

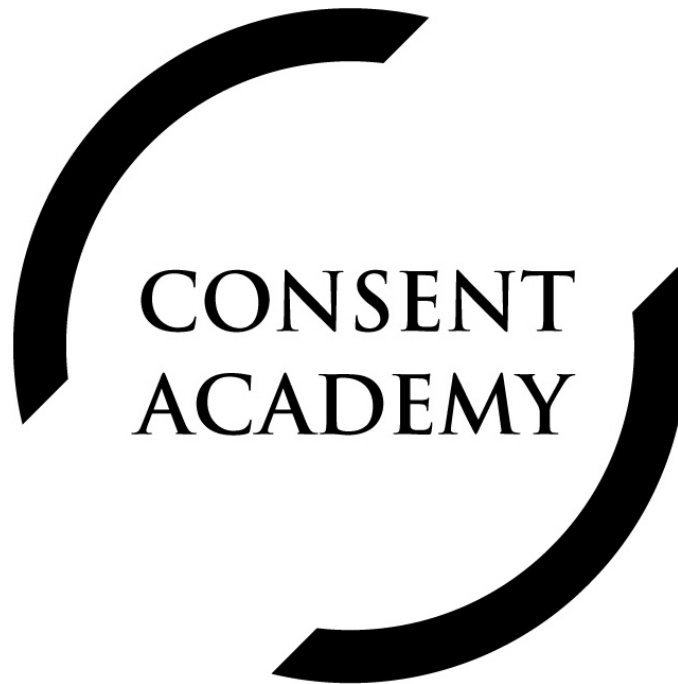


# *Consent And Youth*



(Picture: Stacked Children's Wood Blocks. Top 2="NO" Bottom 3="YES")

**Presented by:**  
**The Consent Academy**



(Image: Consent Academy Logo)  
(Consent Academy name flanked by a partial circle, top left and bottom right)

**[www.consent.academy](http://www.consent.academy)**

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**Seattle, WA**

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# Welcome to The Consent Academy



(Image: Consent Academy Logo)

**Our workshops are designed to help you understand what Consent is. We're not here to tell you *HOW* to do Consent, but instead we teach about the principles and complexities of Consent so you can integrate it into your own life and professional practice.**

## Who are we?

The Consent Academy is a collective of consent educators, experts, and activists. We are committed to the foundations of consent culture by:

- Creating relevant, targeted, and original consent content and curriculum.
- Making consent education accessible and inclusive to all ages, backgrounds, settings, and contexts.
- Challenging current assumptions, perceptions, and the status quo.
- Empowering dialogue around and the application of consent in daily life.
- Operating authentically, bravely, honestly, and with acceptance and compassion.
- Embracing these two concepts: Consent is essential. Consent is for everyone.

We talk a lot about consent and consensual activity. It's the cornerstone of what we teach and who we are. And while that is easy to say, we know that living a dedication to consent takes work, awareness, and a willingness to engage.

## Our understanding of consent is this:

Consent is a voluntary agreement, made without coercion, between persons with decision-making capacity, knowledge, understanding, and autonomy.

- Consent covers all forms of interaction. It creates a space where the safety and agency of all parties is honored using healthy communication and negotiation to craft informed boundaries.
  - It is part of everyday life, present in all forms of human interaction (not just sex).
- Consent, explicit and implicit, is dependent on the capacity of the parties involved, the context of the situation, and can be revoked at any time. It is a process of constant and collaborative discovery.
- Consent allows someone to ask for something and receive an honest and authentic answer. It exists where:
  - The person answering has enough capacity, information, agency, and ability to give that honest and authentic answer without coercion or undue influence.
  - The person asking has enough capacity, information, agency, and ability to receive that answer without creating a coercive environment.
- Honoring autonomy (the right each person has to do and say what happens to one's own body, mind, and spirit) is a defining feature of consent.

**More information and details about upcoming workshops available at:**

**[www.consent.academy](http://www.consent.academy)**

**Consent covers all forms of interaction:** It creates a space where the safety and agency of all parties is honored using healthy communication and negotiation to craft informed boundaries in the moment and for the future.

- Consent, explicit and implicit, is dependent on the capacity of the parties involved, the context of the situation, and can be revoked at any time. It is a process of constant and collaborative discovery.

