

Boundaries and Consent

Bootcamp

Module 4: Consent Skills



a 3 month online course | *with your host Anya Manes*

Welcome to Module 4 of the Boundaries and Consent Bootcamp. This module is all about consent skills. There's quite a lot to talk about, so let's jump in.

Ok, first I think it's important to define our terms. Sometimes people will say consent means that you're just agreeing or that you're giving permission, but I want to take that a little

Consent means...

- It's mutual
- It's clear and enthusiastic in the PRESENT moment.
- Both people are of legal age
- Both people are of sound mind

further. It means that it's mutual. We both not only agree to this and give permission for this, but we *want* this. It's clear. It's enthusiastic and it happens in the present moment. Right? I

can't consent to something down the line (especially sexually), so it has to be in the present. Even if we agree that we're going to have sex or have a meetup or we do whatever a week from now, that doesn't actually hold me to it in that moment. And of course, there are the other details that both people need to be of legal age and a sound mind. And so somebody who is underage is not legally able to consent and someone who is under the influence of something is not of sound mind. Right? Or, if they are not of sound mind for other reasons, then they are not actually able to consent, so those are some pieces to keep track of.

The wheel of consent – Dr. Betty Martin

Either you are doing or they are doing – and either it is for you or it is for them.

Those two factors combine in four ways:

- you are doing and it's for you (Take)
- you are doing and it's for them (Serve)
- they are doing and it's for you (Accept)
- they are doing and it's for them (Allow)



Now, I interviewed Dr. Betty Martin and she has such a fascinating bit to share. She said, “You know this consent stuff is muddy because it's really four things. Four separate things,” and she outlined them in what she calls the **Wheel of Consent**. She says, “Well, either *you* are doing or *they* are doing and sometimes both those things are happening at once, but also either it is *for you* for, your pleasure, or it is *for theirs*.” Right? And so let's tease that apart a little bit.

So you could be the one who is doing and touching and maybe you're doing it because you are motivated. You want to do and touch in that way. In which case, she labels that quadrant on the upper right corner **Take**. You are taking because this is you doing and it's for you. It could be that you are doing, but it is for them, in which case that's **Serving**. It could be that you are doing, that they are doing, and this is for you which is **Accepting**. It could be that they are doing and it's for them, in which case you're really just **Allowing**. Right? So we can actually tease it apart and be like, “Hmm how can these happen in healthy ways and how can they happen in darker ways?” The really dark side of something like Allowing would be closer to date-rape. Right? And something like you are doing and it's for you, the dark side of that might be sexual assault. So there are ways that each of these can happen which is generous and

healthy, and there are ways that each of these can happen in a way that is dark. And so I think this is where it gets really interesting to dive into consent and see, well, how is it different than just giving permission? And what skills do we need so that we're really, truly expressing ourselves and we're making sure that our partner is really and truly expressing themselves? So that I don't think that I am Serving you, and you think that you are Allowing, in which case nobody's enjoying it. Right? Because I think I'm doing it for you and you think I'm doing it for me and neither one of us are really enjoying what's happening. So ultimately, this is all about clear communication.

Consent culture and healthy relationships

Normalize “No”. A person is as free to say No as to say Yes.

- A “No” isn’t followed by big emotions or coercion.

Emphasize mutuality.

- One person doesn’t expect to get their desires fulfilled by the other person.
- The other person isn’t afraid to disappoint.

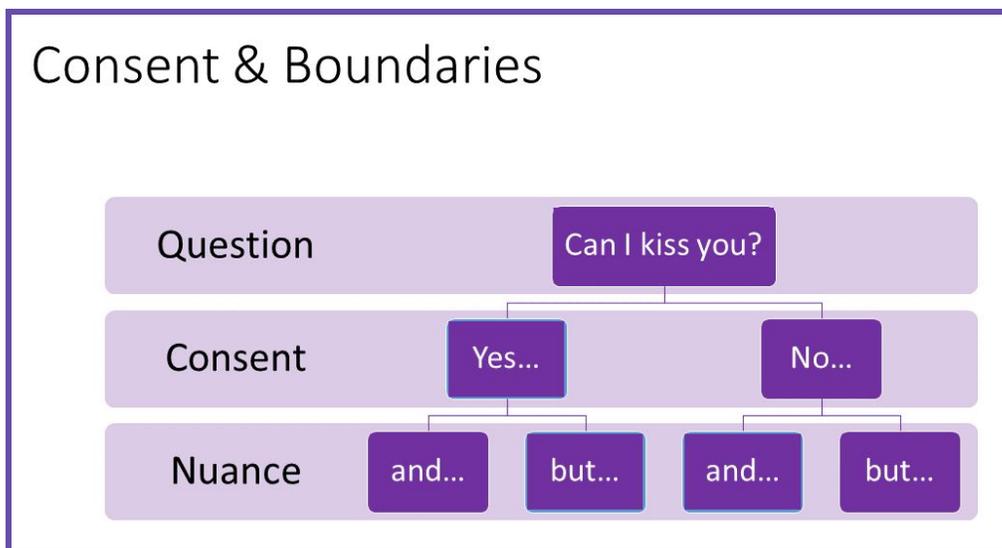
Recognize that each person’s body autonomy is a right. They are given choices.

