Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2012

IT'S TIME … TO TALK ABOUT IT! CONNECT. RESPECT. PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

It's time … to talk about consent.

Consent is essential in all healthy sexual interactions. It is important to understand what consent is, as well as what consent looks like. This fact sheet will provide information, tips and resources about consent.

What is consent?

Consent is permission for something to happen or agreement to do something. When sex is consensual, it means everyone involved has agreed to what they are doing and has given their permission. Non-consensual sex, or sex without someone's agreement or permission, is sexual assault. Some important things to know about consent:

Drugs and alcohol blur consent. Drugs and alcohol impact decision making. When drugs and alcohol are involved, clear consent cannot be obtained. In many states, an intoxicated person cannot legally give consent.

Consent needs to be clear. Consent is more than not hearing the word "no." A partner saying nothing is not the same as a partner saying "yes." Don't rely on body language, past sexual interactions or any other non-verbal cues. Never assume you have consent. Always be sure you have consent.

Consent can be fun. Consent does not have to be something that "ruins the mood." In fact, clear and enthusiastic consent can actually enhance sexual interactions. Not only does it allow one to know that their partner is comfortable with the interaction, it lets both partners clearly express what they want.

> Consent, by definition, means permission for something to happen or agreement to do something. Consent is more than yes or no. It is a dialogue about desires, needs, and level of comfort with different sexual interactions. Healthy sexual interactions are rooted in consent and respect.

Consent is specific. Just because someone consents to one set of actions and activities does not mean consent has been given to any other sexual act. Similarly, if a partner has given consent in the past to sexual activity this does not apply to current or future interactions. Consent can be initially given and later withdrawn.

NSVRC
123 North Enola Drive, Enola, PA 17025
P: 877-739-3895
resources@nsvrc.org
www.nsvrc.org/saam
facebook.com/nsvrc
twitter.com/nsvrc

Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2012

IT'S TIME … TO TALK ABOUT IT! CONNECT. RESPECT. PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

Establishing consent

Remember that sex without consent is sexual assault. When establishing consent be aware of the following:

Ask for consent. Don't assume a partner is OK with what you want to do, always ask them. Be direct. If you are unsure that you have their consent, ask again.

Communicate. Don't be afraid to talk about sex and communicate your boundaries, wants and needs. Encourage your partner to do the same.

Don't mix drugs and/or alcohol with sex. Intoxication impairs decision making and can make it impossible to gain someone's legal consent. Mixing drugs and/or alcohol with sex can lead to risky behavior such as unsafe sex.

Make it fun. Consent does not have to be something that interrupts sex; it can be a part of sex. Checking in with your partner throughout sexual experiences can be a great way to build intimacy and understand your partner's needs. It can help partners create a healthy and satisfying sex life.

Resources

- Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault's Stimulate Conversation Campaign www.whynotask.org
- The Consensual Project www.theconsensualproject.com
- Consent is Sexy www.consentissexy.org
- The Line Campaign http://whereisyourline.org
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) www.nsvrc.org

Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2012

IT'S TIME … TO TALK ABOUT IT! CONNECT. RESPECT. PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

Scenario and discussion points: Focusing on college campuses

Understanding consent is a key characteristic of healthy sexuality. Here are discussion questions and important points to consider.

Alex (21) and Madison (21)

Madison and Alex are both seniors at a large state school. On Friday nights, there are usually plenty of on-campus parties to choose from, and tonight is no exception. Alex was in Madison's marketing class this semester and although they'd flirted a bit over the last few weeks, they have never spent time together outside of class. They both agreed they would go to the same party, so they could hang out. As the evening approached, Madison started getting a bit nervous. She really liked Alex and wanted tonight to go well.

When she got to the party Alex was already there and had clearly had a few drinks. Madison decided to have a few quickly to "catch up" and calm her nerves. Eventually, they ended up drinking in one of their friend's rooms upstairs. They started kissing and things began to get more intense. By this point, Alex really wanted to have sex, but he also realized that Madison was drunk. He wonders what he should do.

Discussion questions

1. What could Alex do in this situation? What do you think Alex should do? Why?
2. Why is consent an issue in this scenario?
3. What could happen if Alex and Madison have sex? How could it impact each of them?

Discussion points

• Since both parties have been drinking, Alex is in a situation where he cannot be sure he has Madison's consent. If he pursues sex, he is doing so without her clear and legal consent. Alex and Madison should not have sex and should wait until a time when they both can give their consent without the influence of alcohol.

• Consent is an issue because alcohol is involved. Even if Madison appears to want to have sex, Alex knows she is intoxicated and would not be making a decision in a clear state of mind.

• If Alex and Madison have sex, it is possible that one or both of them will regret it. Alex could feel guilty for not making sure he had clear consent. Madison could feel violated and angry that Alex would have sex with her while she was intoxicated. Madison may feel taken advantage of and decide to press charges. Sex without consent is rape.

Moving forward

Interested in doing more? Here are some suggestions for what individuals can do to get involved:

• While the scenario above focused on two individuals, there could be many others involved. The person hosting the party, friends of Alex or Madison, or even others attending the party could all help by intervening in the situation. If you see a situation where consent is unclear, say something.

• If you hear someone make a comment or a joke about sexual assault, speak up. Let the person know why you don't agree with their comment and why sexual assault is never a joke.

• Understanding consent can help individuals to educate others. Talk to your friends, share information, plan an event to raise awareness, or volunteer with a sexual violence prevention agency.

© National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2012. All rights reserved.