

CONSENT – Sex and Communication

On a piece of paper, please write your personal definition of consent, add to this definition during the workshop as new thoughts and ideas occur to you.
About 1h 20 min.

I. Intro to collective and our goals for the workshop (10 min.)

INTRO:

(This is the same workshop as last year.)

- Introduce the Collective.
- *See No, Speak No, Hear No* zine sparked our interest and internal discussions about consent.
- Share personal story or goal, why we're interested in this workshop

GOALS:

- We want to redefine consent – to question and broaden our ideas. Defining what consent means to each of us.
- Transforming society to one based on consent and not coercion.
- We want this workshop to focus on communicating, being upfront, and being positive. Equip you (and us) with examples of how to be more proactive in creating safe consensual spaces. (Will not focus on assault)
- We want to discuss dynamics / factors that might be influencing how we give or receive consent – age, power, relationships, etc.
- We want to look honestly at patterns in our own relationships
- One of our goals of this workshop is improving your sex life! We think that consent can be hott and liberating.
- We want to create an open area for a healthy conversation in this workshop. We want to provoke thought and further discussion. There aren't many places where there are right or wrong answers. There will be a lot of open and unanswered questions.

(Support Person Presents)

- This workshop is exciting because it's an opportunity to work through ideas, construct how we want things to be, propose ideals but
- Discussion could trigger difficult memories or feelings for those who identify as having abuse or assault in their history
- And potentially for all of us, because we do not live in a culture of consent and may have had negative experiences of boundary violations that we don't think of in concrete terms.
- Please be sure to check in with your self and be aware of your emotional state. Just because this discussion is happening now does not mean that you need to deal with this stuff now.
- Feel free to leave at any time, if you want to get some water or go to the bathroom, and come back, or not come back, its okay. Take a friend with you if you want. And please try to be aware of your friends too, and check in about how they are feeling.
- I am going to sit by the door and am here if anyone wants to talk to someone more privately during or after the workshop. I am going to check in with every one who leaves, and its fine to just walk by me, but you can also utilize me if you want to.

- *Pass out sexual assault/domestic violence resource list*

ASSUMING:

- We have a diversity of genders, bodies, sexualities, and experiences in the room (so we'll try to make this discussion as inclusive and participatory as possible)
- Survivors of sexual assault in the room, and that this presentation could possibly be triggering for some folks (we'll talk more about that later)
- Most all of us have received conditioning thru this culture, ranging from body issues to imposed beauty standards to sexism and misogyny to heterosexism to religious/sexual morality, etc – one result of that being that it can be really hard to speak openly about sex (so we'll try to make it easier w/ large & small group discussions, open ended/specific questions, etc)

NOT ASSUMING:

- We know anyone's gender or body – *try* to use gender neutral pronouns
- We know anyone's sexual orientation – hence neutral pronouns for partners unless specified
- Anyone's level of previous knowledge about any of these topics – try to be accessible as possible in language
- We all have the same values around sexuality

AGREEMENTS:

- Please make effort to use gender neutral pronouns, we will too. Be patient.
- If you usually speak a lot, step back to give space to others. If you usually don't speak much, step up and give it a try.
- Don't judge other people's consensual sexual behavior or interests.
- Speak from your own experience
- Don't name names or identifiable info during the workshop or afterward (please talk about the workshop later though...)
- Please address what's said, not the person saying it.

We know this can be tuff subject to approach openly and honestly especially among strangers. So we're gonna open up to you and be a little silly and ridiculous and we hope you'll open up to us.

OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP / AGENDA

- Consent and communication could be week long workshops in themselves. Facilitators will be moving the discussions along so we can touch on a variety of areas.

II. Puppet show (10 min)

As you watch puppet show please think about:

- the factors/ dynamics / issues that play into the way the characters give and receive consent.
- Positive / negative examples of consent
- the questions at the end of each scene (also hanging up)

II. Large Group Discussion (about 30, depends on start)

Factors that play into the ways we give / receive and understand consent

[The following issues below should be brought up. Otherwise ask about them directly]

A. Puppet Show

- What did you notice in the puppet show? First / Second / Third / Fourth Scene
- What are some of the un-spoken issues at play?
- Positive / negative examples of consent?
- Think about how you perceived the characters? did you assign them a specific gender? races? what assumptions could you make about their past? the relationships the characters are in?
- What are clear ways they expressed consent or non-consent? What seemed to work?
- What problems did you see? What might be the root of some of the problems?
- What are some factors that can get in the way of real, honest consent?