- “Making a move” does not give them choice.

Another piece to keep track of (and we'll be circling around these) is that we want to **normalize the ability to say No**. I need to be able to say no, and you need to be able to say no. We need to be as free to say no as we are to say yes, because if the only answer we can give is yes, that yes really isn't worth anything. It's not a good tool, right? It doesn't actually tell the other person that I want this, because I'm unable to say that I don't want it. Right? It loses meaning, so **your Yes is only as strong as your No**. But to normalize No and make it okay, then it can't be followed up by big emotions like disappointment or by responses that are closer

to coercion, which makes that No unacceptable. Right? Like, you said no and I'm not really going to respect it, I'm actually going to try to convince you otherwise.

Another piece of consent culture and healthy relationships is this mutuality piece. That [5:00] this is not all for me and it's not all for you. I don't expect to get everything I want, and you can't either. I also don't expect that I'll be able to provide everything that you want, and so that means that not only is it ok to say no, but we don't have to be afraid to disappoint, because those expectations aren't in place. And recognizing that each person's body autonomy is their *right*. They get to have choices, and if I'm not giving my partner choices, then I'm really not respecting them. I'm really not asking for consent. I'm really just pushing on them my agenda. So I don't get to just make a move. And if somebody makes a move on me, then it's important for me to say, "Hey I'd like it if you asked because I want to be given that choice. I don't want it to just happen to me."



So let's say that your partner is game, that your partner is willing to check in and ask questions and practice consent culture. So they might ask you something like "Can I kiss you?" which is wonderful to be asked a question like that, and now the ball's in my court. I get to say

yes or no, which is sometimes all we think of when we think of consent. I challenge you to take it a step further and add in the nuance because the nuance is really where you'll get to define what you want to have happen. So we can add on “and . . .” or “but . . .” Let's see how those play out.



So maybe I really want to give the green light, enthusiastic consent. “**Yes, and** we can go to the bed over there too.” Right? Or “Yes, and you can take my shirt off.” So I am not only consenting but I am really enthusiastic about it. I am one-upping them in a way. Right? It is very nice to receive a response like this because then the other person can be like, “Well, you know, that would be great!” or “Oh, that's a little too much.” Right? It creates that dialogue back and forth.

Maybe I'm okay with what they asked to do, but it's a little close to my boundary and I really want to defend that boundary. “So yes! I'm great with kissing. That sounds fun, but I am NOT ready for French kissing. That's a little too intimate.” So if we use the **yes, but** then that's not as strong of a green light. Right? That's expressing my boundary so it's a move forward

cautiously. I've got a boundary here and I'm going to set your expectations and let you know what it is.

Then **No, but...** I'm gonna decline. "I'm not actually okay and ready for kissing, but we could cuddle. It doesn't mean that I don't like you or that I don't want to spend time with you or be physical with you." And so that one's outside my comfort zone. I'm going to defend my boundary by saying No. "That would make me uncomfortable, but here's what would make me more comfortable." Right? So I'm going to redirect into my comfort zone, and that's what we were calling *dancing the line*. Healthy boundaries is when something takes you outside your comfort zone and you put yourself back in. So here we're not just saying "No!" and freezing up, we're actually giving the solution. Right? Because if we simply say No the other person feels maybe awkward, maybe unsure how to proceed. "I know I shouldn't do that, but what should I do? Are we still okay? What's going on?" Right? And we can save them that. It can go much smoother if we use a **No, but** and let them know what actually would feel really good to us.

There are some people, though, who will ask you to do something that you absolutely do not want any part of, and that's the red light. That's where we need to express our boundary really strongly: **No, and**. So "No, and I don't think of you that way, so please don't ask me for that again." Right? So we need to be really strong with that, but it doesn't have to be off-putting necessarily. It can still be polite. You know? So let's take it out of sexuality. Somebody asks you to head up the PTA charity. What are you gonna say? Maybe you'll be like, "Yes! And I was thinking we could plan an auction." Or maybe you'll say, "Yes, but I only have an hour a week to devote to this. Will that be okay?" or "No, but I'd be willing to be treasurer. I don't want to head up the meetings, but I don't mind contributing" or "No, and I will never have time for a project like [10:00] that. I'm so sorry" Right? So we can use these outside of the sexuality context to be able

to provide really clear yes's and no's and to be able to express our enthusiasm, our strong boundaries, or redirect the other person towards what will actually work.

Now, to some extent you're probably doing this in your real life. Right? We all say Yes and No. We all say And and But. However, you might not be doing it very conscientiously and it might not be something that you've practiced. So when I do this with groups, I find that often we're really good at one or two of them and we struggle with the others. And so when we all go around and we all practice a "No, but...", there's some people have a real hard time with that one. Some people have a real hard time with "Yes, and." Some people are great at the yes's and struggle with the no's. Right? And so it's interesting to find out and sort of try them all yourself and see where do you hiccup. Where is it hard to get that one out? Because that tells you something about yourself, right? It tells you where you have space to grow, what it is that you can practice. And you can totally practice with your partner and with your kids.



Okay, so let's relate this back to our framework. We started here because I think it's the overarching thing for all of this. So here we have our comfort zone, with the boundary, with the

uncomfortable area outside of it, and then “I can't take it anymore” and outside that, panic. If I was to line these up I would hope that if I asked you a question and it felt deep in the comfort zone that you would say Yes. Right? And that maybe it would be a “yes, and.” If it was closer to that boundary, then we're looking at the yellow block and if we're getting close to that boundary please express it. Let's the other person know “Yes, but here's where I stop. This is just me. That's as far as I can go.” If it's outside that boundary, even a little bit, I want you to say No. If it would make you uncomfortable, if you imagine it and you get an uh-oh feeling, say No. If you still want to please that person and not disappoint them and mollify them and show them how much you care, then it's a “No, but.” “No I can't do that, but I could do this.” Right? It doesn't mean that I don't like you - it just means it's outside my comfort zone. If this is somebody who's really asking you to do something that you are not okay with, it's a “no, and” and that “no, and” can be delivered in the warm kind of voice or much sharper. You can let them know “No! And leave me alone!” You can be very strong with that “no, and,” but again, if we're getting to panic then we're no longer in control of ourselves. We might be at fight, flight, and freeze and so that “No, and” doesn't really extend into the panic area, because you may not have strategy and thinking and choice going on outside that panic line, and I just want you to acknowledge that Right? Because I don't want anybody thinking, “God why didn't I say No and and run away?” Right? Thinking that they had control in that moment, because we really don't.

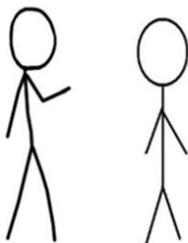
The 3 minute game

With an **adult** (partner, friend), take turns offering to each other:

- How would you like me to touch you for 3 minutes?
- How would you like to touch me for 3 minutes?

from Dr. Betty Martin, created by Harry Faddis

Okay, here is a three-minute game. Now that you have some ideas, how can you start to play with them? So if you want to practice with your partner it can be fun to take turns offering to each other: “How would you like me to touch you for three minutes? All right. It's just three minutes. It's a little timer. And how would you like to touch me for three minutes? Now you're not committing to doing the things that are then suggested, right, it's just an opening. And if you want to get really deep down at those mysterious places that have never surfaced, you could say, “How have you *always* wanted me to touch you” or “How have you *always* wanted to touch me?” Right, so that's taking it even a little deeper.



The thing is that with this they're going to then say, “Well, can I kiss you?” “Well, can I do this?” “Can I do that?” Right? So it needs to be a question,

and then you get to answer “Yes, and”, “Yes, but”, “No, but”, “No, and.” So we're intentionally

setting up this framework for you and then you get to practice. Right? Because if you say yes to something and it turns out to be uncomfortable for you and you're like, "Oh I thought this was going to be great and actually I don't like it anymore" then it's time to express your boundary. Right? Time to adjust and so all of this is practice with boundaries and consent.

The 3 minute game

With an adult (partner, friend), take turns offering to each other:

- How would you like me to touch you for 3 minutes?
- How would you like to touch me for 3 minutes?

With your **child**, only offer:

- How would you like me to touch you for 3 minutes?
- How would you like to touch me for 3 minutes?

But let's say that you want to skill build with your child. Now that's a little different, [15:00] because children are under the age of consent and so we want to be mindful that they might not be very good at this. They are struggling with wanting to please parents and adults versus holding their ground. They may not know what they like and dislike. Right? They may not feel like they have the agency to be able to vocalize it, and so, with your child, it's a shorter, smaller game. You only offer: "How would you like me to touch you and how would you like to touch me?" That way you're really not setting them up in a pattern of serving you. Right? Because we don't really want them to practice that with an adult. We want to keep them strong and so we're going to give them the control when it comes to touch. But then, of course, they

get to propose something and we get to model “Yes, and...”, “Yes, but...”, “No, and...”, and “No, but...” So really this is one where we're modeling.

At some point, your child grows up. At some point, you gain more confidence that your child is able to consent or not. That they have the verbal abilities and the self-awareness. So if you have a teenager, for example, you might want to shift this and treat them more like a partner and a friend and say, “Well let's try turning it around, you know. Let's see how that goes.” So I'm gonna leave that up to your judgment. You don't have to respect the age of consent laws in your state, which vary all over the place. It might be 16 here and 18 there, so you don't have to wait until your child is 18 before you're willing to flip this around. But I am going to say, you know, check in with yourself about whether you feel like they are actually able to consent or not. Consent skillfully because we don't want to set them up to be humoring or serving, or you know, using touch to mollify an adult.