**Consent is a part of day-to-day life:** Anytime someone sets a boundary or makes a request there is the opportunity for consent to come into play. In the course of any given day consent is confirmed and violated multiple times. People do it to us and we do it to other people.

- Any activity has some risk of consent being missed, broken, misunderstood, misinterpreted, unintentionally violated, or intentionally violated. Some activities have more risk than others. And some people, either due to behavior, lack of understanding, or condition pose a greater risk as well.
- The risk of committing a violation and having one committed against you goes up as your capacity, level of information, clarity of agreement, an/or understanding of autonomy goes down.

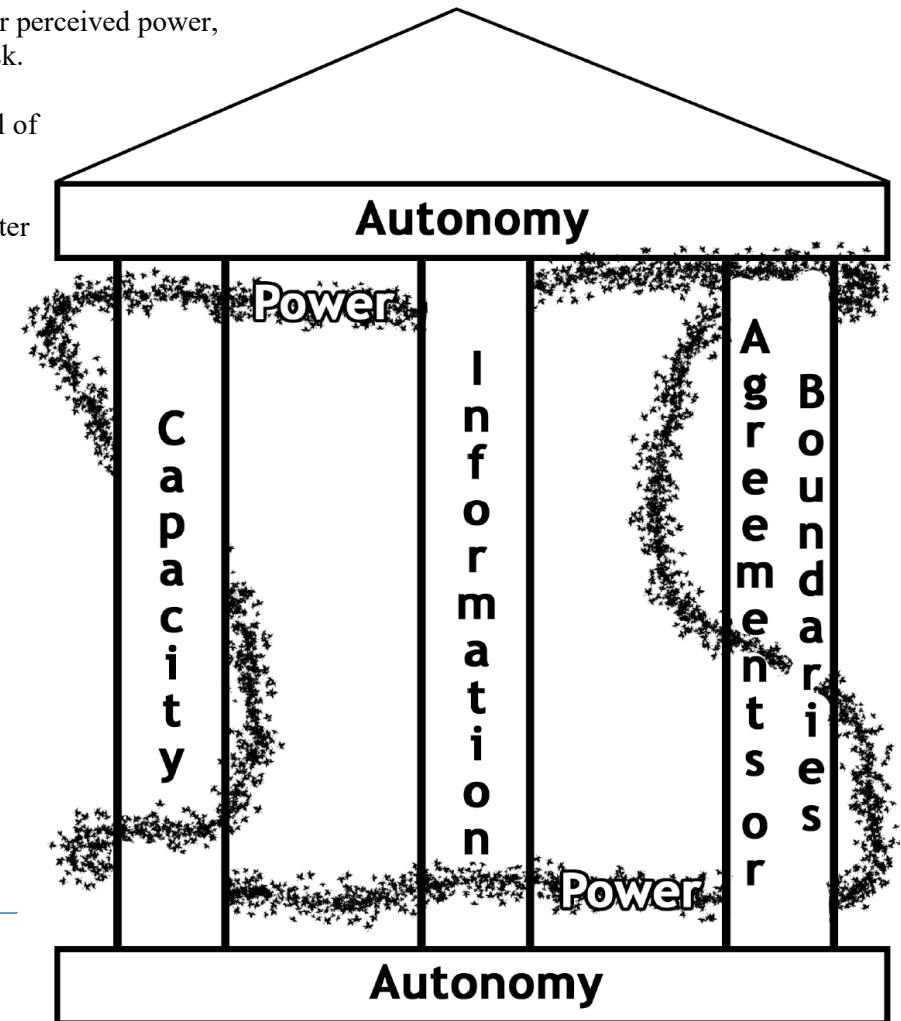
**Power, and the issues it causes, weaves throughout Consent:** It impacts our ability to both give and receive it.

- The greater the difference in power, or perceived power, between two people the greater the risk.
- Power differentials can be created by many things including: age, role, level of experience, social position, money, privilege, and/or anything that puts one person in a higher or better position than another.
- It's important to reduce the impact of power wherever possible when engaging in authentic consent.

There are four basic concepts you need to understand Consent:

- Capacity
- Information
- Agreement & Boundary Setting
- Autonomy

Autonomy both supports and is supported by the pillars of Capacity, Information, and Agreement & Boundary Setting.



(Image: The 4 Part Complex Model of Consent)

(Base = Autonomy supporting 3 Pillars: Capacity, Information, & Agreements or Boundaries, holding up a Roof = Autonomy. Vines representing Power weave through the pillars.)



