

Let's Talk Consent

March 2024

Sexual consent, or consent, is when people agree to a sexual activity before it happens. It's not just about saying "yes" one time—it also means checking in along the way to make sure everyone still feels comfortable. Consent is important to building healthy and respectful relationships. With consent, everyone knows what is and is not okay.

Consent is...

Voluntary

Give consent when you want to, not because you feel you have to or are tired of saying "no." It is never automatic, even if you're in a relationship. If someone is in a position of power over you, that can get in the way of your ability to consent.

Ongoing

Consent is an ongoing conversation about what you and your partner feel comfortable doing. Part of that conversation may be one of you changing your mind or deciding to stop.

Informed

To give consent, you need to have all the information about how it impacts you and your sexual health. It's not consent if someone lies or hides important information, like secretly removing a condom or lying about a sexually transmitted infection.

Coherent

Drugs and alcohol impact your decision making, so you and your partner must be coherent to give consent. A person cannot consent when they are drunk or high, even if they say "yes."

Essential

Consent is essential to any sexual activity, including genital touching, oral sex, and vaginal or anal penetration. If someone engages in sexual activity with you without your consent, it is sexual assault, which is a crime.



You have a right to refuse or give consent, so remember to use your **V.O.I.C.E!** Also, remember, it is NEVER your fault if you are sexually assaulted. If you think you have been sexually assaulted, reach out to a trusted adult or contact one of the hotlines on the next page to get support.

Did you know?

Each state has its own age of consent law, which states the minimum age someone must be before they are legally capable of consenting to sex. These laws are designed to prevent adults from taking advantage of minors (people under the age of 18). However, some states have laws that make it [illegal for two minors to have sex if one or both are under the age of consent](#). Therefore, it is important to know the [age of consent laws in your state](#).

Want to learn more about consent?

Check out these resources!

Family and Youth Services Bureau, *We Think Twice*[™]: [Dating and Relationships](#)

Collection of resources on how to have healthy relationships with friends, family members, and romantic partners.

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): [What Consent Looks Like](#)

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): [Consent Laws \(by state\)](#)

State laws regarding consent, including information on age of consent in each state.

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): [Sexual Assault](#)

Have you been affected by sexual assault?

Get confidential support.

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#)

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, call 800-656-4673 (800-656-HOPE) or use the online chat hotline in [English](#) or [Spanish](#) for confidential 24/7 support.

RALIANCE: [Rape Crisis Centers](#)

Directory of local rape crisis and sexual assault organizations in 56 U.S. states and territories that provide free and low-cost support, including counseling and legal assistance.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: [love is respect](#)

Call 866-331-9474, text "LOVEIS" to 22522, or use TTY: 800-787-3224 to access 24/7 support if you or someone you know may be experiencing or is at risk for dating abuse. Remember that dating abuse is a pattern of behaviors used to gain or maintain power and control over a partner—physical violence is just one example of dating abuse.

This resource was developed by RTI International and its subcontractor partners under contract #GS-00F-354CA/75ACF122F80015 Task 4 with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau.

Suggested Citation: Wulah, A., Tallant, J., Offiong, A., & Dickinson, D. (2024). *Let's talk consent*. Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau.