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# CENTERSTONE

## Healthy Relationships & Consent

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# What is consent?

- Consent is defined as “to give permission for something to happen or be done.” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
- In the context of a healthy relationship, this is giving a dating partner permission to engage in a specific action.
- This includes everything from holding hands to penetrative sex.
- Consent should be sought before a person engages in any kind of physical activity with their dating partner.
- In other words, if you want to physically interact with another person, you need to ask!



# Consent Further Defined

- Every physical act that a couple engages in requires both person's consents.
- Just because a person consents to one act does not mean they consent to any others.
- Just because a person consents once does not obligate them to participate in that act again.
- Even if a person has consented to an act, they have the right to stop at any time.
- Consent is explicit permission. Just because a person doesn't say "no" does not mean they are saying "yes."



# In other words . . .

- YOU are in control of YOUR Body. No one may enter your personal space without your consent.
- YOU have the right to say “No” at any act, even if you have previously said “Yes.”
- YOU have the right to stop ANY encounter at ANY time.
- YOU must also ask for consent from your dating partner.



# When asking for consent

- When asking for consent, you must consider 1) does this person want to consent? And 2) is this person able to consent?
- Whether or not a person is able to consent depends on a variety of factors.
- For instance, if a person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, **THEY CANNOT CONSENT.**
- If a person is sleeping, unconscious or mentally incapacitated, **THEY CANNOT CONSENT.**



# So Let's Consider the Following Scenarios



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Casey and Dakota have been dating for a couple of weeks. Casey really likes Dakota and would like to kiss her. On their next date, Casey asks Dakota if he can kiss her. Dakota says, “Yes,” and the couple kisses.

Did Casey have Consent?

YES!



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Jamie and Taylor are at a party. Taylor has been drinking and flirting with Jamie. Jamie asks if Taylor would like to leave, and the pair leaves together. Jamie notices that Taylor is having difficulty walking and has slurred speech. When they arrive at Jamie's house, Taylor stumbles into the bathroom. It's sounds like Taylor is throwing up. When Taylor comes out of the bathroom, Jamie begins to kiss Taylor. Taylor seems unresponsive and unaware of the surroundings. Jamie continues to kiss Taylor.

Did Jamie have Consent?

NO!



Payton and Riley have been dating for a while. The couple makes out, but haven't had sex yet. Riley isn't comfortable having sex yet and has verbally expressed this to Payton multiple times. While hanging out one night, Payton begins unbuttoning Riley's shirt. Riley pulls away, again expressing being uncomfortable with having sex. Payton says, "Come on, it's not a big deal. Everybody has sex. Don't you care about me?" After several minutes of pressuring Riley, Payton begins to undress Riley again, and Riley does not physically pull away.

Did Payton have Consent?

NO!

Keisha and Trey have been hanging out for a while. The couple has been using condoms as their form of birth control. Trey complains that he does not like condoms and that, if Keisha trusted him, she would be okay with him pulling out. Keisha continues to insist on using condoms to prevent pregnancy and transmission of STDs. One night, while Trey and Keisha are having sex, Trey removes the condom without asking Keisha. Trey continues to have sex with Keisha.

Did Trey have Consent?

**NO!**

# Let's talk about power in relationships . . .

- When two people are involved in a relationship, there's a component of power.
- Power involves who “calls the shots.” In other words, we look at who is in a position to make the decisions in the relationship.
- For example: who has the power in these relationships?

Parent and Child

Employee and Supervisor

Teacher and Student



# When it comes to romantic relationships:

- It is ideal for these relationships to be equal in power.
- This means both parties should have equal rights to make decisions in the relationship.
- What factors might contribute to differences in power?

- Age/Developmental Level
- Employment
- Sexual Experience
- Financial Status
- Physical/Mental Health
- Education
- Culture
- Gender
- Physical Prowess



# So Let's Consider the Following Scenarios



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Derek is a high school sophomore who plays varsity soccer. One of his teachers, Amy, coaches girls' soccer. Amy is 23 years old and has recently been helping coach the boys' team because the boys' coach has been sick. Amy seems kind of flirtatious with a few of the guys on Derek's team. She has even offered to give a few of the guys private coaching lessons, but has asked them to keep it a secret, so that the girls' team does not get jealous. Derek overhears in the locker room one of his teammates, Andy, saying that he hooked up with Amy.

Is this an equal balance of power?

NO!



Kendra is 16 years old and a junior in high school. While at a football one night, Kendra meets Jake. Jake is 22 years old and attended high school with Kendra's older brother. After several weeks of texting back and forth, Jake asks Kendra to be his girlfriend. Kendra thinks she's falling for Jake. He just seems so much more mature than the boys she goes to school with. Jake is in college, has job, a car and even his own apartment. With so much experience, Kendra just lets Jake set the pace for their relationship.

Is this an equal balance of power?

NO!



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# Consent Must Be:

- Explicit
- Ongoing
- Mutual



# How do we maintain consent?

- Talk with your partner. Be clear in what you are both comfortable with. Be clear on your limits and boundaries.
- Talk before introducing any new physical act into your relationship.
- When introducing new physical affection, be sure to ask, “Are you comfortable with this?” or “Is this okay?” Maintain these questions throughout your affection.
- Never pressure your partner into an act they seem uncomfortable with.
- If your partner seems quiet or unresponsive, stop what you are doing and again, ask “Are you comfortable with this?” and remind them that you can stop at any time.
- If at any point your partner says “No” or “Stop”, STOP IMMEDIATELY.



*Everyone deserves to be in a safe, consensual, respectful, healthy relationship. NO ONE deserves to be scared, or to be abused physically, verbally or emotionally. If you are someone you know is in an unsafe relationship, you can call 1-866-331-9474 or visit [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org) to talk to someone 24 hours a day. You should also talk to a trusted adult as soon as possible.*