# Capacity

- Does everyone involved have the ability to both give and receive honest and authentic consent?
- Consent is only valid when all people involved are capable of giving and receiving consent. Each person must be able to both give and understand a clearheaded “Yes”, “No”, or a request to negotiate.
- There are many things that can impair or diminish a person’s capability around consent. If you are uncertain if someone is able to give you honest and open consent, ask them. If you’re still uncertain for any reason, don’t continue.
- The more diminished someone’s capacity the higher the risk of violating consent or having consent violated.
- Here are some things that can impact Consent Capacity:

**Substances:** Alcohol, marijuana, illicit drugs, medications, or any substance that impairs or significantly changes the way we think and/or feel.

- If you’ve never had a particular drink, substance, amount, or dosage you won’t know how it might impact you.
- Everyone reacts differently and that can change based on time of day, amount of food, and other capacity issues.
- Because substance use is so common, it’s important to know how it impacts you and the people you’re with.

**Physical Limiters:** Sleep, hunger, fatigue, pain, disability, or any physical issue that impairs or significantly changes the way we think and/or feel.

- A person’s level of physical awareness also impacts assessment. The less awareness, the greater the impairment.
- The significance or level of physical issue plays a strong role. The more pain, hunger, etc. the greater the impairment.
- Overlapping physical issues, or ones that overlap with other capacity issues, will also have a greater impact.

**Emotional Limiters:** Arousal, grief, anger, depression, euphoria, upset, or any emotional issue that impairs or significantly changes the way we think and/or feel.

- A person’s lack of emotional awareness and ability to emotionally regulate can also have significant impact.
- The importance or level of emotion plays a strong role. The more something is felt or focused on, the greater the impairment.
- Note, feelings are good and important. Too much feeling, or unregulated emotion, lowers capacity.

**Cognitive/Mental Health Limiters:** Mental fatigue, cognitive delay, brain injury, depression, anxiety, trauma, or any other issue that impairs or significantly changes the way we think and/or feel.

- The significance of the issue, and in some cases, the medication used to treat it, can play a strong role.
- Note, a cognitive/mental health diagnosis or disorder, when properly managed, does not automatically create impairment.

**Social Limiters:** Social standing, power differences, social capital, social perception, social norms, or any issue that impairs the ability to give or receive an honest and authentic choice.

- This can change significantly between different groups, organizations, and contexts.
- Social limiters, or the perception of them, need only be present on one side of an interaction to create capacity issues.

## Ways to Improve Consent Capacity

- Remove or reduce substances that create greater impairment.
- Wait longer after taking a substance or engaging in significant emotional/mental activity.
- Practice more self-care before, during, and/or after an activity where consent is present.
- Get regular sleep, exercise, food, hydration, play, and/or anything that increases your physical wellbeing.
- Practice emotional regulation skills, emotional awareness, patience, and relaxation skills.
- If your capacity is low, bring in someone with more capacity to watch out for you and help you make decisions.
- Engage in more explicit negotiation and boundary setting before engaging in an activity.
- Avoid re-negotiating in the middle of an activity.
- Be willing to say no and/or walk away if you don’t have the capacity to give and/or receive consent.
- Create a plan for what happens if something goes wrong. Follow the plan if something goes wrong.
- Ask for help when you need it.

# Information

- Does everyone involved have enough information to make an informed decision about the activity?
- For consent to be valid, all the people involved need to know what's being agreed to.
- Being clear about what you're asking for when you make a request is critical to avoiding misunderstandings and unintentional consent incidents.
- If someone makes a request of you, and you're not sure what they're asking for, ask for clarification. Don't agree to something you don't understand.
- If you're not sure the other person understands what you're saying, pause and try to explain again. Don't proceed with an activity, especially a risky one, without being reasonably sure you're understood.
- Any request or boundary should be as specific, clear, honest, and open as possible.
- Here are some things that can impact Informed Consent:

**Language:** A language difference, language level, or difference in common language can impair clarity or understanding.

- People can be difficult to understand and often mean something different even when using the same words.
- Always clarify the words you're using if there is a chance of a misunderstanding.

**Knowledge Base:** Every activity has a set of knowledge and understanding that goes with it. A lack of knowledge can impair clarity or understanding.

