

Sex and Its Consequences

Our discomfort with talking honestly and openly about sex raises the risk of sexual violence. Talking about sex requires more than just a “nuts ‘n’ bolts” approach however. To get an honest and respectful dialogue going, keep the following points in mind:

RECEIVING PLEASURE

Great sex is fun and exciting. If you feel guilty, sad or angry after sex, something’s going on – look at why you are having sex and who your partner is.

GIVING PLEASURE

Fabulous sex means giving as well as receiving. It is important to talk about giving and receiving.

PHYSICAL INTIMACY

Sharing your body, and being physically intimate, is part of the sexual experience. If the idea of revealing your body or being intimate with another person’s body makes you uncomfortable, then consider setting your sexual boundaries at an earlier point (you may not want to take clothes off).

EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

Sex often creates emotional intimacy and vulnerability. Think about whether you’re ready to let down your emotional guard and show someone who you are – intimately! And, consider whether you’re ready to know someone else so intimately – intimacy creates responsibility.

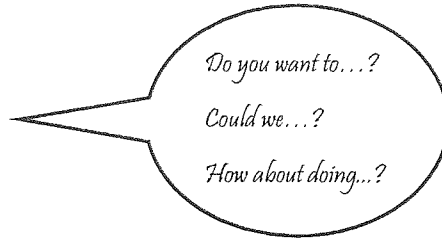
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Sexual intimacy may also mean sharing more than just pleasure! Sexual intimacy may lead to the sharing of infection. Consider how you would broach the subject of sexually transmitted infections.

PREGNANCY

Are you ready to talk about birth control? Have you discussed what you will do if sex with your partner leads to pregnancy? The answers to these questions are musts before sex.

Talk About Sex



Sex without discussion does not allow consent, or even minimal expectations, to be communicated. Without mutual agreement, sex becomes sexual assault. When we discuss what makes us comfortable and uncomfortable, and try new ways to express ourselves, we confirm mutual agreement, we take responsibility for our sexual behaviour, and we also greatly reduce the risk of sexual assault.

BE AWARE.

Know that most sexual assaults occur between people who know each other. Be aware of stereotypes that prevent you from acting as you want to (ex. believing that a man can't take "no" for an answer, believing that men always want sex).

KNOW YOUR BOUNDARIES.

Know your sexual limits and expectations before you enter a relationship. It's important to take your time and make sure that you are making the right decision for you. Then discuss your boundaries with your partner early on so there is no miscommunication when you become intimate.

COMMUNICATE.

True and effective communication is a two-way street. Once you have communicated what you want and do not want, find out about your partner's needs too. Talking honestly and exploring together builds safety and trust in a relationship.

BE SPECIFIC.

Tell the person exactly what you want and do not want to do. For example: "I like kissing you, but I don't want to have sex." Suggest other options.

USE "I" STATEMENTS.

Avoid "You" statements that attack or put down the other person ("You make me feel..." or "The trouble with you is..."). Owning your feelings is a much more effective strategy ("I don't want to..." or "I feel...").

DON'T ASSUME, ASK!

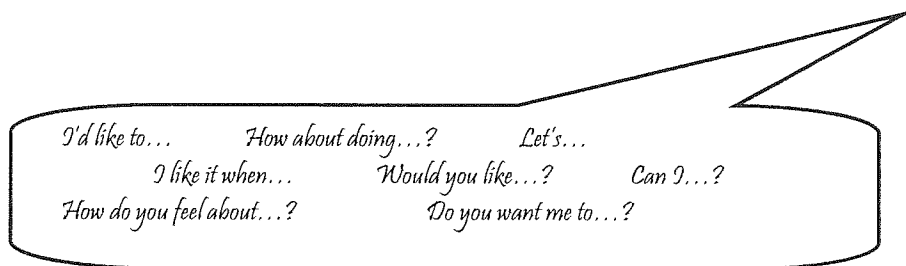
The only way to know if your partner wants to have sex is to ask. It is never okay to pressure someone to doing something they don't want to. Ask yourself: do you really want to have intercourse with someone who does not want to have intercourse with you?

AVOID INSULTS.

Although you may be deeply upset with the person, it is more effective to reject the person's behaviour, not the person.

DON'T ACCEPT DISRESPECT.

If you repeat your boundaries and the other person does not listen or respect your choices, get out of the situation. Healthy relationships are free from harassment, shame, fear or guilt.



Consent Is...

