



How to say no

Key Facts and Discussion

Worksheet

Sexual consent, what's it all about?

Sex is supposed to be a positive and pleasurable experience – this is impossible if you or your partner feel like you're not ready, or are forced into having sex. Here are some things to think about:

1. Both you and your partner should be enthusiastic about any sexual encounter, if one of you feels obligated or pressured into doing something they are not excited about, and may not feel ready for, then something is going wrong.
2. You can say no at any time. Having sex (or any other sexual activity) before, with a previous partner or a current one, doesn't mean you have to/or want to do it again.
3. Being in a relationship with someone or being married to them does not give them the right to do anything they want to you – or you to them. It's no different to sex with anyone else – you must both consent, each time and to each type of activity.
4. You can change your mind about sex at any time, and it's completely fine to stop before or midway through. This is your right and you should never feel pressured to continue.
5. Giving your consent and getting your partner's consent may feel a bit awkward but ultimately sex is about communication and can and should be a positive and pleasurable experience.
6. The legal age to have sex in your country may be different depending on whether you're a boy or a girl.
7. Any sexual contact without consent is wrong whatever the age of the people involved.
8. If you decide to have sex with a partner, make sure it's safe. Using a condom every time you have sex is the best way to protect yourself and your partner against unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.
9. It can be difficult to say no in the heat of the moment – so letting your partner know beforehand about your wishes will make it easier later on.

Ideas for discussion

What do you (or your group) know about sexual consent, or saying 'no'? Maybe you've never really thought about it before. Here are some questions to think about yourself, or discuss in your group.

1. What does sexual consent (in other words both partners agreeing to sex) mean to you? What are the signs that your partner is giving consent?
2. Saying no may seem like such a simple thing, but the reality is that it can be hard to do. What are some good ways to let your partner know that you don't want to have sex? What are good ways to make sure that your partner is happy with what you are doing?
3. Many people feel pressured into having sex because they think they 'should'. What are some other reasons why people have sex, even if they're not ready, or don't want to?
4. What do you think is the relationship between sexual consent and sexual health?
5. Healthy relationships, whether sexual or more, are built on respect and boundaries. Are you comfortable talking about issues of sexuality and consent with your partner when you're in non-sexual situations? What about with your friends?