So we all want to practice that. If you're looking for a small way to jump into this and you're like, “That big open-ended question is too big for my little one” or “It seems kind of intimate.” Right? Just touch right? It's got stuff to it. Well, okay, let's try just keeping it really small.

So you could say, “We're gonna play a three-minute game with foot massages.” Right? Foot massages are pretty hard to screw up, right? It's unlikely that any one's gonna hurt anybody else and, of course, you can always step out. You can always say, “Oh, we're done.” So the simple way to do this is to sit across from each other. If you've got toe heebie-jeebies stuff then just have everyone wear clean socks. Right? That skips bunions and calluses and all the rest of it. No one will be examining your toenails. You can ask a modification of the question: “How do you want me to massage your foot? How do you want to massage mine?” and then

Start with Foot Massages

If this seems like a big open ended question for your little one, or “too intimate” a question for your older child, start small. Try foot massages.

- Sit across from each other on the couch. Wear clean socks.
- Ask, “How do you want me to massage your foot?” “How do you want to massage mine?”
- Discuss where, how much pressure, type of stroke, pulling toes, etc.
- Model Yes and/but, No and/but
- Encourage your child to use Yes and/but, No and/but

you get to discuss the different elements of this touch. So, where on the foot? Are we talking about your heels? Are we talking about the Achilles tendon? Are we talking about the toes? The ball of the foot? The arch? Right? How much pressure are we talking about? Feet can take a lot of pressure, but whenever we're talking about sexuality touch includes how much pressure you want. And so here's practice talking about that. What type of stroke? Yeah? How fast, how slow, whether we're going to pull on the toes or not? Right? How we're going to treat the joints? So there's a lot to discuss about a foot massage. It gives you enough latitude to kind of explore and in this, you get to model that yes/no, and/but kind of a format and you get to encourage your child to use that as well. So if you were to say yes/and you can do this, your child might say, “Yes, but, do you, you know, do you want this with this?” Or “Yes, but my hands get really tired.” Right? So you're starting to communicate with that. It's very easy to pick up once it's present in the environment, once you're hearing it a bunch.

Okay, so that's one piece of homework. The biggest response that I get to this stuff is: “It's so awkward to vocally ask, right? I don't know how I feel about asking for everything. It seems like it would destroy the momentum.” Well, it's not consent if you're not giving your

Biggest objection: It's awkward to ask!

It's not consent if they have no choice

- Relish the YES!
- Normalize NO
- Teach them a script, how to respond to a No

partner a choice. That's the big problem. And I think that when people are worried about asking, it's not because they're worried about getting a Yes! Because those yes's feel wonderful. Right? When someone says "Yes, I want a hug", "Yes come over here", "Yes, oh, more and

more" that's great! Right? That's excitement building! That's fun! So you get to relish that Yes. I think they're worried about what to do around a No because that feels like, maybe, rejection.

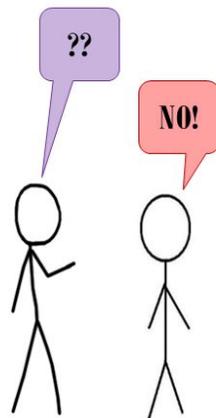
[20:00] Right? It feels like, maybe it's awkward and I don't know what to do afterwards. So I think what they're worried about is the No. They're not sure what to do after getting a No. Right?

Because maybe that other person doesn't then suggest something else. They don't have the skill where they're like "No, but..." Right? Smoothly transitioning to what would be good. So what we need is a little bit of practice figuring out what to say to a No because if somebody does just say No like, "No, I don't want that," how do you pick it up from there? Right? I think that's the worry and the fear for why I don't ask, why I don't want to ask because maybe I'll get rejected. Right? Maybe I won't know what to say in order to recover, in order to pick things back up.



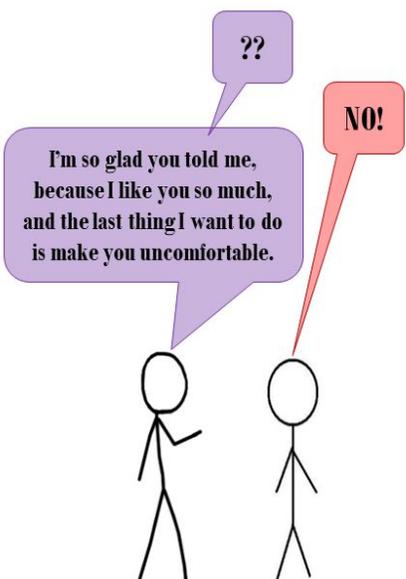
And so I'm going to give you a script which, of course, is not something that you have to say every time, but it is a place to begin. I'll show you the script and then ways to modify it.

How to handle a NO:



Okay, so someone asked you a question, maybe you say no. What would be the best response to receive? Right? How could this get better? Well, imagine they said, "I'm so glad you told me because I like you so much and the last thing I want to do is make you uncomfortable." Wouldn't that be great if someone welcomed your No? My goodness, that would make me feel so safe that I can have my reactions. I can have my uh-uh.

