**Sexual Consent**

**Intended Learning outcomes:**

By the end of the session young people will be able to state the following:

* I understand what consent means and why it is so important.
* I can recognise when someone is consenting and when they are not.
* I know what to say and do to seek the consent of another person.
* I understand that consent should never be assumed and should never be treated as a ‘one-off’.
* When seeking another’s consent, I know how to avoid assuming consent.
* I know that when asked to give my consent, I have the right to make clear what I do and don’t want to do.
* I understand that it is not my fault or my responsibility if someone mistakenly assumes my consent to do something I don’t want to do.

**Session**

**1. Discuss what is consent?**

**Consent is agreement which is given willingly and freely without exploitation, threat or fear, and by a person who has the capacity to give their agreement.**

(Explain that consent is not just about saying yes or no and that it is always the responsibility of the seeker of consent to be sure of whether consent is being freely given or not given. This shouldn’t be considered as a one-off since people can change their minds or consent to one activity but not another. This makes continued checking very important).

**2. Play Disrespect Nobody ‘Consent v’s rape’ short clip. (Other clips available in additional resources).**

If we weren’t sure whether the other person was giving their consent, how could we check?

**3. Think of two or three questions we could ask.**

Suggest that they should always remember to ask **‘Are you happy with this?’** and **‘Are you sure?’**, and to stop immediately if the answer is not ‘yes’ *(the absence of a ‘no’ is not the same as a ‘yes’).* Saying ‘If you don’t want to, that’s ok’ is also very important. They should also remember that sometimes people change their minds or feel differently in different circumstances or may consent to one thing but not something else; this means that seeking consent should not be seen as a ‘one-off’ process but rather a continuing process. It is crucial that any activity, sexual or otherwise, only takes place if consent is clearly given, and if in doubt, one should assume that consent has not been given. There should be no ambiguity or confusion over whether consent is given: ‘not saying no’ is not giving consent. Responsibility for ensuring that consent has been given lies with the person seeking consent, both ethically and in law.

**4. Look more closely at how people seeking consent can identify and recognise verbal and non-verbal signs of consent and non-consent.**

SEE SUPPORTING MATERIAL – ‘Possible signs of consent’.

**Discuss**

• How people show us with their words …

• How people show us with their facial expressions …

• How people show us with their body language

**5. Discuss the right to withdraw consent.** (SEE SUPPORTING MATERIAL - ‘The right to withdraw consent’ discussion prompt)

**6. Choice, freedom and capacity to consent in law**

Write the terms ‘Choice’, ‘Freedom’ and ‘Capacity’

Mind map or discuss what these terms might mean in relation to consent.

**Extend the discussion:**

* Are the choices we make always made completely freely, or are they sometimes governed by other things? (e.g. peer pressure, society, parental expectations)
* How do we know when a choice is freely made?
* What sort of things can affect our capacity to make decisions/choices? (e.g. mental health, age, maturity and development, drugs or alcohol)

**Sexual Consent notes**

**Sexual consent** refers to a positive choice to take part in a sexual activity by people who understand the nature and implications of the activity they are agreeing to. Both parties take part not because they have to, but because they *want* to. Consent must be free – an active, personal choice; it must not be inferred, assumed, coerced or gained by exploitation. In addition, the person giving consent must have the capacity to do so: they should be old enough, have all the information they need to make the decision, and be in a fit state to give consent (and not, for example, with their judgement impaired by alcohol or drugs). It is the person seeking consent who is legally and ethically responsible for ensuring that consent is given and meets these criteria, and because people may change their minds or consent to one activity but not another, the seeker of consent should not see seeking consent as a ‘one-off’ but rather a continuing process of making sure the other person is consenting.

**What is sexual Consent?**

It doesn’t matter what age or gender you are, or whether you’re straight, gay or bisexual, if you’re planning to do anything sexual then both of you must give consent.

Consent has to be given freely and no one can be made to consent to something. It’s not consent if someone does something because they feel like they have to. You can also never assume that someone is giving consent – you have to be sure.

Consent is an essential part of healthy relationships and it’s really important to know what it is and the [many ways to spot it](https://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk/consent/signs-to-spot/). Both you and the person you’re with always need to consent before sex or any intimate activity.

If you want to do something sexual with your partner, the responsibility lies with you to check for consent, not with your partner to say ‘no’ if they don’t want to

**WHAT IS RAPE?**

Rape is sex without consent. This means that rape isn’t just people being physically forced into a sexual act, it also includes pressure that makes someone feel like they had no choice but to have sex.

Most rape victims know their attacker, sometimes it is even the person they’re in a relationship with.

Anyone of any gender or sexual orientation can be a victim of rape and / or sexual assault. The most important bit to remember is that being pressured or forced to have sex or to do something sexual when you don’t want to is a crime. If you have been raped, or sexually assaulted, remember that it’s not your fault, you aren’t to blame and there are people who can help you.

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| **Supporting Material: Possible signs of consent**  **Possible verbal signs of consent** | **Possible verbal signs of non-consent** |
| Yes  I'm sure  I'm excited  I want to...  I want to do this  I feel good about this  I'm ready  This is the right thing to do | No  I'm not sure  Stop  I don't want to do that  Can you please not do that  I thought I wanted to, but...  I don’t want to do this right now  I'm not ready or not sure if I'm ready  I don't want to do this anymore  This is the wrong thing to do |
| **Possible non-verbal signs of consent** | **Possible non-verbal signs of non-consent** |
| Direct eye contact  Nodding  Looking comfortable and relaxed  Laughter and/or smiling  "Open" body language, (e.g. relaxed, loose and open arms and legs, relaxed facial expressions, turning towards someone)  Actively taking part | Avoiding eye contact  Pushing someone away  Avoiding touch  Shaking head  Looking uncomfortable, tense, sad or fearful  "Closed" body language, like tense, stiff or closed arms and legs, turning away from someone  Not actively taking part |

**Discussion prompt: The right to withdraw consent**

**Scenario**

***‘What do you mean ‘stop’?'***

*‘Please stop. I want you to stop.’*

***‘But we just got started, it was great! You can’t want to stop now!’***

*‘I’ve changed my mind, I don’t want to.’*

*‘****You have been leading me on!’***

*‘No I haven’t!’*

***‘You can’t change your mind now!’***

*‘I can, I just don’t want to do it.’*

***‘But it’s not like it is the first time, we’ve done it before!’***

*‘I know, I just don’t want to now.’*

***‘What about me! You’re not being fair!’***

*‘I know, I’m sorry, but I really don’t want to.’*

**Discuss the following**

* What is the responsibility of the person seeking consent in this scenario?
* Does it matter at what point we decide to change our minds about doing something?
* If someone has done something before does that automatically mean we should expect them to want to do it again?
* Does the person who apologises in the scenario have anything to apologise for?
* What do you think about the term ‘leading someone on’