

Understanding Consent

Time Required: 1 hour

Learning Objectives:

- Understanding the concept of consent
- Identifying consensual and non-consensual behaviour
- Encouraging safe online dating skills and awareness about sexually exploitative behaviour

Notes for Educators:

In introducing a definition of consent, it is good to also contextualize by providing the concept of consent in realistic scenarios. This exercise allows the group to discuss various sexual and romantic scenarios, including digital interaction, and then explore where we individually and collectively stand on whether specific examples of behaviour are consensual, or possibly exploitative. The exercise allows for honest reflections and dialogue around the gendered barriers and attitudes some young people might be feeling around consent during intimate interactions.

Materials:

- Dry erase board or chalkboard
- Paper
- Tape
- Markers
- Cut-out words (see list in the activity)

Activity One

Discuss a general definition of consent (5-10 minutes). A working definition for you to share can be:

Consent is a voluntary, sober, enthusiastic, creative, wanted, mutual, honest and clear agreement to engage in specific sexual activity. Consent is active: it cannot be coerced or exploited. Consent is a process, which must be granted in the moment of each step of intimate or physical interaction.

It's important to keep in mind that consent goes beyond any sexual act and can be applied to the many ways we relate with others from posting pictures of someone else to physical gestures of affection such as hugs.

On the Dry Erase or Chalkboard, write "Asking for consent is" and "Asking for consent is NOT" on opposite sides. Have the following list of words (on pre-cut paper) in the middle, and ask students to work as a group and to SILENTLY rearrange the words until there is consensus about where each term fits.

SOBER
SEXY
ASSUMED
HOT
A TURN-OFF
PHONE SEX
MUTUAL
AWKWARD
BEING SHAMED OR PRESSURED TO DO SOMETHING
NECESSARY EVEN IN 2SLGBTQ+ RELATIONSHIPS*
SHARING INTIMATE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR PARTNER WITH YOUR FRIENDS
TALKING ABOUT WHAT FEELS GOOD
SAYING YES WITH HESITATION
AGREEING TO HOOK UP IN THE DAYS LEADING UP TO THE EVENT
GOING ON A DATE
SEXTING
AGREEING TO A DRINK
SHARING SEXY PICTURES WITH ONE ANOTHER
NEEDED
ARRANGING A DATE FROM A DATING APP
SENDING AN UNREQUESTED PERSONAL PICTURE
COOL
SLIDING INTO SOMEONE'S DM'S
AGREEING TO SEEK PRIVACY TOGETHER
INVITING SOMEONE TO COME OVER
INVITING SOMEONE TO YOUR BEDROOM
STALKING SOMEONE AFTER FIGURING OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA WHERE THEY LIVE
DOING WHAT YOU ARE TOLD
FILMING SOMEONE WITHOUT THEIR KNOWLEDGE
PRESSURING

** Please note that studies show that 2SLGBTQ+ people experience higher rates of intimate partner violence, where the sexual violence 2SLGBTQ+ people is often downplayed as 'just flirtatious' or 'not real violence'*

Afterwards, the group can debrief around the challenges they might have had placing some of the words on a side. This exercise can open up into the conversation for students around the feelings and attitudes some might have about consent and exploitation.

This exercise allows for people to engage in discussion and unpack scenarios where people might be unsure of whether a specific behaviour is harassing or exploitative, or explore so-called 'gray areas' around language or actions. Areas to explore include both the distinct and similar pressures both men and women face in conversations within short-term, new, or even long-term committed relationships.

Some of the questions you can ask to start or facilitate the discussion following the activity can include:

- Which words were difficult to place?
- Which words were obvious?
- Does anyone want to share why they might not agree with where any words are?

Activity Two

Ask students about the different apps that are used to meet others including potential romantic or sexual partners.

Get students to share some safety precautions they might take when dating online.

Divide the class into different groups and hand out one of the following scenarios to each group:

- *Paula met Don in a Dating App. It's been three weeks since their first conversation and he is already promising her a "better future" and "eternal love".*
- *Carla and Jim get along very well over a dating app. Jim, however, continuously makes their conversations very sexual and requests intimate pictures from Carla.*
- *Within their first conversations in a dating App, Alex promises Aiden various gifts and nights out at luxurious places.*
- *Jo and Sam started talking on a dating app. After a while, Jo reveals that they are actually 2 years older than the age listed on their profile*
- *Jordan sent private pictures to Marion over a dating app. Marion tells Jordan that they could sell those pictures for some extra cash*
- *You meet someone online and share with them that your parents are strict. They tell you "your parents will never change" and invite you to escape with them.*

Ask each group to discuss:

- Are there any red flags in your scenario?
- Why are they red flags?
- What would be the best decision for the people involved in the scenarios?

Ask each group to read their scenario out loud and answer those three questions. Tie the conversation to child sexual exploitation and how digital spaces are increasingly used by Human Traffickers to gain trust and compliance from vulnerable youth in order to exploit them.

Close the activity by asking students about green flags in online dating. These can include:

- Respecting boundaries
- Taking things slowly
- Not using any kind of pressure or threats
- Showing interest in your friendships and family
- Non-controlling behaviour

Wrap-Up

Discuss how often unhealthy gender expectations on masculinity pressure male-identifying individuals to be sexually aggressive/dominant and disregard the importance of asking for consent.

Finish by mentioning that there is nothing wrong with online dating, yet safety precautions are very important as dating applications are widely used by Human Traffickers to groom young people.