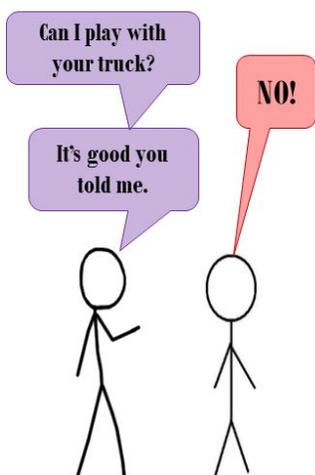
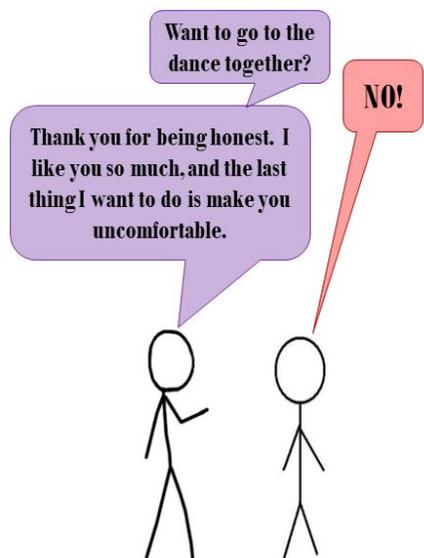
They're not going to drop me. They're going to say, "I still want to be in a relationship with you. I still like you. It's okay that you don't want to do this with me." So there's a script. Let's see how it would play out in a few different situations.



Okay, let's say that this person asks a question. I'm encouraging you here to roleplay with your child. So you could come up with any question, any yes or no question. Right? Your child could say, "Can I go over to your house for a playdate?" Right? So any yes or no question is fine, then the other person says No and then your child tries using some variation of the script. Right? And it might be like, "Oh that's okay. I'm glad you told me that you'd be uncomfortable

with that because I like you so much I don't want that to happen.” And so the roleplay is really where the skill building happens. And if your child is worried about asking another kid out on a playdate or asking their boyfriend or girlfriend out to prom, or whatever it may be, then this is the kind of conversation and skill building that we can help them with.

So let's say that you have an adolescent who says, “Do you want to go to the dance with me?” and they receive a No. Well, then I think they need to say something along the lines of “Thank you for being honest. I like you so much and the last thing I want to do is put you in a situation where you're uncomfortable.” Right? So that's a variation on the script. What about our little ones? “Can I play with your truck?” and the other kid just says, “No!” Right? What's the simplest version of this? Something like, “I'm glad you told me” or “It's good that you told me” or “Okay, thanks for letting me know.” So something where not only do we accept the No, but we welcome the No.



What about the one I already gave you: Will you take over the PTA fundraiser? Right? Somebody says No, maybe they give you a big reaction and it's like, “Thank you!” You know, “Thanks for being honest with me, and I think you do a beautiful job, but I don't want to give you a project you wouldn't enjoy. That's not what I'm about.” So if we can make it okay to say No and then give some version of thanking the person, welcoming their response, saying, “I'm glad

you told me. I'm glad you were honest," then that is the best way to pick things back up, to reconnect after that No (which can feel real distancing).

Top Coercion Lines

- "If you loved me..."
- "Everybody's doing it."
- "Now is the time..."
- "But before..."

Role play each of these with your teen! Be sure they can manage these manipulative tactics.

So sometimes you give someone your No, and rather than responding well with that statement that reconnects, they may go the wrong way into coercion. The lines that we often see are things like, "Well, if you loved me, you'd do it for me" or "Come on, everybody's doing it" or "Now is the time. We're not going to get an opportunity later. We have to right now" or "But before you said you would" or "Before we did. What's different about now?" These are all ways of trying to get a person to overturn their no. Right? Trying to make them come out with another [25:00] answer, and so I think we need to actually be clear about this with kids that these are not okay things to say and do because it means that we're not actually okay with somebody telling us No. So if we're going to pressure another person, or if we're going to receive pressure from another person, we need to call them out on that. So if someone said, "If you loved me you do it, right?" Then I think we go right back to our Eye Heart Hand, or Ear like, "I hear that you really want this. I get it that you're hoping I'll do this as an act of love but I really don't feel comfortable with doing this right here right now or with doing that thing and so I would be happy to show my love for you in a different way. Right? Can I give you hugs? Can I give you a card?"

Can I call you on your birthday? I want to express it in another way, express my love for you in another way besides this.” Right? So we stand firm.

