

# WHAT DOES IT TAKE ... TO GIVE SEXUAL CONSENT?

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## **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. List the conditions necessary for giving consent to a sexual behavior.
2. Describe common situations that young people face, based on the conditions of consent.
3. Demonstrate their own ability to consent.

## **Audience**

Middle adolescents (ages 14-17)

## **Rationale**

In order to determine whether a sexual behavior is appropriate in a particular relationship, at a particular time, in a particular place, a person needs to understand the concept of consent. Consent is a particularly important idea for young people to grasp, as they make choices about their relationships. In this lesson participants practice assessing a situation for the ability of an individual to give sexual consent.

## **Lesson Outline**

Introductions, Group Agreements and Purpose (See **The Lesson Essentials**, p. 3)

Guidelines

Consent Situations

Would You Be Able to Consent?

Conclusion

## **Materials**

- Easel paper/whiteboard
- **Handout: Guidelines for Consent**
- Easel paper or signs, prepared with one of each of these statements:
  - **ABLE TO GIVE CONSENT**
  - **NOT ABLE TO GIVE CONSENT**

- **Educator Resource: Consent Situations** (Prepare large cards with one different situation for each pair of participants; also make a copy of all the situations for participants to read together later.)

**Note:** Most of the situations deal with sexual intercourse, because that behavior puts people at risk for pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection and abuse.

## **Procedure**

### **GUIDELINES**

1. Begin the lesson by asking, “Can anyone think of a time when you, or someone you know, agreed to do something you didn’t really want to?” You may want to give an example from your own experience. Ask for a few volunteers and jot the basics of the situation on the easel paper/whiteboard. What are some reasons why people sometimes agree to do something they don’t really want to do?
2. State that sometimes a person agrees to do something with a sexual partner that they don’t want to do. This lesson gives participants a chance to examine the conditions necessary for a person to be able to agree to freely and safely engage in **any** sexual behavior. Distribute the **Handout: Guidelines for Consent**. Review the handout, clarifying any questions participants have.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- a. How easy or difficult would it be to adhere to these guidelines?
- b. What might make it challenging to adhere to these guidelines?
- c. If one of your friends was having trouble understanding consent, what might you tell them?

### **CONSENT SITUATIONS**

1. Note that free, knowledgeable and unpressured consent is important for many shared behaviors and activities and in **all** relationships. This next activity will give participants a chance to examine these consent guidelines in real life situations. Explain that although about half of adolescents do not have sexual intercourse, many of the situations in this lesson involve intercourse because of the importance of being very clear about what consent means with this particular behavior.
2. Post the easel paper or signs prepared with the statements **ABLE TO GIVE CONSENT** and **NOT ABLE TO GIVE CONSENT**. Distribute one card each from the **Educator Resource: Consent Situations** to pairs or small groups of participants. Ask them to identify, based on the limited information given, **one** way the person on their card seems either **able** or **not able** to give consent, and **why**.

3. Now, distribute copies of the complete **Educator Resource: Consent Situations** so participants can follow all the situations more easily. Ask one person from each pair or group to post their card under the **ABLE** or **NOT ABLE** signs, read the situation aloud, and tell why they decided to place their person where they did. With each situation, ask the other participants:

- Do you agree or disagree with the placement, or the reasons? Why?
- What questions would you ask the person in the situation to determine how able they are to give voluntary informed consent?

***Discussion Questions:***

- a. What reactions do you have to the consent situations?
- b. What other situations can you think of where consent may be in question?
- c. How can reviewing these situations help you in the future?

## **WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO GIVE CONSENT?**

1. Ask participants to turn back to the **Handout: Guidelines for Consent**. Invite them to reflect on the guidelines, and think about them as if they are a checklist for engaging in sexual activity. Ask participants to share ideas on how they would change each guideline into a question to ask oneself when considering engaging in a sexual activity with a particular person, at a particular time, in a particular place.

***Discussion Questions:***

- a. How helpful can these guidelines be for somebody who is thinking about engaging in a sexual behavior? Explain.
- b. If someone looking at this list realizes they are not able to give voluntary, informed consent, what could that person do?
- c. If a person does not know what a sexual behavior involves, how to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, or which sexual relationships are illegal in their state, how can that person find out this information?

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Distribute notecards to all of the participants. Conclude the lesson by asking participants to complete the following sentence, writing their response down on a notecard:

***The most important thing about consent is ...***

2. Collect all of the cards and either read all of them aloud yourself, or redistribute to the participants and ask them to read the card they receive aloud.