Start the Conversation: Practicing Consent
Resource Guide

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What is Consent?

**Dictionary Definition:** Permission for something to happen or agreement to do something

**FRIES** (Planned Parenthood, specific to sex/physical intimacy): Freely Given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic, Specific

**CRISP** (Clare Warden, Intimacy Directors & Coordinators): Confident/Considered, Reversible, Informed, Specific, Present/Permitted

**In Our Communities & Classrooms:** consent is finding agreements on how we will interact and respect each other’s boundaries and bodily autonomy

**Why is consent important?**
Practicing consent and working to build cultures of consent is not only about safe and ethical relationships and communities but also about empowering, honoring, and supporting ourselves and each other, even when our needs and wants are different. Practicing consent requires us to be in continual reflection about how we feel and what we need and want while also deconstructing the assumptions we have about others’ needs and wants. This prioritization of identifying and respecting boundaries, bodily autonomy, and wants enables us to better care for ourselves and our communities.

When we invite young people to build cultures of consent alongside us, we help them build a foundation to prioritize self-awareness, communication, and mutual respect that will support the formation of healthy relationships. This also instills in them the value of their autonomy and gives them tools to assert their boundaries and identify and articulate concerns and discomfort they may experience in non-sexual and sexual situations.
What is Consent Culture?
Consent culture, or a culture of consent, seeks to prioritize consent for all individuals and applies consent beyond sexual and physical interactions to all aspects of life. This can include prioritizing consent in the categories of time, resources, emotional engagement & labor, and physical interaction. When we seek to build cultures of consent, we seek to be open about the existing needs, expectations, and forms of power in a situation and reach agreements about how our shared goals can be met in ways that respect the boundaries and bodily autonomy of ourselves and others.

How do we build a Culture of Consent?
No matter our intentions, how we provide instructions, outline expectations, and ask questions provides young people information about the value of their boundaries, bodily autonomy, and right to consent. When we ask if a hug is wanted, affirm a young person’s decision not to sit on a relative’s lap, respect (or celebrate!) a “no,” seek permission before posting them on social media, honor when they communicate their bodily needs with us, or model setting our own boundaries, we demonstrate the ways each person’s boundaries and autonomy deserve respect. Being intentional about leading with consent-forward practices in activities and interactions lays a foundation for young people from which they can identify healthy and respectful ways to be in relationship with themselves, others, and our larger communities.

In situations where a young person’s consent is not legally recognized or secondary to health and safety, such as when receiving medical treatment or attending school, we can prioritize clearly explain why the adult(s) are making the decisions they are in advance, specifying what will and won’t be in the young person’s control, and listening to any opinions and questions they may have. We can also use this as an opportunity to highlight the nuance of consent and the many factors they will one day be responsible for considering when they are making legal decisions for themselves.

Practicing consent with young people can include…
- Asking both young people and adults before initiating a hug, kiss, or other form of physical contact
- Providing language and reminding young people to ask when seeking physical contact from others
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- Naming the changes we see in their body when they feel uncomfortable and frightened and how that changes our behavior (ex: “I see you are leaning away from me now so I’m going to stop rubbing your back.”)
- Treating no as a neutral response rather than a personal rejection
- Empowering young people to decide what they will share and when
- Repeating and affirming the boundaries they articulate them
- Reminding other adults to ask rather than assume the boundaries and needs of the young person

Three Key Steps:

Ask: communicating your desire/intention (via words, gestures, etc.) and asking if something specific is wanted or what the other person would like

Honor: allowing time for them to process and respond; paying close attention to receive their response means being aware of what they communicate with any combination of words, tone, body language, gestures, and silence/redirection & ready to seek clarification as needed

Receive: respecting the response whether it's a direct or indirect yes/no, a request for modification, or a specific invitation; depending on the response to the original ask, what is received may also be an ask

Consent-Forward* Practices:

Consent-forward practices are means by which we can lead with consent and prioritize the boundaries and bodily autonomy of ourselves and others. The following consent-forward practices can be integrated into your existing activities and interactions to prioritize seeking consent.