If it's a teenager who's not really willing to go this route, it could be well, you know, “If we're in love, if we love each other, then there's really no pressure to do this right now. Right? I do love you, and this is just not the way that I would express it.” It's the same with the “now is the time kind of thing” right? If you get that “everybody's doing it,” I think you can go to a critical thinking place of like “Is everybody doing this? Is this the norm with my peers?” Because probably it isn't. You know, even if everybody has this experience they're not doing it tonight and right now. And so, you don't have to entertain that. You can say, “No, not everybody's doing this” or you go back to your Eye-Heart-Hand: “I hear that you feel like everybody is doing this I actually disagree. I don't think everybody is doing this. I think it's really a small number of people who might even be considering doing this, and it doesn't really matter to me, because I'm different from other people. So what if we were to do this other thing that I actually am comfortable with?” Or that time pressure right? “We only have prom night. We have to have sex tonight. There will be no other night when we have opportunities.” “Well, you know, if we're really a couple and we really love each other, then there will be other opportunities, you know, and this doesn't feel right to me.” So if we go to the Eye-Heart-Hand like, “I hear that you're worried that we won't get another opportunity, and I feel just as strongly as you do that I want to be in this relationship with you and that I want this, but I also feel like I don't want it right now, and so what if we were to plan a time when we could do this. Let's talk about other ideas, how to make space for this later, in the future, when I might be ready for it.” Right? So we can be addressing their concerns, assuming that these are real concerns, without giving in to the coercion.

If it's a "But, before you said you would" or "But, before we did - what was wrong with that? Why don't you want to do it now?" Then, you know, remember consent happens in the present moment. It doesn't matter what happened before. Just because you said Yes before doesn't mean you have to say Yes now. And so same sort of thing: "I hear that maybe you're a little frustrated that my answer before is not my answer now, you know, that things have changed. I really feel like now is not the time or now is not the place or I really feel like what we did before was too much and I want to go slower. So how about if we..." and then you give your suggestion for what would be comfortable. Right? Now when someone continues and they're just not hearing your No, that's where we were talking about leveling up and making it about the relationship. Right? "I feel like I'm trying to tell you No and I feel like you're not hearing me, and it's really hard for me to trust when you're not taking my feelings seriously. It makes me feel distant from you. Can we do something that we would both enjoy?" Now so if you escalate to the point where you call the relationship into question, it's like, "I don't feel good about being girlfriend/boyfriend or in relationship with somebody who pressures me like this." Right? And so that kind of escalation is necessary when someone doesn't hear your No. The last thing we want to do is cave in and teach them that these coercion lines work, because, of course, they'll keep using them. Right? So roleplay with your teen. Make sure that they can handle themselves when one of these coercion lines is thrown at them because it's super common.

Now, I wanted to tell you a little bit about non-concordance because I think this is a key [30:00] piece to understand when it comes to consent. I think a lot of people get this messed up and that a lot of kids get confused because of this. So **non-concordance** is when two things don't go together and that means that one doesn't lead to another or one doesn't have the meaning that you would think of the other. And so in this case, I'm talking about arousal. So how

Non-concordance? What's that?

It means two things don't concord, they don't go together. One does not signify or lead to the other.

In this case, we're talking about arousal. Specifically, how aroused you feel vs. your genital response. Hardness and wetness means you're aroused, right? Being aroused means you're hard and wet, right?

Simply untrue. Dangerous over simplification, in fact.

aroused you feel versus what your genitals are actually doing. Those are not the same thing. Hardness and wetness might be indicators of arousal, right, or being aroused means that you get hard and wet, right? Well, unfortunately, those things don't go together as often as you might think. It's a dangerous oversimplification. They've done the research on this! They have hooked people up to machines and shown them pornography or other things, asked them how aroused they feel and measured what was going on down below. So sometimes they feel really aroused but their genitals aren't doing much and sometimes their genitals are doing a lot and they're like, "I'm not aroused at all" and sometimes they match. Right? But it's all over the map, so one does not equal the other, and you certainly can't use the genitals to override someone's verbal response. Right? If I say, "How aroused are you?" and they're like, "Not so much," you can't be

Here's the truth

Sometimes how aroused you feel is not demonstrated by your genitals. Sometimes your genitals respond when you're more No than Yes. One does not equal another, and the genitals certainly don't trump how you're feeling!

Therefore, we can't assume we're reading our partners correctly if the only information we have is from their genitals!

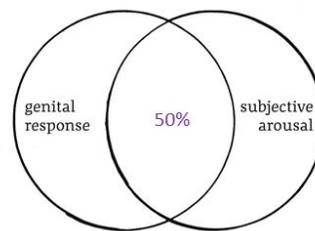
like, “Well, but I see down there you really are.” Right? It's not a trump card. It doesn't override at all. If they say they're not, then trust their response. **Their words carry more weight than what their genitals are doing**, however, a lot of us try to read our partner's body language and we make these assumptions. We think, “I see what's going on with the genitals, yeah, therefore I know that you're aroused” or “I know that you're ready” and that's just something that we can't assume. So we can't just go off of information from their bodies like that.

Want the scientific measurements?

