

# CONSENT, SEX & THE LAW



**CONSENT** means you agree to do something, and are comfortable with this decision. When we think about consent and sex, this means that you feel able, and agree to, take part in having sex, or engaging in any type of sexual activity at that time.

Any type of sexual activity always needs to have consent from every person involved. This includes:

**KISSING, SEXUAL TOUCH (fingering, masturbation), ORAL, ANAL, AND VAGINAL SEX WITH A PENIS OR SEX TOY**

**REMEMBER** - just because you have consented to something, you can still say you want it to stop if you change your mind and for that to happen. Also, just because you have consented to something once does not mean your partners can expect that from you all the time without checking you are happy to do it again.



**CONSENT IS ABOUT SHOWING YOURSELF AND YOUR PARTNERS THE CARE AND RESPECT YOU ALL DESERVE!**



## CONSENT & THE LAW

Legally, consent is the agreement between people to engage in sexual activity. It's very important that all those involved must have:

### FREEDOM

To make a decision to engage in any sexual activity that they want to at that time, without feeling pressured, forced, threatened, or otherwise coerced into any type of sex.

### CHOICE

Knowing that if they change their mind at any time, and either want to do something else or for the sex to stop, this will be respected, and they will not be made to feel bad about themselves.

### CAPACITY

Being able to fully understand what they are agreeing to. If a person is not fully conscious, or are too sleepy, drunk, or high, to know what is going on - **THEY DO NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CONSENT.**

Engaging in any sexual activity without the full consent of everyone involved is rape, sexual assault, or sexual harassment and is unacceptable. All are serious criminal offences and can be prosecuted. If anything like this has ever happened to you, support is available, and you can report it if that is something you would want to do, at any time.

## DID YOU KNOW

In the UK, the legal age of consent to have sex is 16, and anyone aged under 13 cannot consent to any type of sexual activity. It is also an offence to make, distribute, possess or show any indecent or sexualised images of anyone aged under 18, even if they had been created with the consent of that young person.

These laws are in place to protect young people, not to prosecute them.



## COMMUNICATING CONSENT



Giving and getting consent is all about open, honest, and respectful communication. It's talking about what you do and don't want, what you like or don't like, and also things that you might be willing to try and know your decisions will be respected if you change your mind at any time. You can practice communicating consent in other situations, ask other people for their consent on something and pay attention to their response and how they're feeling. It's important you do this for yourself too, and see how much better it is to have had that conversation.

### GETTING CONSENT



#### ASK IF SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS WHAT THEY WANT, AND IF IT FEELS GOOD FOR THEM



This might mean asking them what they want to happen next?, if they want to stop?, do they want to try a different position?, is there anything they want to do instead?

#### LISTEN TO AND RESPECT WHAT THEY SAY



They might tell you that it feels good, that they like it, that they want you to keep doing it or to do it again, they might tell you where they enjoy and want to be touched. If they tell you to stop, that they aren't in the mood at that time, or if they're completely silent it's important you stop and check and check that they're ok.

#### UNDERSTAND YOUR PARTNER'S BODY LANGUAGE



Reading your partner's body language can be a really important way of making sure they're giving their consent, even if they haven't said so in words.

Are they looking at you? Do they seem relaxed and happy? Are they nodding their head or smiling? Are they kissing or touching you back? If not, if they are not making eye-contact or seem frightened, if they are trying to push you away or off them or flinching when you touch them, they are not giving their consent for the way you are touching them or the sexual activity taking place and you must stop.

### GIVING CONSENT



Just as important as the things you might say, or the body language you might display to show whether or not you are consenting, giving consent involves checking in with yourself to make sure you are comfortable and want any sexual activity to take place.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

Are you doing this because you want to? Do you have feelings for this person and want to be intimate with them, or are you feeling pressured or forced into it? Are you worried you might disappoint them if you don't do what they want?

#### DO YOU FEEL SAFE?

Sex should be fun and something that you want to do. You might feel nervous because it can be exciting. If though, it is something that is causing you anxiety or panic, if you feel scared or upset, if you don't want sex at that time it's important a partner respects that.

#### HOW IS YOUR BODY RESPONDING

Are you turned on and does it feel good? Or does it feel painful or uncomfortable? Do you want to try a different position or want it to stop? If so it's important that your partner listens to what you tell them. **REMEMBER** - even if your body is responding in a certain way and is aroused, you still don't have to have sex if you don't want to.

If someone forces you, or pressures you into doing something you don't want to do, it is **NEVER** your fault. **If you or someone you know is at risk of sexual assault or violence you can call 999 any time of day or night if it is safe for you to do so, to get help.** If you don't want to talk to the police you can contact the Sexual Assault Referral Centre Hackenthorpe Lodge on tel: 0330 223 0099 or visit <https://hackenthorpelodge.org>

Further information on other support options for sexual and domestic abuse is available at: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/public-health/get-help-with-domestic-abuse>