

Guide to Autonomy, Consent, and Healing in Relationships

Union of Saints

1. Understanding Personal Autonomy

- **Definition:** Autonomy is the sacred right to choose your own path, your own body, and your own relationships without pressure.
- **Key Principle:** No one owns another person's time, body, or choices—even within committed relationships.

Signs Your Autonomy Is Being Honored:

- You feel free to say *yes* or *no* without fear.
 - Your boundaries are acknowledged and respected.
 - You are supported in pursuing your goals, even if they differ from your partner's.
-

2. Consent in Relationships

- **Consent is active, not assumed.** It requires clear, mutual agreement.
- **Consent is ongoing.** You can change your mind at any time.
- **Consent is specific.** Agreeing to one thing does not mean agreeing to all things.

What Consent Looks Like:

- ✓ Enthusiastic participation
- ✓ Ongoing verbal and nonverbal agreement
- ✓ Respect when you change your mind

What Is Not Consent (Examples of Coercion):

- ✗ Repeated pressure or guilt-tripping (“If you loved me, you would...”)
- ✗ Using substances or manipulation to lower resistance
- ✗ Threats, intimidation, or withdrawal of affection as punishment
- ✗ “Wearing someone down” until they give in
- ✗ **Force** ← **Contact Authorities Immediately**

3. Why Goals May Differ in Relationships

- One partner may prioritize family, while another prioritizes career or spiritual growth.
 - Differences don't mean failure; they invite dialogue and respect.
 - A healthy relationship finds balance without forcing one person to abandon their sacred path.
-

4. The Sacredness of Choice

- Choice is an expression of the soul's freedom.
 - When choice is respected, love flourishes.
 - When choice is violated, ***the spirit may feel fractured***, and ***soul recovery*** becomes necessary.
-

5. Soul Recovery After Boundary Violation

When someone crosses your boundaries:

- **Acknowledge what happened.** Write it down to affirm your truth.
 - **Release guilt.** Responsibility lies with the person who disrespected your boundaries.
 - **Reconnect with your essence.** Practices like journaling, meditation, prayer, therapy, and supportive community help rebuild inner strength.
 - **Affirm your sacred autonomy.** Reclaim your right to choice and peace.
-

6. Next Steps: Protecting Yourself

a. Immediate Care

- Ensure physical safety first.
- Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, counselor, or crisis hotline.

b. Police Statement Guide (Compassionate Version)

When ready, you may choose to involve law enforcement. To prepare:

1. **Ground Yourself:** Take a few deep breaths, write affirmations like *“My truth matters.”* ← *Do not let anyone gaslight your experiencing, including the police.*
 2. **State the Facts Clearly:**
 - Who was involved
 - What happened (without minimizing or over-explaining)
 - When and where it occurred
 - How it impacted you
 3. **Use Clear Language:**
 - Instead of “It was confusing,” say: “I said no, and they continued.”
 - Instead of “Maybe I overreacted,” say: “They ignored my refusal.”
 4. **Include Evidence (if available):** texts, photos, or witnesses.
 5. **Affirm Your Dignity:** Close with a simple truth, e.g., *“I did not give consent. My boundaries were violated.”*
-

c. Personal Victim Guide

A compassionate self-reference for recovery:

- **Emotional Safety:** Grounding practices (breathing, journaling, prayer).
 - **Practical Safety:** Change locks, adjust routines, inform trusted people if needed.
 - **Professional Support:** Therapy, survivor advocacy organizations, hotlines.
 - **Community:** Safe groups, supportive friends, faith-based or secular healing circles.
 - **Legal & Practical:** Restraining orders, victim advocacy programs, legal aid.
 - **Rebuilding Soul Power:** Affirmations such as:
 - *“My boundaries are holy.”*
 - *“I am worthy of respect and care.”*
 - *“My voice is strong, and my healing is real.”*
-

✨ This guide honors both the **practical** and **spiritual** sides of autonomy, consent, and healing—balancing safety planning with soul recovery.