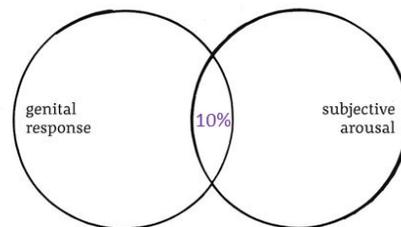
When the researchers attach instruments to the genitals and ask participants how aroused they are in response to a variety of stimuli, there's **50% non-concordance for men.**

It's **90% non-concordance for women.**

men's arousal concordance



women's arousal concordance



So when they did these studies, they found that there was about fifty percent concordance for men. In other words, what they're doing and how aroused they said they were matched up about fifty percent of the time - which means half the time it didn't! You know, half the time the men felt aroused and the genitals weren't responding. Right? That's why they invented Viagra. And half the time the genitals were responding and the men were not interested. That happens too, especially in puberty. My goodness, right? The little boy's body is

practicing. He's getting erections that are unwanted all the time, maybe even in his sleep. That is not the same thing as arousal.

And with women that non-concordance is so much more dramatic. It's only ten percent overlap and I imagine that that's because, you know, our reproductive systems are cycling and so the wetness that a woman experiences may have nothing to do with how sexy she's feeling, how aroused she's feeling. It may have a lot more to do with her cycle, her yeast infection or any number of other things. And so your partner judging whether you're ready for sex based on what's going on in your vulva - it just doesn't work. A lot of women tend to be on the submissive side, not communicating strongly, which means the men are trying to figure it out. Right? Or their partners are trying to figure it out, and if your partner thinks that your wetness is a good measurement of your arousal they're not likely to get it right.

Mistaken meaning...

Beyond that, when there *is* a genital response, in a sexual situation, *that's all it is.*

- like yawning when someone else yawned
- scratching when someone else scratched

The body took in information and mirrored. There's no particular meaning behind it. Just as you don't have hypoxia (low oxygen) or a bug bite, a genital response doesn't mean you "like" what's happening.

Okay, so we also mistake the meaning of our genital response. Right? When there is a response in a sexual situation, then really, that's all it is. So if my husband yawns and that makes me yawn, I'm not gonna make meaning of that that I'm tired. I may just say, "Huh yawns are contagious." Same thing with scratching. Right? If my dad scratches and so I scratch, that

doesn't mean that I've got bug bites or a rash or anything going on, and the same thing happens with arousal. Your body will mirror what's going on sometimes, and there's not necessarily any particular meaning behind it. So just because your genitals responded to something doesn't mean that you enjoyed it or that you liked it or that it's even something that's necessarily arousing. It's just that your genitals responded this time.

consider the impact...

A girl's sexual partner focuses on how wet she is, instead of her body language, facial expression, or words. The partner doesn't check in verbally. Instead, when they're ready for penetration, they assume she is too. There wasn't enough foreplay and communication for her to enjoy the sex.

Misconception: Wetness is not the same as enthusiastic consent.

Okay so this might seem like splitting hairs. You might be like, "Yeah, yeah, I know. I was a teenage boy once and I got hard-ons when I didn't want them" or "I had a boyfriend who did. I [35:00] know, I know, I know." But unfortunately, this is where I think people fall down a lot. So if a girl's partner doesn't check in verbally and just thinks that they know when this girl is ready to be penetrated it's not likely right. Ten percent chance that they're gonna get it right, and so she's probably not gonna get enough foreplay. She's probably not going to get communication on the level that she'd like. She may not enjoy the sex. We don't want to set up girls for that, right? We want to teach everyone who might partner with a girl that her wetness is not an indicator of her arousal or her consent.

Same thing for men though, because sometimes men get erections when they're not awake or sometimes they get erections and they're not actually interested in having sex with

that partner. ~~They might be aroused,~~ but they don't really want to go any further. I mean, their genitals might - I just said that totally wrong. Their genitals might have responded, but they're not actually feeling aroused. So it is totally possible for a man to be raped. The physiology supports this, even though the public understanding is that a man would always want sex - and it's just not true. So we can't assume that he wanted it or that he actually had control to get rid of an erection that had appeared. Right? So some people think men can't be raped, but the research doesn't support that. It is possible for a man to have an erection and unwanted sex. So having an erect penis is not the same thing as enthusiastic consent.

consider the impact...

A woman watches a violent scene in a movie and feels her genitals respond. She is horrified. She wonders if she's sexually deviant or an immoral person.

Misconception: Wetness is not the same as arousal. She's not turned on by violence.

Sometimes this impacts our own perception of ourselves. I had a mom who asked me: "I was watching this movie, and there was this violent scene and it was sexual, and I felt myself respond and I was just horrified. I had such a shame attack." Right? "I mean, what is wrong with me that I would feel aroused by this?" and I'm like, that's not arousal. Careful there. That's just genital response. You know that you didn't feel good about it. You know that you felt horrified, that you didn't like this. Right?" That's what's true, so trust your feelings, let your body do whatever your body does. You know if you're tired or if you yawned. Okay, so what's right? Wetness is not the same as arousal. Violence doesn't necessarily turn her on. They might, you

know, I'm sure there are people that who are that way and at the same time you can't make that kind of meaning out of it.

consider the impact...