Consent — both person's agreement to sex — is the bottom line of good sex and a healthy relationship. **Consenting sex is great sex.** You're both into it, you both want it, and you both feel safe and in control of your choices.

Consent is:

- Based on choice
- Active, not passive
- Possible only when there is equal power

Consent requires talking together and actively agreeing on the level of sexual intimacy both persons are ready for. No coercion, no manipulation, no pressure. It isn't always easy, but it is respect!

In a respectful relationship:

- Both people feel safe;
- Both people feel appreciated;
- Both people are considerate;
- Both people are understanding.

Consent isn't...

Physical Force

Saying "yes" because of the threat or use of use of physical force.

Verbal Coercion

Using words to convince, pressure or force sexual activity. Statements like "You would if you loved me," "you're uptight" or "you're being a tease" are examples of being *coercive* not assertive.

Manipulation

Threatening some sort of consequence or punishment if the other person does not do what you want.

Alcohol

Be aware that under the law, consent cannot be given a person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Being under the influence limits your ability to be fully aware of your actions, as well as the other person's feelings and wishes.

It is never okay to pressure someone to doing something they don't want to do. Sex without consent is a crime.

Being Sure About Consent

Learning how to explicitly negotiate consent builds sexual closeness and intimacy, and is an important part of every healthy relationship.

Ask!

Avoid assuming that because you haven't heard "no" your partner consents. The simplest way to check out consent is just to ask. Use general check-in questions ("How do you feel about kissing?" or "Can I touch you here?"). Practise and become comfortable at asking.

Speak up!

Ask for more information when unsure. If you are feel you are getting 'mixed signals', stop and say something like: "I'm picking up mixed messages. What's going on for you? I only want to have sex with someone who is sure they want to have sex with me."

Respect your partner's choice.

Remember that your partner can change "yes" to "no" at any time. And, keep in mind that obtaining consent is an ongoing process. Having done something sexual previously is not a blanket "yes" for the future.

Be a good listener.

Let your partner know that you hear, understand, and care about what she or he is saying and feeling.

Be ask-able.

Let your partner know you are open to questions and that you will not jump on her or him, or be offended by questions.

Accept "no" for an answer.

If you are unwilling to take "no" for an answer, then "yes" has no meaning. Be aware of stereotypes that prevent you from acting as you want to (e.g. believing that a man can't take "no" for an answer, believing that all physical contact must lead to intercourse). When you hear "no", STOP.

Tell it straight.

Communicate with your partner about what you want as early as possible. Be clear, honest and open about your desires, your expectations, your limits, your likes and dislikes.

Stay straight.

You are responsible for your behaviour whether you are sober or not. Being "high" or intoxicated is not a legal defence for committing sexual assault.

Keep yourself safe.

Know which behaviours constitute sexual assault. Understand that most sexual assaults occur between people who know each other. And, remember that the decision to be sexually intimate must be made without coercion.

Success does not equal score.

Understand that success in talking does not mean one person getting the other person to do something. Rather, it means that you both have said what you think and feel respectfully and honestly and that you have both listened respectfully to the other.

"Yes" and "No"

"No" Means No!

- "No" never means "maybe", "yes", or "convince me."
- Silence is not consent—if your partner is not responding, stop and ask whether what you are doing is okay.
- Lack of physical resistance does not automatically result in consent. Discomfort and fear might be displayed through body language or statements like "I'm not ready..." or "This is moving too fast..."
- To give consent, a person must be physically and mentally capable of making the decision—if a person is unconscious, intoxicated, or under the influence of drugs, she/he cannot give consent.
- "No" can be said in many ways. It may be difficult for women to talk about their sexual limits and desires because our society teaches opposing and confusing messages about how to act in a sexual relationship (women who enjoy sex are sometimes called "sluts"; girls who wait are sometimes called "nice"). Watch for non-verbal cues. Pushing away, stiffening, crying or lack of participation are signs that your partner's boundaries are not being respected.
- **If you are unwilling to accept "no", then "yes" has no meaning!!!**

Consent is about "yes."

- Consent is more than just the absence of "no." In order to have consensual sex, each partner must be able to say "yes" without pressure.
- Consensual sexual activity is a **choice**. Each partner must be able to freely choose whether to engage in sexual activity or not.
- Consensual sexual activity is **active**. Each partner must be able to freely communicate their sexual boundaries and desires in an honest and respectful way.
- ***Consent is about "Yes!" A fully affirmative YES. Not an ambiguous yes, or a "well-not-really-but ok- I-guess yes." Not an "ouch" or "gross-but-I'm-afraid-to-hurt-your-feelings yes." This is about YES, UM HUM, ABSOLUTELY, YES!!! Being with someone who you are sure really wants to be with you; and being with someone who you are sure you really want to be with – that is exciting, is deep, is great... is YES! And... that is consent.***

What is Coercion?

