

Why Talk About Consent?

Consent is an important component to healthy, positive interactions and relationships. Understanding consent can lead to more enjoyable, less confusing and potentially harmful outcomes when engaging with others in any capacity¹. Increasing consent can reduce miscommunication, violence, trauma and overall harm, which is why it is imperative for people of all ages, and young people in particular, to begin to develop these skills and nurture an understanding of what consensual interactions look like². Seeking to increase consent in interactions can lead to individuals developing a better sense of their own boundaries and desires, more sophisticated communication skills and an increase in empathy. However, a majority of people do not learn about consent in middle school sex education classes or from their parents, but wish they had³. Programs like these can fill in the gaps and start the conversation earlier.

SESSION 1 (60 min)

Objectives:

At the conclusion of Session 1, participants will be able to:

1. Define consent and name at least 3 components of consensual interactions.
2. Develop an understanding of their own personal boundaries.
3. Demonstrate an increase in understanding of differing comfort levels in various circumstances.
4. Increase their ability to communicate about the concept of consent verbally and in written form.

Materials:

- 2 stacks of different colored index cards (enough for each participant to get one of each color)
- A big pad of paper (poster size)
- Thick tipped markers (Magic markers or sharpies will work)
- A box of pens (one for each participant)
- Pushpins or masking tape to hang poster paper if they are not already sticky-backed
- A box to collect index cards
- Scratch paper
- Projector or screen with audio to watch Youtube video.
- Computer or phone to access Youtube.

¹ <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/students/112015/112015-4112015-why-isunderstanding-sexual-consent-important>

² <https://www.npr.org/2016/08/09/487497208/to-prevent-sexual-assault-schools-and-parents-start-lessons-early>

³ https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/1414/6117/4323/Consent_Survey.pdf

Schedule:

(5 min) FREE WRITE

****Materials: pens for each participant, 2 stacks of different colored index cards**

- Participants receive a pen and 2 index cards as they enter the space.
- Give 5 minutes for participants to write an answer on one card to the question, “What does the word ‘consent’ mean to you?” If needed, also ask: “What do you think of when you think of the word ‘consent’?”
- Leaders can also think or write answers.
- Participants keep the second index card to write down any questions regarding consent that arise during the workshop. ****It helps to have two different colors of index cards to distinguish between definition and question cards.**

(5 min) INTRODUCTIONS/ ICEBREAKER

- Participants and Leaders go around in a circle stating name, pronouns and something they love to do.

(10 min) WORKING AGREEMENTS

****Materials: Large poster paper, thick tipped marker, push pins/ tape to hang poster**

- For smaller groups: together make a list of working agreements for fostering a safe, comfortable and non-judgemental environment that everyone agrees upon.
- Leader writes down agreements as they are discussed on large poster paper.
- For larger groups: Leaders prepare a short list ahead of time. Ask group if they agree to the list and if any additions are necessary.
- Examples of working agreements:
 - *Use “I” statements. Assume good intentions of others, have good intentions. Confidential space. Ask questions. Listen when someone is speaking. Take space, make space (If you are quiet, challenge yourself to speak up! If you speak easily, challenge yourself to let others have the floor). Turn off phones. Take care of yourself (Make sure to explain that consent can be a sensitive subject and can sometimes be upsetting to talk about. Doing what you need to do to take care of yourself might be going out of the room for a little, getting water or whatever you need, let us know if there’s anything we can do to make you more comfortable.)*

(15 min) CONSENT VIDEO + DEFINING CONSENT

****Materials: Screen with audio, scratch paper for small groups, pens**

- Put on “Let’s Get Consensual” youtube video.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=25&v=e1wRKTniHU8
- Explain: Participants will break out into small groups (4-5 people) and receive scratch paper and pens to list aspects of consent and create a definition for consent.
- Give groups 5 minutes to think and create their lists.
- Bring back to one large group and ask participants to share their definition and what they determined were important aspects of consent.