A man witnesses a rape of an incapacitated person. His genitals respond. He is horrified. He is too overwhelmed with confusion and shame to intervene.

Misconception: Hardness is not the same as arousal. He's not turned on by rape.

And this one I think is an important one, because a lot of the times when there's hazing or gang rape, there's actually a lot of witnesses and you wonder, why didn't those witnesses do something? Well, I wonder if it has something to do with arousal non-concordance. So if someone witnesses rape, then their genitals may very well respond because this is a sexual situation. Their body might mirror, and they may very well be horrified that they're feeling their body respond. This is rape! This is wrong! Right? And that can be so confusing and overwhelming that maybe I'm stuck in my own mess and I can't go help a victim. I can't go intercede, right? So that's terrible! We want to clear that up from the beginning. No, you know you are not turned on by rape. You did not have an impulse to join. You were horrified! Right? You had an impulse to stop it, you just got mixed up in this quagmire. So again, there's that misconception that maybe arousal happens because of the genital response, no, not the same thing.

consider the impact...

A preteen is fondled by a sexual predator. The adult uses the preteen's erection as evidence that "he liked it." The child is overwhelmed and confused.

Misconception: Hardness is not the same as arousal. It's not the same as consent.

And when we get to talking about preventing sexual abuse, this is a big one for helping kids understand what's going on with themselves because they don't know these nuances. They don't know the difference between sex and love. They don't know the difference between, like, lust and intimacy. And they don't know the difference between their genital response and arousal, for example. And so they may very well be taken advantage of because of that innocence where the person who's abusing them may say, "You know, I know you like this because you are having this genital response" or "because you orgasmed." Right? That can be very confusing; it turns around the child's head. They get overwhelmed. They may even have experienced pleasure from an orgasm, but it doesn't mean that their body betrayed them. Right?

[40:00] What's going on with the genitals is not the same thing as what you enjoy or what you consented to or what arouses you. We want to make that distinction really clear because if the child is confused by it, this is really going to make it difficult for them to speak to one of us, one of their allies, and tell us what was going on. Right? If they're clear from the beginning that these are distinct things, then it's much harder to take advantage of them.

This is *not* new research

The studies were done in the 70's – we've known about it for *50 years!*

We're talking about consent, consent, consent, without clearing up this very common *wrong* assumption.

I'm convinced it's a missing piece which will have great impact.
Now that you know, spread the word! Share this near and far.

Now, this is not new. We did all this research and discovered non-concordance and genitals and arousal back in the 1970s; which means we've known about it for a long time and yet I don't think that the public perception has really latched on to it. In a lot of ways, we seem to think that if you're very young, your body might be practicing and you might not be aroused, so okay. Or if you're very old, your body might be, maybe, broken and so you need your Viagra and somehow we think that it doesn't apply all of us. Actually, the research is like, no it applies to all of us. It's not just for the young and for the old. There is arousal non-concordance. This thing is real. And so I think that part of talking about consent is clearing up this misconception. I'm convinced that it's a missing piece and I hope that it becomes a greater part of the dialogue.

Consent means...

- It's mutual
- **It's clear and enthusiastic** in the PRESENT moment.
 - **Genital response does not count** as clear and enthusiastic.
- Both people are of legal age
- Both people are of sound mind

Okay, so going back to consent. When we say it's clear and enthusiastic, in the present moment, the genital response doesn't count as an indicator that's clear and enthusiastic. The

only way that you know it's clear and enthusiastic are from other signals. Right? It's got to be that they are pulling you towards them, that they're leaning in, that they're smiling, that they're telling you so. Right? So clear and enthusiastic isn't "he had an erection" or "she was wet."

Action Steps

Teach your child Yes and/but, No and/but. Try a foot massage to practice.

Tell us about it in the Facebook group!

Stretch: Role play how to respond to a No and how to respond to coercion.

Alright. Action steps around consent skills. I think the easiest place to start is to try that foot massage and teach your child may be just through your modeling or maybe in the more concrete way using our diagram about yes/and, yes/but, no/and and no/but. And then you get to practice! Right? You can practice with the foot massage. You can practice with other things and tell us how that goes, because I'd love to hear whether it was a fun experience, or whether it felt kind of awkward, whether you weren't sure about what you were doing. So let me know how that goes.

If you want to take it further, if you're ready to step it up, the stretch is to do that roleplay. How do you respond to a No? So when you invite your friend over and they say No, how do you welcome that? How do you gracefully accept their No and tell them it's good that they told you No. And then the other part to roleplay is how to respond to coercion. So that's not for the youngest kids. Maybe you can assess where your child's verbal ability is. You can play with that.

Definitely for the older kids - they need that skill of being able to respond to coercion and stand their ground.

Alright, that is it for consent skills! Give me your feedback. Please let me know what seems doable, what seems difficult, what questions you have, and we will address them in the next Q&A Call. Alright! Have a wonderful day!