

# Consent 101: Respect, Boundaries, & Building Trust

Whether you're starting a new relationship or navigating a long-term partnership, knowing what consent looks like helps create safer, more respectful interactions.

## What Is Consent?

In this context, consent is a mutual agreement to engage in sexual activity. It should always be clear, voluntary, and communicated without pressure, manipulation, or fear.

Everyone involved must be capable of giving consent. This means they are:

- Of legal age
- Sober and alert
- Not under coercion or threat

**Consent isn't just a one-time check-in. It's an ongoing** conversation. You need consent every time, for every type of activity. Just because someone said yes in the past doesn't mean they're saying yes now. Just because someone agreed to one thing doesn't mean they're okay with everything.

**Fact: If someone is underage, asleep, intoxicated, or manipulated into saying yes—they cannot give consent.**

## How Consent Works in Real Life

Communication is active, not passive. You don't have to guess or make assumptions about what someone wants. Consent happens through open conversations where all people involved feel safe, heard, and free to say "yes," "no," or "let's talk about it."

## How to Practice Consent

- Ask, "Is this okay?" before moving forward
- Listen and respond to your partner's words and body language
- Respect a "no"—even if it's said quietly, indirectly, or nonverbally
- Check in as things progress; don't assume it's fine to keep going

**You also have the right to change your mind.** Consent can be withdrawn at any time, even in the middle of an activity. If something doesn't feel right, you can speak up—or use nonverbal signals like freezing, pulling away, or going silent. Partners should watch for these signs and stop immediately if anything seems off.



Consent doesn't end with a "yes" or "no."

It requires clear communication, mutual respect, and ongoing agreement. Learn what consent looks like in real life.





If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, you are not alone. RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline offers free, confidential, 24/7 support in English and en Español.

Call 800.656.HOPE  
(4673)  
Chat at  
RAINN.org/hotline  
Text "HOPE" to 64673



### **What Is Enthusiastic Consent?**

Enthusiastic consent means seeking out a clear, positive “yes”—not just the absence of “no.” This model encourages partners to look for active participation, mutual excitement, and ongoing check-ins throughout an intimate experience.

### **Enthusiastic consent looks like:**

- Saying “Yes, I want to” or “I’m into this”
- Smiling, nodding, or engaging in a relaxed and comfortable way
- Checking in with questions like, “Are you still okay with this?”
- Offering reassurance: “We can stop anytime—just let me know.”

**Arousal, lubrication, or orgasm are involuntary bodily responses. They do not equal consent.** If your body responds in a certain way during an unwanted or nonconsensual experience, it does not mean that what happened was okay. Sexual violence is never the survivor’s fault.

### **What Consent Is Not**

Understanding what doesn’t count as consent is just as important. These are red flags that show consent is not present:

- Ignoring a “no” or pushing through hesitation
- Assuming consent based on clothing, flirting, or past encounters
- Pressuring someone into saying “yes” through guilt, fear, or intimidation
- Engaging with someone who is too intoxicated to make informed decisions
- Taking silence or lack of resistance as agreement

**Consent should never be assumed. It must be given clearly, freely, and enthusiastically.**

### **Why Consent Matters**

Consent builds trust and connection. It ensures that everyone feels safe, respected, and in control of their own body and choices. Practicing consent is a powerful way to show care for yourself and your partner.

Talking about boundaries might feel awkward at first—but it’s one of the most important conversations you can have. Clear communication isn’t just responsible—it’s attractive, mature, and necessary.

### **If You Didn’t or Couldn’t Consent**

If something happened to you without your consent, it wasn’t your fault. Whether you froze, didn’t fight back, or someone used pressure or manipulation—what happened matters, and your experience is valid.