- You need to know what you should be asking and finding out about.
- The less you or the other person knows about an activity or behavior, the higher the level of impairment.
- Be careful of the things you don't know, and don't realize you don't know.

**Honesty:** It's crucial everyone involved in an interaction is being honest about their understanding, intentions, and desires. Any deception will impair safety and prevent consent.

- Be sure of your own honesty. The less honest you're being, the higher your risk.
- Make sure that you're being honest with yourself first, then work on being honest with the other person.
- Use your best guess in gauging your level of trust in the other person.

**Openness:** It's important everyone involved to be open/transparent with each other. A lack of open sharing will impair clarity, understanding, and consent.

- Don't wait to be asked for information. Share important information rather you are asked or not.
- Power differentials have a huge influence on openness and the ability to share information.

**Length of Relationship:** The more you know someone the more you understand how they speak, their background, personal quirks, level of honest, consent practices, etc. A lack of knowledge about the person you're interacting with can impair understanding and increases the risk of a consent incident.

- The more experience you have, the more you know how much you can trust.
- Over time you build a model of people's Consent Framework, a map of what's okay to do with them and what's not okay. This framework changes over time and people can still give or withhold Consent even if that answer does not match what you already understand about their framework.

## Ways to Improve Informed Consent

- Communicate before engaging in a complicated or risky activity to establish a common language.
- Talk about the activity you're planning on doing in detail.
- Practice negotiation and communication skills outside of the activity.
- Negotiate more completely. Take more time and give more attention to your negotiations.
- Write down your agreements, boundaries, and limits.
- Take classes, read books, and get more information about the activity you're wanting to do.
- Have open and honest conversations with the other person before starting the activity.
- Be willing to say no and/or walk away if you don't have the information you need to give or receive consent.
- Create a plan for what happens if something goes wrong. Follow the plan if something goes wrong.
- Ask for help when you need it.

# Agreement & Boundary Setting

- Does everyone involved have the ability to say either yes or no to the activity?
- Once you have capacity and information, the next step is to give clear a “Yes” or “No”.
- Agreements state what you are wanting or willing to do. “Yes” is the simplest of agreements.
- Boundaries state what you are unwilling, unable, or simply don’t want to do. “No” is the simplest boundary.
  - Both should be as Explicit, Verbal, Clear, Unambiguous, Willing, and Complete as possible.
  - Both should come from an authentic place and reflect what you actually want or don’t want.
- The more implicit, nonverbal, confusing, ambiguous, coerced, and incomplete a statement is, the greater chance there is for confusion, misunderstanding, and violation.
- Here are some things that can impact Agreement and Boundary Setting:

**Level of Explicitness:** A lack of clarity and/or details in a statement can impair understanding and increase the risk of a consent incident.

- The safest agreement or boundary is specific, clearly expressed, physically demonstrated, and backed up with action.
- The more confusing, implied, able to be misinterpreted, or susceptible to multiple interpretations the answer is, the higher the level of risk.

**Level of Articulation:** A lack of an easily understandable statement, either due to what is said or how it is expressed, can impair understanding and increase the risk of a consent incident.

- The safest agreement or boundary is simple, clear, verbal or written, and easily understood.
- The more complicated, mumbled, non-verbal, or ambiguous the answer is, the higher the level of risk.

**Level of Enthusiasm:** A lack of perceived desire to engage can impair understanding and increase the risk of a consent incident.

- The safest agreement or boundary clearly shows desire, enthusiasm, and excitement.
- The more confusion, lack of wanting, fear, or simple disinterest shown, the higher the level of risk.

**Level of Coercion:** Any verbal, physical, or emotional behavior that forces/pushes for a specific answer, or creates a threat of retaliation, removes the possibility if a consensual activity.

- It should always be okay to say no to any activity for any reason.
- The more you feel you will be punished in some way or that the other person wants/relies on a specific answer, the higher the level of impairment.
- Power differences are a significant factor in both intentional and unintentional coercion.

**Level of Perceived Trust:** A lack of trust in the person you’re interacting with will impair understanding and increase the risk of a consent incident.

- The more you know and trust someone’s response, the safer you are likely to be.
- The less you know someone, the more often they have broken your trust, or if you have a bad feeling about them, the higher the level of risk.
- This is true for provable deception, any hint of deception, or a perception of untrustworthiness.

