

F Free

- Consent is about what we authentically want, so it must be given freely, not under pressure, threat, manipulation, sense of obligation, or substantial power imbalances.
- A person can't consent if they're asleep or unconscious, drunk/intoxicated/altered state, a child, or otherwise unable to make decisions they'll feel good about later.

Book a free
consultation:



O Ongoing

- Consent must be given before and during an activity, and it can be withdrawn or changed at any time.



- Pay attention for signs of pleasure and engagement throughout—that's how you know they're still enjoying it. If you're not seeing clear signs of enjoyment, it's time to check in or shift the activity.
- The moment someone says something like “no,” “stop,” “wait,” “pause,” or a safeword, stops responding, withdraws, or seems uncomfortable, stop immediately and check in. Don't question it or push back. It doesn't matter what they said before or how close you are to climax. Stop. Now.

X Explicit

- It should be as clear as possible what someone is saying yes to. Consenting to one activity does not imply consent to anything else, or even to the same activity in the future. Dressing, dancing, acting, or talking sexy does not imply consent to being touched in any way.
- If someone doesn't know about the risk factors or expectations involved in the activity (e.g. STI status, birth control, other partners, power dynamics), they can't consent.
- Be honest about anything you would want to know about your partners and anything you think they would want to know. Err on the side of over-communicating.



Y Yes

- Consent must be affirmative: saying yes, not just not saying no. Silence and being passive are not consent. If someone doesn't respond to your request, that's a no. In fact, sometimes the most dangerous situation is when you're not getting any response at all—this could indicate the person is scared or experiencing a trauma response. The best thing to do in this situation is stop and check in.
- Affirmative doesn't necessarily mean verbal. It's not only possible to ask for and give clear consent for a specific activity without words, it's often sexier! However, it doesn't work for everyone. Start slowly and wait for multiple signs of yes before progressing.

Desire makes it sexy.

Instead of asking “Is this okay?” or “Can I...?” try desire-oriented language like “Does this feel good?” or “If you’re into it, I would love to...” Even better, use open-ended questions like “How is this feeling?” “How do you like to be touched?” or “What would feel good right now?”



Be *easy* to say no to.

When someone says no, try saying “Thank you for being clear,” or “Thanks for your no.” Don’t argue, pout, or pressure them. If they can trust you to respect their no, they’re more likely to say yes!

Talk about *how* to communicate.

For some people, words can be stressful and break the flow in the moment, while for others the specificity of words creates safety. Nonverbal consent can be perfectly clear and effective when everyone is comfortable with it. Early on when you’re with someone new and you think things might get sexy, try asking a question like “Do you like verbal check-ins, or are you comfortable relying on nonverbal cues?” This goes a long way in preventing misunderstandings, and it can remove a lot of the stress of not knowing if you’re checking in often enough or in the right ways.

Check in *more often* in the beginning.

When you’re with someone new or doing something new, check for consent more often in the early stages. As each person becomes more confident that you are communicating well and respecting each other’s boundaries, you may not need to check in as frequently.

Standing consent agreements.

In ongoing relationships, consider making standing consent agreements, where you give general consent for certain kinds of touch without having to ask each time. Examples might be “You can touch me anywhere except bikini areas without asking,” “You can hug me anytime, but please ask before touching me with sexual intent,” or even “You can touch me however you want and I’ll let you know if it’s not okay.” To make it sexier, add your preferences, like “I especially like feather-light touch and being bitten.”

Share the responsibility.

It’s just as important to communicate clearly and proactively about your desires and boundaries as it is to ask the other person about theirs.

Talk about *power* dynamics.

Every relationship has power imbalances. If they are particularly extreme, such as between employer and employee, consider avoiding sexual interaction—in such situations genuine consent can be very difficult or impossible. But in any relationship it’s a good idea to get relevant power dynamics out in the open. Ask, too, about each person’s comfort saying no and expressing desires. Experiences of marginalization in society or personal relationships can make both of these hard.

Accidents *happen*.

The aftermath of a consent accident can be a valuable growth experience for all parties and even strengthen a relationship, if handled well.



- If you were hurt and you believe it might have been an accident, tell the person how you feel and what you need. See what happens if you assume they want to respect your boundaries and need to know more about how to. If someone continues crossing your boundaries or doesn’t seem to care about your well-being, get whatever support you need to get out.
- If you accidentally hurt someone, thank them for telling you, acknowledge their feelings, apologize, and ask what else you can do to support them. Try not to argue or defend your actions—it can make the other person feel wrong for being uncomfortable, and it can cast doubt on your sincerity.

For more tips, tools,
and practice:



@consentbeyondayes

If you’re not sure about something, *ask!*