*** Bring up questions from scenes ***

B. Recognizing Boundaries – your own and others

- How do you give yourself or someone else space to figure out what you/they want?
 - Do you know what you want? How do figure this out for yourself?
 - How do you communicate what you want or don't want?
 - Have you ever been unsure? What did you do?
 - How do you give a partner space to communicate what they want
- How do you know when someone else is consenting?
 - How do you know when someone wants to be kissed or to kiss you?
 - How are you sure they are fully present?
 - That they are excited to be doing what they are doing?
 - Do you account for cultural differences?
- How do people communicate their boundaries?
 - Have you interpreted passivity or silence as consent? What factors were at play?
 - Do you feel it's the other person's responsibility to say something if they aren't into what you're doing?
 - How often do you check in as things progress?
 - What signs do you look for? Verbal? Other signs?
 - When do you feel its ok to use non-verbal signs? When isn't it?
 - It is commonly interpreted that silence=consent and verbal signs=non-consent.
 - Are the signals you are sending clear? Do your words match your body language? (ex. saying no while continuing movement); consistency in words and actions? How do you address it when someone else's words and body language don't match up? (ex. saying yes but moving away or not responding)
 - How do you react when someone expresses non-consent?
- Consent in long-term relationships vs. hook up?
 - What assumptions do you make once someone's consented?
 - Have you made assumptions about consent with a long-term partner?
 - How do different types of relationships impact how and when we talk about consent? (ahead of time / in the moment)

- How can you communicate about STI's?
 - When might be a good time to bring this up?
 - What is safe sex to you?
 - How can you help partners feel comfortable talking about it / bringing it up with you?
 - How does how you feel about someone, your assumptions about them, or the type of relationship affect how you talk about STIs?

C. Power and Privilege

- What power dynamics might factor into communication and consent? (privilege, gender, sexual preferences, size, race, age, class, organizational structure, sexual histories)
 - How do you address different histories or unequal power dynamics?
 - How do you honor the experience of the person you're with when it has been different than yours?
 - How do you bring differences up and communicate about them?
- How can we talk about histories of sexual assault?
 - How can we bring it up? When?
 - What about coming from a background where sexual assault is the norm?
- How does inebriation effect consent giving / asking?
- Trying to prove something – cool, liberated, ready (reaction to non-consent)

V. Small Groups - Practical “tools” (15 min)

** ask groups to do intro's first. Clarify – we want groups to come back with ideas and specific examples to share. Take home with knowledge, phrases, etc. Role play if time/comfortable.*

1. Giving and recognizing consent / non-consent

- a. What are ways to give consent? How do you (personally) expressed consent? What signs (verbal and non-verbal) do you look for to know if someone is consenting?
- b. What are ways to express non-consent? How have you (personally) expressed non-consent? What are signs (both verbal and non-verbal) that you look for to know someone is not consenting?

2. How to talk about consent with a partner

- a. When do you bring it up?
- b. Is this different for a long-term partner vs. a casual encounter?
- c. Ideas for improving communication around consent?
- d. What can you do if you or your partner aren't sure what you want in the moment?

3. Making consent hott

- a. What's hott about consent?
- b. How can we incorporate clear consent into “doin' it” and make it fun and erotic?

4. Communicating about STI's.

- a. How can you bring up STIs and your feelings about safe sex?
- b. When can you bring this up?
- c. What is safe sex to you?
- d. How can you help partners feel comfortable talking about it / bringing it up with you?
- e. How does how you feel about someone, your assumptions about them, or the type of relationship affect how you talk about STIs?

VI. (Re)defining consent and Closing (15 min)

REPORT BACK

DEFINITION OF CONSENT

- What are some key thoughts/ phrases / words for a “holistic” “Yes! Yes! Yes!” (which implicitly includes No).
- What are some key elements that need to be taken into account in a radical definition of consent?
- How do power and privilege relate to our ability to give, receive, and understand consent? How did the issues in that part of the discussion figure into your definition of consent?
- Did your definition change throughout the workshop?

WRAP UP

- Hope we opened up questions for people.
- This is an ongoing process in understanding our desires and boundaries and communicating this with others.
- Encourage you to talk about this in our communities, to break down barriers to talking openly about this. Improving communication and understanding is both healthy for our relationships and can prevent problems.