

CONSENT IS THE DIFFERENCE

MAKE THE LEAP: INCREASE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF CONSENT. SHARE THE INFORMATION WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY – TALK ABOUT CONSENT!

Consent is the difference between sex and a crime.¹ It means that you and your sex partner freely agree to whatever sexual activity is happening, such as kissing, touching or intercourse. And, you can change your mind any time. You have to give consent each and every time you engage in sexual activity. You can't give consent if you are sleeping or unconscious.

It is not consent if:

- If you say 'no' at any time.
- You say 'yes' because you are scared, tricked, bullied or pressured until you agree (that's coercion).
- You are drunk or high.
- The other person assumes you are inviting something more, because you are wearing certain clothes, flirting, or kissing.
- The other person is a family member – such as a father, aunt, or grandfather.
- The other person is in a position of authority over you, such as a caregiver or babysitter.
- The other person is a professional that you see in their job, such as a teacher, doctor, or coach. Even if you agree to it – it's against the law for them to engage in sexual activity with you. The crime is called sexual exploitation

You have to be at least 16 years old to give consent.²

If you are 14-16 years of age, you can consent to sexual activity as long as your partner is less than five years older and there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency, or any kind of exploitation.³

WE DON'T TALK ENOUGH ABOUT CONSENT⁴

Some people worry that talking about consent will be awkward or that it will ruin the mood, which is not true. If anything, the mood is much more positive when both partners are happy and can openly communicate what they want.

Consent is always important. Here are some examples:

- Communicating when you change the type or degree of sexual activity with phrases like "Is this OK?"
- Explicitly agreeing to certain activities, either by saying "yes" or another affirmative statement, like "I'm open to trying."
- Using physical cues to let the other person know you're comfortable taking things to the next level. Verbal communication is important because some people may not be comfortable with physical cues alone.

Consent is a topic we all need to understand. Talk about it with people you trust. Your local sexual assault centre will have information as well as staff and volunteers who are able to talk with you about it confidentially.

¹ See Department of Justice: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/victims-victimes/def.html>

² See Age of Consent: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/faq.html>

³ There is also a close in age exception for 12 and 13 year olds. See Age of Consent

⁴ RAINN: What does consent look like? <https://www.rainn.org/articles/what-is-consent>