

# Reimagining Connection through using CONSENT

A short guide to the revolution of consent culture

Created by Carey French

## What is consent?

(and why does it matter?)

Consent is often defined as an **enthusiastic yes**: spoken in the absence of coercion, intimidation, or drugs or alcohol.

I like to define consent as **mutual agreement**. (All parties are informed and free to make a voluntary choice.)

## What is your definition?

Consent is....

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## Consent matters

because without asking questions and making agreements, we end up making assumptions about what's ok and what's not ok -- and too often these assumptions lead to harm in the form of crossed boundaries and violation.

When we build our skills of practicing good consent, we radically shift the non-consensual world we live in by affirming and respecting each other's agency and autonomy!

**WOO HOO!**

Sounds simple, right? Well...

There's some things that make consent complex... like **power**.

[Power: the ability to influence.]  
When unbalanced power dynamics exist, our ability to give and receive consent is compromised. (It is tough to say **no** to someone who holds more power if I fear the consequence of that **no**.)

**AND IF NO IS NOT AVAILABLE, YES IS NOT VALID.**

Power shows up between students and teachers, and employees and bosses -- but we also hold power when we have privilege attached to our social identities like: white, middle-class, male, cis-gendered, citizenship, straight.

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What are some ways that you hold power/privilege?

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## With great **power** comes **great responsibility**.

So what do we do when we have more power than someone else?

- Leave people room to physically exit an interaction
- Leave lots of room for a "no." ("It's totally ok to say 'no'...")
- Try expressing interest and then leaving, to give space for them to decide and choose to engage.
- Sometimes, NOT pursuing anything sexual is best!

### What if someone says **no**?

*(we don't have to take it personally!)*

**No** can be a scary thing to hear. Turns out it's also a hard thing to say! (the more we practice saying and hearing **no**, the easier it gets!)

When someone says **no**, REMEMBER: They are saying **YES** to themselves. They are also sharing their authentic boundaries with you, which is a brave thing -- and a gift!

When you get a **no**, you can try saying: "Thank you for taking care of yourself."

#### **Boundaries: What are they?**

Our boundaries mark the edges between what is ok for us and not ok for us. We can get more familiar with our boundaries by feeling into our bodies and noticing sensations that communicate comfort or discomfort in response to situations.

#### **Verbal AND non-verbal cues!**

Look for...

- leaning away - crossed arms
- leaning toward - looking around
- smiling/laughing (sometimes smiling indicates comfort, and sometimes it can cover up for discomfort... notice it!)

#### **The skills of practicing good consent are revolutionary!** When we:

- Recognize our power and minimize the effects
- Ask rather than assume
- Know our boundaries and communicate them
- Receive a no gracefully
- Remember that we can always change our minds

**WE CREATE SAFE & MUTUALLY EMPOWERING CONNECTIONS!!**

#### **Disclose important information!**

"I'm sick." "I'm really high."  
"I have an STI."  
"I'm married and in an open relationship"

#### **Try asking...**

Can I take a picture of you?  
Would you like to share a hug?  
I'd like to kiss you... What are your boundaries around?

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