## Ways to Improve Agreements & Boundaries

- Increase your level of clarity, verbal expression, and use of specific language.
- Give and accept a simple “yes” or “no”. Remember, “maybe” or a lack of response is not consent.
- Practice saying “yes” when you want something and “no” when you don’t want something.
- Practice expressing your wants and boundaries clearly and with lots of details.
- Practice expressing your wants and boundaries with enthusiasm.
- Practice accepting other people’s answers without asking why or demanding to know their reasons.
- Learn to negotiate and take time. Sometimes what is needed is more information, clarity, and/or reassurance.
- Be willing to walk away if you don’t get the response you want or if the other person isn’t listening to you.
- Never try to force someone to consent. They give either an explicit/enthusiastic yes or you don’t have consent.
- Create a plan for what happens if something goes wrong. Follow the plan if something goes wrong.
- Ask for help when you need it.

# Autonomy

- Is everyone involved being treated as though they have the right to make their own decisions?
- Autonomy is the concept that everyone, regardless of their appearance or identity, has the right to say what happens with and to their body, mind, spirit, property, and information.
  - It is both the basis and outcome of practicing consent.
- No one has the right to take away your autonomy. You do not have the right to take away someone else's.
- Autonomy creates the basis for Agency: the ability to wield or manipulate power.
  - Power is the ability to create change in your world/environment.
  - Many things can impact a person's Power and Agency.
- Behaviors like coercion, bullying, manipulation, or harmful power plays create a reduction in Agency and thus increase the risk of consent being broken or violated.
- Here are some things that can impact Autonomy:

**Autonomy of the Self:** A lack of understanding or belief in your own autonomy, your ability to make decisions based solely in your own needs, wants, and desires, impairs your ability to give or receive consent.

- There are many experiences or beliefs that may diminish our self-concept in terms of when we can or can't make a decision.

**Autonomy of the Other:** A lack of understanding or belief in another person's autonomy, their ability to make decisions based solely in their own needs, wants, and desires, creates significant risk of a consent incident or violation.

- There are many experiences or beliefs that may diminish our concept of others in terms of when it is right or okay for them to make a decision.
- Sometimes the level of desire, ours or the other person's, can impact the awareness of autonomy.

**Boundary Setting:** A lack of stated boundaries, yours or the other person's, create significant risk.

- Boundaries that are implicit, unclear, easily misinterpreted, or unstated increase the level of impairment.

**Boundary Holding:** Boundaries that are not enforced/reinforced, yours or the other person's, create significant risk.

- Good boundaries come with action when pushed or broken. Sometimes this is simply reiterating the boundary. Sometimes it means imposing a consequence. Sometimes it means walking away from the encounter.
- Boundaries that are diffuse, easily pushed, and/or poorly held increase the level of impairment.

**Power Differential:** A difference in the level of power, or other power-based concerns, between two people creates significant impact on consent and increase the level of risk in an interaction.

- There are many things that cause a difference in perceived power. Examples: boss/employee, teacher/student, Top/bottom, differences in privilege, etc. The greater the difference in power, the greater the level of impairment.
- The impact is the same if only one person involved perceives the difference.
- A power differential impacts all areas of consent: Capacity, Information, Agreement, Boundaries, and Autonomy

## Ways to Improve Autonomy

- Think and talk about your own autonomy. Focus on the things in your life that both promote and deny it.
- Think and talk about the autonomy of others. Focus on the things that both promote and deny it.
- Increase your level of clarity, verbal expression, and specific language around your own rights and power.
- Restate boundaries in a more firm or clear way when they're not respected.
- Be willing to walk away from or ignore someone who isn't respecting your autonomy.
- Reinforce your autonomy by being around supportive and respectful people.
- Practice using your Agency in positive ways and find ways to give Agency to others.
- Never try to force someone to consent. They give either an explicit/enthusiastic yes or you don't have consent.
- Create a plan for what happens if something goes wrong. Follow the plan if something goes wrong.
- Ask for help when you need it.



