

# Consent

## Easy read PDF



Please note the word 'Rape' is used frequently in this document

# Contents

- 1 What is Consent?
- 2 Is Consent just 'yes' or 'no'?
- 3 Ways to ask for consent
- 4 Non-verbal ways to ask for consent
- 5 Support



# What is consent?

Consent is used in our every-day life, however unfortunately, at times it can be ignored, avoided or sometimes, people may not really know what consent means.

Consent means gaining the permission for something to happen or an agreement to do something. Using the Fries acronym, consent has to be:

Freely given

Reversible

Informed

Enthusiastic

Specific

This means that when gaining permission for something to happen it must be (1) **Freely given**, so the person must not feel pressured or forced, (2) **Reversible**, the person must be able to change their mind, (3) **Informed**, the person must be able to understand what they are agreeing to, (4) **Enthusiastic**, the person must be happy to agree and (5) **Specific**, the person must be aware of what they are specifically agreeing to.

The agreement to engage in sexual behaviour is known as sexual consent. Before you engage in sexual activity with someone, you must first determine whether they wish to engage in sexual activity with you as well. It's also crucial to be open and honest with your partner about your desires and dislikes.

Setting your personal boundaries and respecting your partner's are all part of consenting and asking for consent — and checking in if things aren't clear. For sex to be consensual, both parties must agree to it every time.

Sexual activity (including oral sex, genital touching, and vaginal or anal penetration) without consent is a form of sexual violence.

# Is consent just yes or no?

Following on from the Fries acronym, you may be able to see where consent might not just be as easy as 'yes' or 'no'.

For example, if someone repeatedly asks if you will have sex with them and you give in after a while, this means you were not consenting enthusiastically nor was it freely given. You were pressured into agreeing which is a form of sexual violence, called sexual coercion.

Not everyone is able to verbally agree to something and so may use other ways of communicating to acknowledge if they are consenting or not. This may be because they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or they may have a disability which means they communicate in other ways. We will talk more about this in the next section.

It is also important to acknowledge 'capacity'. Capacity means the ability to use and understand information to make a decision, and communicate any decision made. A person lacks capacity if their mind is impaired or disturbed in some way, which means they're unable to make a decision at that time. This can mean if someone is mentally unwell, has a learning disability that prevents them in having capacity, but it can also mean whether someone is at an appropriate age to engage in sexual activity, for example, in the UK, the legal age to have sex is 16 - this is because the Law states that those who are aged 16 have the capacity to make consenting decisions regarding sexual intercourse.

# Ways to ask for consent

There are many ways to ask for consent, but here are some examples:

- "Do you want to have sex?"
- "Are you comfortable with...?"
- "Do you want me to...?"
- "Will you do... to me?"
- "It turns me on when we... How do you feel about that?"
- "What fantasy can we enact?"
- "What word would you like for me to use to describe this part of your body?"

Before sex, it may feel more comfortable to talk about words both consenting parties will use in order to show they would like to stop. Sometimes this can be as simple as using the word 'stop', but you may want to come up with another way that fits both parties.

# Non-verbal ways to ask for consent

Consent can also be non-verbal. There are ways to express a clear willingness to engage in sexual contact without using words. Examples of giving nonverbal consent may include:

- Head nod
- Thumbs up
- Pulling someone closer
- Nodding yes
- Making direct eye contact
- Actively touching someone
- Initiating sexual activity

It's crucial to note, though, that everyone's body language is different, and depending on it alone might be troublesome at times. It is your job to inquire if you aren't convinced you're getting a clear, passionate yes from your spouse. Because someone isn't physically rejecting or verbally refusing sexual contact, you can't presume they've given their consent. Silence, passivity, or a lack of resistance are not indicators of consent.



# Sexual violence fact sheet

## **WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?**

Sexual violence is an umbrella term used to describe any kind of unwanted sexual act or activity, including rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and many others.

**MYTH: IF SOMEONE GETS REALLY DRUNK, IT'S THEIR OWN FAULT IF THEY END UP GETTING RAPED. THEY SHOULD HAVE KEPT THEMSELVES SAFE.**

People have the right to drink alcohol without getting raped. Having sex with someone who is very drunk, drugged or unconscious is rape – and the blame must always be with the rapist.

**MYTH: WOMEN OFTEN LIE ABOUT RAPE BECAUSE THEY REGRET HAVING SEX WITH SOMEONE OR BECAUSE THEY WANT ATTENTION.**

Stories in the media can give the impression that women often lie about sexual violence. In fact, false allegations of rape are very rare. Most people who have been raped or experienced sexual violence or abuse never tell the police.

**MYTH: IF SOMEONE DIDN'T SCREAM OR TRY TO FIGHT THEIR ATTACKER OFF, IT WASN'T RAPE.**

there are many reasons why someone might not scream or struggle. In fact, many people find that they cannot move or speak at all – this is a very common reaction. Some rapists also use manipulation or threats to intimidate or control the other person. No matter whether or not someone 'fights back', if they didn't freely consent to sex then it is rape.

**MYTH: IF YOU ARE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE, IT'S ALWAYS OK TO HAVE SEX WITH THEM.**

Everyone has the right to say 'no' to any type of sexual activity at any time – including with their partner. Consent must be given and received freely every time. Rape in a relationship is illegal.

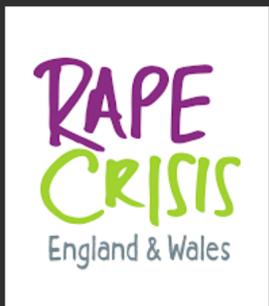
# Where can I get support?

It can be scary to reach out for support, but you deserve to be listened to and given the right support when and if you need it. Below is a list of services that may be of help to you.



**Say it Loud:** At Say it Loud, we are used as the first point of contact if you are unsure what has happened to you and you don't know who to talk to or sometimes we are used as just a safe space to vent if needed. We provide emotional support via our chat line used on Instagram by trained volunteers. We also provide a free platform in which we educate the general public as well as supporting loved ones of survivors. Our chat-line runs from 5pm - 8pm Monday to Friday. You can contact us on instagram @sayitloudteam, via our website [www.sayitloudspace.com](http://www.sayitloudspace.com) or by our email [contact@sayitloudspace.com](mailto:contact@sayitloudspace.com)

**Rape Crisis England & Wales** is the charity working to end sexual violence and abuse.



They are the membership organisation for Rape Crisis Centres who deliver specialist services to those affected by sexual violence in England & Wales. Together with their member Rape Crisis centres, they aim to educate, influence and make change. They provide specialist information and support to all those affected by sexual violence in England & Wales. You can call their helpline on: 0808 802 9999 or visit their website at: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/>



**Survivors UK** provides an online helpline and other services for adult men (aged 18+) who want to talk about rape or sexual abuse.



**Childline** offers free, confidential advice and support for children and young people.

You can have a 1-2-1 counsellor chat online, or call them free on 0800 1111.

