

Talking about Consent

So far, we have discussed healthy relationships from a general standpoint. The remainder of this document will focus on having a healthy sexual relationship with your partner. The most important topic of discussion related to this idea is consent.

What is consent?

Consent is the voluntary agreement of an individual to engage in an activity. In the case of relationships, the term is often used in the context of sexual activity.

Some characteristics of consent are as follows:

- **Informed:** Consent is the unambiguous, affirmative, and conscious decision by each partner to engage in mutually agreed upon sexual activity.
- **Voluntary:** Consent is willing, positive cooperation in an act, or the expression of desire to engage in an activity. True consent is not forced. Silence is not consent.
- **Revocable:** Consent on one occasion does not indicate consent for future sexual activity. Consent can be given and withdrawn at any time, regardless of the relationship. The activity must stop immediately once consent is withdrawn.
- **Consenting to one kind of sexual activity does not mean consent for another sexual activity.**
- **Consent is not obtained when the person is incapable of consenting – for example, due to intoxication or abuse of power or trust.**
- **Consent must be freely given – a person is free to say yes or no in the situation. Saying yes because saying no could result in negative consequences is not freely given consent.**