## Risk & Responsibility

- There are many things that can impact and impair the different areas on consent. The greater the impairment in any given area, the greater the risk of a Consent Incident: An event where something has happened around consent and needs resolution.
  - Consent Incidents exist on a spectrum from minor to severe. Basically any problem including consent.
  - They include things like misunderstandings, mistakes, accidents, and unintentional impact.
  - They also include boundary pushing, boundary violation, emotionally driven, and intentional impact.
- Where a Consent Incident has occurred, there is the possibility of a Consent Violation: An incident where one or more the people involved believe their consent was broken or violated.
  - Only the person who experiences the impact or harm gets to determine if their consent was violated.
  - The parties involved do not need to agree for a violation to occur.
  - The more consent is impaired, the greater the risk a violation will be felt/experienced.
- If you engage in risky consent you are choosing to accept the risk of a Consent Incident.
  - Do what you can to mitigate the risk by increasing consent in other areas.
  - Make a plan for what you will do if you violate someone else's consent or if they violate yours.
    - If something happens, get support and follow the plan you made.
  - Even when a Consent Incident is unintentional, everyone involved is accountable to each other.
    - We have an obligation to engage and take responsibility when something happens.
    - Even when we don't mean to break someone's consent, they still experience that break and its consequences.
  - If you break someone's consent, consider taking these steps as part of your plan:
    - Stop doing the thing that created the impact.
    - Make an honest apology: 1) Validate. 2) Apologize. 3) Accept responsibility. 4) Ask to help.
    - Make amends for what happened
    - Update your Consent Framework and strive to do better in the future.
- Choosing to accept the risks associated with a high risk activity does not make you responsible for the other person's behavior. You accept your responsibility. They accept theirs. This is especially true for intentional violations.
- Consent is complicated and contains many different influences and issues. Think about your risk factors and do what you can to make your interactions with others as consensual as possible.

## Discovery & Practice

- Practicing Consent is easy when everything is calm. It's more difficult when something creates a sense of pressure, increases intensity, or lowers inhibition.
  - Any significant feeling or emotion raises the intensity level of an interaction.
    - This includes things like: arousal, desire, anxiety, fear, euphoria, etc.
  - Intensity increases the risk of miscommunication, misunderstanding, and a wide variety of communication errors. The more errors in communication the higher the risk of an incident.
  - Anytime you find yourself in a situation where there is intensity, emotional or otherwise, that's the time to step back and evaluate.
    - When in doubt, take your time, ask again, and pay attention to what people are actually saying.
    - This will help you avoid confusion, prevent misunderstanding, and stop harm.
  - Intentional violation of consent is not an issue of intensity or misunderstanding. It is simply wrong.
- Learning about Consent is a process of trial and error. We each affirm and violate Consent in small ways every day.
  - When you meet someone for the first time, it's be very clear and explicit about expectations and boundaries.
  - The more you practice consent, both in and out of intensity, the easier it gets.
- Part of that process is Consent Accountability.
  - When you mess up, take responsibility, apologize, and make amends. Focus on the impact, not the intent.
  - When you experience an incident or violation, say something about it, either to the person or someone else.
  - When you see poor consent behavior, say something and hold other people accountable.
- Practicing consent is not about defining right/wrong behavior. It's about what is right for you, understanding what is acceptable for another, understanding the level of risk that goes with specific behaviors, and making a conscious and authentic choice to engage in a given activity.

#ConsentIsEssential

#ConsentForEveryone

#ConsentAcademy



## Etymology of Consent: “to feel together”

**Com** (Latin) with, together + **Sentire** (Latin) to feel  
=

**Consentire** (Latin) agree, accord; feel together  
=

**Consentir** (Old French) agree; comply  
=

**Consent** (English 1300) agree, give assent; yield to one with power

Consent is more than just thought and knowledge.

Consent is about feelings & sensations.

Unfortunately, we live in a society that doesn't value all the complex feelings humans are capable of, and values logic above all else. Influences:

- Colonialist culture
- Cartesian enlightenment thinking (I think, therefore I am) influence.
- Internal hierarchy of thoughts over feelings over sensations.
- A focus on rules around consent, like “yes means yes”, “no means no”, look for enthusiasm, etc.

But consent is so much more complicated and can't be approached linearly.

- It often takes time to reach a consensual agreement.
- Our sensations and feelings take time to process as they cycle through the many systems of our body.
- Being too much in your head about consent will put too much weight on what you say and hear rather than the more subtle feelings and sensations that actually convey more about whether something is consensual or not.

It often takes time to reach a consensual agreement.

- The same way it takes time for our sensations and feelings to cycle through the body.
- We need to feel something is consensual for it to be consensual.

