



SAYING "YES" TO THE DRESS:

A Discussion About Consent

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is the communication that happens between people, especially romantic partners or people who want to be physically/sexually intimate together. Consent is, in essence, permission given from one person to another. It is important that both individuals ask for and are asked for consent. Doing this supports each individual in having their boundaries respected and met.

HOW DOES CONSENT WORK IN REAL LIFE?

Some folks are familiar with the saying "no means no," but this is not enough to understand what consent means. "Yes means yes" is also not enough. Consent should be an enthusiastic "yes" and an ongoing conversation about what that "yes" means.

If you ask to kiss your partner and they say "yes," it is important for you to talk about what they are specifically saying "yes" to. Ask for clarification about how they are comfortable or not comfortable being kissed, or find out where it is okay and not okay for you to kiss them.

The key to understanding if you receive or give consent is to make sure all parties are on the same page when it comes to what is happening between them. Consent assists in preventing people from feeling powerless, or feeling like they have been taken advantage of, and/or hurt. It allows everyone to make the decisions they are most comfortable with regarding themselves and their bodies. Consent can consist of:

Explicitly agreeing to certain activities, either by saying "yes" or another affirmative statement, like "I'm open to trying"

Asking for clarity to be sure you know exactly what activity is being okayed (if you are receiving consent)

Clearly defining the activity you are saying "yes" or are giving consent to

Regularly checking in with your partner. Ask "Is this okay?" or "How are you feeling?"

CAN I CHANGE MY MIND AFTER GIVING CONSENT?

Absolutely! The best way to ensure both parties are comfortable with any intimate/sexual activity is to talk about it before, during and after. **Consent is an ongoing conversation.**

After consent is given, an individual can take away that consent at any time. One would do this by communicating to your partner that you are no longer comfortable with the intimate or sexual activity and you want to stop. Once an individual says they no longer want to continue with the activity, they no longer are giving consent for the other individual to continue that activity, and it is important to respect their decision.

It is also important to know that getting consent for one activity, one time, does not mean that you have permission for the same activity in the future. Consent should happen every time.

ARE THERE TIMES WHEN SOMEONE CANNOT LEGALLY GIVE CONSENT?

Yes - there are certain circumstances when an individual cannot give consent. When a person is drunk, on drugs, intoxicated, asleep, passed out, or in a situation where they do not feel safe saying no - **they cannot give consent.** This means even if an individual is in any of the states listed above and they say "yes" to a sexual act, the "yes" is not recognized in the court of law. The other individual involved could face criminal charges, ranging from sexual assault to rape. There are also legal restrictions on who can give consent, and to whom, depending on a person's age.

LET'S REVIEW! CONSENT IS:

- Agreement between partners to engage in intimate/sexual behavior
- An ongoing conversation
- Verbal and bodily cues that show you want to participate

CONSENT IS NOT:

- Refusing to acknowledge "no."
- Pressuring someone into sexual activity by using fear or intimidation.
- Someone being under the legal age of consent, as defined by the state.
- Someone being incapacitated because of drugs or alcohol.
- Assuming you have permission to engage in a sexual act because you've done it in the past, treating it like a "one-time fits all conversation."
- Assuming that wearing certain clothes, flirting, or kissing is an invitation for anything more.
- Gender specific; it is not up to one gender to ask for consent and another to give consent. Relationships come in all forms. **It is important for any partner in a relationship to ask for consent.**