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LESSON:

# Talking to Your Kids About Consent

(Ages 8-18)



## Background

It is absolutely imperative that your teen knows what it means to give consent. They need to know that if any attention is unwanted, it needs to stop. Teaching this lesson to your child will not only empower them with confidence, but also make them aware of and help protect them from sexual predators. Emphasize that your children should be treated with respect and dignity everywhere.

## Preparation

Review the objective of the lesson and understand why it is important to talk to your child about consent. Read over the lesson first and familiarize yourself with the glossary terms. Anticipate any questions your child might have. Be prepared to empathize with your child.

## Objective

- Define consent.
- Explain consent is every person's right.
- Discuss how to be safe in various situations.
- Empower your child by helping them realize they are in control.
- Define rape culture.

## Lesson: What is Consent?

Consent is giving informed, clear, and conscious permission or agreement. It's crucial that your teens understand what constitutes **consent** when it comes to sex, both for themselves and for others, so they will know when "yes" really means "yes."

Having sex with someone without their consent is forcible or coerced **rape**. Date rape doesn't just happen on college campuses, so talk with your kids about rape in this type of situation as well. Help them understand sex is good and healthy when consent is given and can be a beautiful experience. Teach them they have to power to say "no!" Empower your child by teaching that if someone is being physical with them in a way they do not like, they can say no and get away. They have that right and power. Being slapped, pinched, grabbed, or touched in any way that's not wanted or uncomfortable is to be touched without consent. Emphasize that your child should expect to be treated with **respect** and dignity everywhere. They should also give that respect to others.

If there is anyone who touches your teen in a way to which they did not consent, it needs to be stopped immediately so it doesn't progress. This kind of touching can start with a "**test touch**," (see glossary) such as a touch to the arm or a hug, then progress more and more to the point that it is uncomfortable and unwanted. Tell your teenager that even if they liked hugging or other physical contact with someone before, they can stop it if it becomes uncomfortable or more than they want.

Make it clear to your teen that they should not only say no, but they should walk away. They need to completely remove themselves from the situation, and call an adult if needed. Assure your teen you will be his/her advocate.

Point out the types of things that make up **rape culture**, such as blaming the victim, making jokes about rape, gender violence in movies, assuming only promiscuous women (and never men) get raped, and tolerance of sexual harassment.

\*It is important to reassure your child (both boys and girls) that if a person, harms them in any way, you will listen to them, believe them and help them in whatever way they need. Remind them that when someone has touched them in a sexual way or hurt them against their consent it is not their fault.

## Questions to Ask Your Child

- Why is trust an important part of a relationship?
- How does good communication relate to determining what your partner truly wants?
- If a person does not respect another's "no," when does it become harassment?
- How will you know if someone has given you their consent?
- What else besides drugs or alcohol could make it hard to give true consent?
- What should you do if you have not given consent but a person comes on to you anyway?
- What does it mean to be violated?
- Why do we sometimes blame the victim of a **sexual assault**? How can we avoid this?

## Activity

Pose the following scenario to bring the subject into real-life context: You are at a party and you've had two beers. You don't normally drink, and you're feeling a little light headed. Everything seems silly. You're flirting back and forth with a guy/girl you know from math class but have never really noticed before. You feel silly and giddy, and he/she suddenly seems like the greatest person in the room. He/she, who has also had a few drinks, starts making sexual overtures toward you. You've never thought of him or her like that before, but you feel so tipsy that sex with him/her seems like a good idea. You find a secluded spot together and have sex.

## Questions:

- Have you truly given consent?
- Has he/she?
- Do you think this would play out differently if one or both of you weren't impaired?



## Following Up

- Each time your child is not in your care, be aware of who they are with and where they spend their time.
- This will not be a one-time discussion; you'll want to reiterate these principles continuously.
- Don't be afraid to ask your child if they've ever been in a situation where they've had to use the skills taught in this lesson, let them know you will support them no matter what.
- When you see examples of rape culture in the news, in an advertisement, or on social media, point out how harmful it is and how it is contributing to unhealthy sexuality.

## Related Discussions

All of these can be found in *30 Days of Sex Talks, Empowering Your Child with Knowledge of Sexual Intimacy* on Amazon: <http://amzn.to/1TEMnUr>.

Pornography

Respect

Creating a Healthy Relationship

Relationship Boundaries

Self-esteem and Sex



## Glossary Terms

**Consent:** Consent is giving informed, clear, and conscious permission or agreement.

**Rape:** A sex crime in which the perpetrator forces another person to have sexual intercourse against their will and without consent. Rape often occurs through the threat or actuality of violence against the victim.

**Rape Culture:** A forced culture in which rape is pervasive and to an extent normalized due to the culture and societal attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Behaviors that facilitate rape culture include victim blaming, sexual objectification, and denial regarding sexual violence.

**Respect:** A feeling or understanding that someone or something is important and should be treated in an appropriate way.

**Sexual Abuse:** The improper sexual usage or treatment of another person or entity, often to unfairly gain power or other benefit in the relationship. In instances of sexual abuse, undesired sexual behaviors are forced upon one person by another

**Sexual Assault:** A term often used in legal contexts to refer to sexual violence. Sexual assault occurs when there is any non-consensual sexual contact or violence. Examples include rape, groping, forced kissing, child sexual abuse, and sexual torture.

**Test Touch:** Seemingly innocent touches by a predator or offender, such as a pat on the back or a squeeze on the arm, that are meant to normalize kids to being in physical contact with the predator. Test touches can progress to trying to be alone with the child.