body language that shows discomfort, or verbal statements like “I am not sure about this” or “I’m not comfortable” are an indication that *the person is not consenting to the situation.*



Remember, if it is not a 100% enthusiastic YES, you do not have consent.

AGE OF CONSENT AND PROTECTION

Age of Consent (or Protection) are the laws safeguarding youth from exploitative relationships. These laws outline the age when a youth can legally agree to a sexual activity, and with whom.

Close in Age Exceptions refer to youth under 16 who won’t be criminalized for engaging in a relationship with other youth their age.

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|--------------|-------------|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| If you’re... | 12 - 13 old | → | You can consent to being in a relationship with someone who’s | → | Less than 2 years older |
| | 14 - 15 old | → | | → | Less than 5 years older |
| | 16 - 18 old | → | | → | Not in position of authority |



Regardless of age , youth under the age of 18 cannot consent to a sexual act or relationship with a person of trust or authority.