Consent requires praxis - combining theory and physical practice

- It takes intellectual understanding and learning combined with the somatic (body) experience of working with it.



# The Consent Academy

## Glossary of Important Consent Definitions

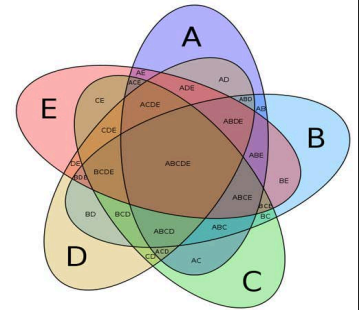
- 1. Consent Frameworks:** The models we create about what's ok or not ok with a given person.
  - Based in Heuristic Modeling (see below)
- 2. Explicit Consent** - Consent directly, clearly, and specifically given or stated for a defined activity.
  - Explicit Consent is time-limited and often directly negotiated between participants.
- 3. Implied Consent** - Consent that is "understood" to be given simply by showing up and/or participating at a given time, in a given place, or because of a preexisting relationship.
  - Example: people who show up to a class give implied consent to be taught by the instructor
  - Often misinterpreted, creating increased risk of a Consent Incident
- 4. Consent Affirmation:** An experience where consent was upheld and/or boundaries were perceived, acknowledged, & respected.
  - An umbrella term for where consent has been respected and upheld by another.
  - Affirmation takes place over time. Consent needs to be continuously upheld throughout an interaction to be affirmed.
  - Basically, someone says "yes" or "no" and the person or people they're with respect that answer.
- 5. Consent Incident:** An event or occurrence, involving consent, where something has gone wrong.
  - Consent may have been broken, bent, misinterpreted, confused, violated, coerced, or otherwise not upheld.
  - An umbrella term for anytime someone perceives their consent has been broken by another.
  - There is no initial assumption of guilt or fault. There is no assumption of victim or perpetrator.
  - It is an event that happened which needs consideration, review, and outside support.
  - Primary Actors: The Person Harmed, The Person Accused, & The Person Responsible for Harm
- 6. Consent Violation:** An experience where someone believes their consent was broken, a boundary was crossed, or harm was caused during a Consent Incident.
  - Where a person's agency or consent is taken away by someone else without their explicit permission.
  - Only the person who experiences the harm can determine if an incident is a violation.
  - A consent violation can happen regardless of the intent of the person who commits it.
- 7. Person Harmed (or Impacted Party):** The person harmed during an incident.
  - While people often use the word "victim" here, we believe it important to 1) not identify people without their consent and 2) avoid bias that might cause additional harm.
- 8. Person Accused (or Implicated Party):** The person who is accused or reported during an incident.
  - This person may or may not be responsible for the harm done. Investigation is needed to determine.
- 9. Person Responsible for Harm (or Responsible Party):** The person who created, instigated, or allowed the harm during an incident.
  - This may or may not be the person who was directly interacting or accused.
  - While people often use the word "perpetrator" here, we avoid it for the same reason we avoid "victim".
- 10. Intent:** The sum of our thoughts, feelings, desires, and beliefs that go into a decision to engage in a behavior. Can be either conscious or subconscious. Intent happens prior to action and may take minutes or moments to form. Intent is not behavior; it is the driving force that causes behavior.
- 11. Impact:** The effect that behavior has. When we witness or experience someone else's behavior we perceive it, and then have thoughts or feelings in response. That is the impact. It is not the action or behavior itself, but rather how it lands and affects us.
- 12. Accountability:** Taking responsibility through words and/or actions for one's harmful behavior and/or negative impact on others.