*Consent-forward and consent-based are two terms that have become popular to refer to individuals, practices, and programs that prioritize consent and building cultures of consent.

- Scaffolding Ask, Receive, Honor into the activities
- Including “no” as an option
- Centering relationship and communication
- Incorporating moments of reflection and reassessment
- Providing multiple means of participation, engagement, and opportunities for regulation
- Center consent as a goal rather than just a requirement
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- Exercise and strengthen skills for identifying and articulating personal needs and boundaries and respectfully responding to the needs and boundaries of others
- Seek consent at individual, interpersonal, and community level

Meg-John Barker: Rewriting the Rules
The Consent Check-List
https://www.rewriting-the-rules.com/zines/#1570712847485-79489f1b-f52a

This zine provides a checklist that you can work through when considering how to do anything – sex, a social event, work, a relationship – consensually. It explores and unpacks the key elements needed to ensure that people are freely agreeing to something, that they can tune into their wants, needs, limits, and boundaries and feel safe-enough to express them to others concerned.

Recommended Children’s Books & Book Lists

Pre-K - Lower Elementary
- Yes! No!: A First Conversation About Consent by Megan Madison Jessica Ralli, and Isabel Roxas
- C is for Consent by Eleanor Morrison
- Can I Give You a Squish? by Emily Neilson
- Don’t Hug Doug (He Doesn't Like It) by Carrie Finison
- Miles Is the Boss of His Body by Abbie Schiller and Samantha Kurtzman-Counter
- I Choose to Say No by Elizabeth Estrada
- Don’t Touch My Hair! by Sharee Miller
- What Does It Mean to Be Safe? by Rana DiOrio
- Let’s Talk About Body Boundaries, Consent, and Respect by Jayneen Sanders

Upper Elementary & Middle School
- Big Questions Book of Sex & Consent by Donna Freitas (Ages 10+)
- Maybe He Just Likes You by Barbara Dee
- Dress Coded by Carrie Firestone

Middle School & High School
- A Quick & Easy Guide to Consent by Isabella Rotman
- What Does Consent Really Mean? By Pete, Joseph, and Talia Wallace
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- *Can We Talk About Consent? A Book About Freedom, Choices, and Agreement* by Justin Hancock (Ages 14+)

Caregivers & Educators
- *Creating Consent Culture* by Marcia Baczynski and Erica Scott
- *Ask: Building Consent Culture* an anthology edited by Kitty Stryker
- *Staging Sex: Best Practices, Tools, and Techniques for Theatrical Intimacy* by Chelsea Pace

Other Resources
- [Sex Positive Families](#) | Workshops, Webinars, and Resources; providing education and resources that help families raise sexually healthy children using a shame-free, comprehensive, and pleasure-positive approach
- [The Consent Workshop](#) | a youth-led grassroots nonprofit organization based in Nigeria and Canada deconstructing rape culture through consent education, provision of resources and policy advocacy
- [Theatrical Intimacy Education](#) | Integrating Best Practices into K-12 Lesson Planning Workshop; a consulting group specializing in researching, developing, and teaching best practices for staging theatrical intimacy
- [Consent Education for Kids: Create a Culture of Consent in Your Home](#) by Bekah Groop
- [4 Ways Parents Teach Kids that Consent Doesn't Matter](#) video by Parenting Gently
- "[How to Teach Consent to Kids in 5 Simple Steps](#)" by Michelle Dominique Burk
- [Teaching Consent to Elementary Students](#) by Emelina Minero
- [Teaching Consent Doesn’t Have to Be Hard](#) by Beth Hoover
- [How My Third Graders and I Address Consent](#) by Elizabeth Kleinrock
- Instagram Accounts
  - Consent Culture Initiative | @consent_culture_initiative
  - Consent Educator Sarah Casper | @ComprehensiveConsent
  - Sex Positive Families | @SexPositive_Families