

UNDERSTANDING CONSENT:

Guiding Principles

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is an agreement between individuals that is enthusiastic, reciprocal, and continuous.

WHEN TO CONSENT?

Consent is important in sexual intimacy, but it is so much more than that. Think of consent as a set of guiding principles that you can apply to a variety of interactions and situations.

PRINCIPLES OF CONSENT:

- **Respect:**
 - Mutual respect is key in consent. Others should respect your choices and you need to respect the choices of others.
- **Boundaries:**
 - Boundaries are limits that you define based on behavior that is acceptable to you. You have the right to choose what feels comfortable to you and to express your preferences and desires. Others also have the right to define what behaviors feel acceptable to them.
- **Communication:**
 - Communication can be done verbally or nonverbally, and body language can be a strong indicator of someone's comfort in a given situation. Continuous communication is so important in order to make sure everyone is still comfortable with what is happening.
- **Ability:**
 - If someone is unable to agree to something, they don't have the ability to give consent. For example, a child may not be able to comprehend what they are agreeing to—which indicates a lack of ability to consent. If someone is asleep or unconscious, or in an altered state, they are also unable to consent. Additionally, power differences may influence a person to feel pressured to make a choice that they would otherwise not make.
- **Ongoing:**
 - Just because you received consent once doesn't mean you've received a permanent yes. Anyone involved may change their mind at any time and has the right to express that change.