"If you really loved me, you would have sex with me..."

"You're such a tease!"

"Why did you ask me in if you didn't expect to have sex?"

Coercion is the use of words, alcohol / drugs and or pressure to convince or force someone into sexual activity.

What can be done?

- **Communicate.** State your expectations, boundaries and desires as soon as you can.
- **Listen.** Let your partner know that you hear, understand and care about what she or he is saying and feeling.
- **Respect.** Remember that your partner has the right to say "yes" or "no" at any point in a sexual encounter. Respect your partner's choices and decisions.
- **Accept "no."** If you are unwilling to accept "no" for an answer, then "yes" has no meaning. When you hear "no", stop. **Forced sex is sexual assault.**

"I'll tell just everyone we had sex anyway..."

"I'm so turned on, I can't stop now..."

Sexual Harassment – What is it?

Sexual Harassment is:

Any unwelcome behaviour, action, or words which:

- Are sexual in nature;
- Are likely to offend or humiliate;
- Relate to a person's sex, sexuality, or body parts;
- The harasser knows or ought to know are inappropriate;
- Are repeated after the person has been told to stop.

Sexual harassment is a violation of the New Brunswick Human Rights Code. This code protects persons against discrimination and harassment based on characteristics such as race, skin-color, sex, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability.

Sexual Harassment includes:

1. Unwelcome verbal suggestions, comments or jokes
 - Whistling
 - Obscene phone calls
 - Demeaning sexual jokes
 - Sexist remarks about clothing or the body
2. Unwelcome and constant leering, ogling, or exposure
 - Flashing
 - Pornography in public places
3. Unwelcome bodily contact
 - Brushing up against someone in a sexual manner
 - Patting, pinching or touching
4. Indecent propositions
 - Persistent sexual invitations
 - Sexual gesturing
5. Pressure for sexual activity or favours
 - Bribery or blackmail for sexual activity
 - Threatening job loss unless sexual favours are given

How Do I Know? – Ask Yourself:

- *Is the behaviour of a sexual nature?*
- *Is the behaviour unwelcome?*
- *Does the behaviour interfere with a person's ability to learn, work or enjoy life?*
- *Does the behaviour involve one person trying to have power over another person?*
- *Would you want this behaviour to be directed towards a family or friend?*

Sexual Harassment –

What’s the Problem?

Some people suggest that sexual harassment is not a problem, that it is blown out of proportion, and that it is simply an appreciation of women.

“What’s wrong with a little admiration?” Women like to be complimented. Compliments are meant to make a person feel good. If a comment hurts, then by definition, it is **not** a compliment.

“Men have a right to express themselves freely... it’s freedom of speech.” An individual’s right to freedom of speech does not include the right to harm another person.

“In some cultures sexual harassment is acceptable.” Cultural differences cannot be used as an excuse for abusive behaviour.

“Women shouldn’t dress like ‘that,’ they should know that it will turn someone on.” Accusing women of inviting sexual harassment because of their appearance or behaviour is a blatant example of blaming the victim instead of the harasser. Women should not have to change to avoid abuse. Moreover, women endure sexual harassment no matter what they wear.

“Women who object have no sense of humour.” Sexual harassment is not humorous because it is harmful. It is degrading, humiliating, and may jeopardize the woman’s employment, finances, emotional and psychological health.

“That’s just the way men are.” Many men are insulted by the assertion that they are naturally abusive. Not all men sexually harass women.

Sexual Harassment and Flirting: What’s the difference?

Sometimes it’s hard to tell when a person has crossed the line from flirting to harassment. To figure out the difference consider why the person is doing it and how it makes you feel. Here are some other clues:

SEXUAL HARASSMENT	FLIRTING
1. Makes the receiver feel demeaned, humiliated, embarrassed and powerless.	1. Makes the receiver feel good, flattered, attractive, and powerful.
2. Effects can be negative self-esteem, physical ailments and financial instability.	2. Effects can be positive self-esteem, excitement, and a new relationship.
3. Is perceived as one-sided and degrading.	3. Is perceived as equal and a compliment.
4. Unwanted and invading.	4. Generally wanted.
5. Motivated by dominance and power.	5. Motivated by interest and equality.
6. Illegal.	6. Legal.