13. **Accountability Circle (or Pod):** A group to help an individual to engage better/more thorough accountability and/or to make amends.
14. **Amends:** Behavior designed to correct a mistake or to make up for harm done to another. Can be direct or indirect.
15. **Transformative Accountability:** A model for working to resolve an Incident that focuses on positive change and accountability; based in compassionate support, harm reduction, recovery, distributed responsibility for harm.
  - It supports the person who experienced harm, to get the help they need to recover from that harm.
  - It supports the person responsible for harm, to hold them accountable for that responsibility and help them move towards more consensual behavior.
  - It supports the organization or community involved, to both recover from the incident and to help set up better systems and norms to better prevent incidents from happening in the future.
  - The focus is on recovery and change through appropriate communication, emotional support, accountability practices, and education.
16. **Harm Reduction:** A set of principles and strategies for both reducing the overall harm present in a situation and preventing further harm from occurring. Tenets of Harm Reduction are:
  1. Harm that has happened cannot be removed. Harm cannot be prevented from happening in the future.
  2. Additional harm can be prevented and impact of the harm that was done can be reduced through appropriate intervention, education, and support.
  3. Non-judgmental interactions with both the person who experienced harm and the person responsible for it is essential to the process.
  4. Issues of power, privilege, oppression, trauma, past experience, and other social inequities impact a person's vulnerability to and capacity in dealing with harm.
  5. The real and sometimes tragic impact harm has on a person must be seen, acknowledged, and validated; be it physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual.
17. **Power:** The ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or course of events.
  - **Personal Power:** The ability to create change in one's own environment or circumstances.
18. **Agency:** The capacity or ability to project power, especially over the self, in a given place and time.
19. **Boundaries:** Personal limits that define what is okay and what's not. "No" is the simplest of stated boundaries.
20. **Privilege:** Additional Agency enjoyed by a person, held solely due to their inclusion in a particular group
  - Advantages, favors, and benefits given to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups. Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels
21. **Oppression:** The removal or reduction, either directly or indirectly, of a person or group's Agency
22. **Abuse of Power:** Improper use of one's Agency which results in the harm, injury, or oppression of another.
23. **Bias:** prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another
  - Bias is found in all aspects of life, thought, and interaction. It's a normal part of the human experience
24. **Implicit Bias:** Attitudes we have towards people or stereotypes we associate with them without our conscious knowledge.
25. **Cognitive Bias:** A systematic error in thinking that occurs when people process and interpret information in the world around them; impacting and affecting the decisions and judgments they make.
  - Comes from: Limited Attention, Personal Motivation, Social Pressure & Constructs, Emotional Pressure, & Heuristic Modeling
26. **Social Construct:** Jointly-constructed understandings of the world, within a given society, that form the basis for shared assumptions about reality. Example: Money.

27. **Ableism:** A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence, and productivity.

28. **Intersectionality:** An analytical framework for understanding how a person's traits combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

- Looks at how much of the success and respect an individual achieves (or does not achieve) in life can be explained by the possession of certain traits.
- Examples of these intersecting and overlapping aspects/traits include gender, caste, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, etc.
- Identifies multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage, which consequently add or subtract so that the net effect may be empowering or oppressing.
- Introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1994 to describe women of color's position within overlapping systems of oppression and to demonstrate how white feminist and antiracist agendas have concealed violence toward women of color.
- Disputed the common idea in law at the time that once irrational biases were eliminated, the law would be benign and fair to all.



29. **Unknown Unknowns:** Things you can't see or don't question about your behavior, assumptions, beliefs, and intent. These are often things you don't know you don't know, but which still impact how you act and how other people see you.

- The behaviors, assumptions, beliefs, and intents we engage in without thinking about them. They are there, but we don't perceive them. - Previously described as "Blind Spots"

30. **Consent Ethos:** A philosophy of Consent, what it means and how it works.

- Helps provide direction and inform actions around and about consent and consensual interactions.
- Should be: Well thought out, Specific, Useful, Refined, and Individual
- Can be either personal or organizational

31. **Systems Perspective:** A way of thinking that looks beyond an event that happens and into the patterns, structure, and mental models that caused the event to happen.

- Looks at all parts of a system together; both the individual pieces and how they interact/interconnect.
  - While each piece may act on its own, they come together to create a whole that is bigger and more complex than any individual piece.
  - Groups of people act as systems. Through group dynamics, personal experience, and feedback loops people come together to create a system built on the interconnection between those people. Thus, small changes in one or two relationships can have bigger, wider impacts; helpful and harmful.
  - Organizations are systems and will often behave in ways that don't always match the people that make them up.
- Systems work to protect themselves, often at the expense of change (positive or negative).
  - Such protection can be active (through system members) and homeostatic (structures that discourage change).
- Creating change in a System requires finding the right Intervention Point/Level.
  - Global / Cultural / Community / Organization / Group / Interpersonal / Intrapersonal
  - When there is an issue or problem, a Systems Perspective asks: "Is there something happening at a higher level that is influencing what happened?"

32. **Trauma:** The experience of severe psychological distress following exposure to significant violence, life threatening event, serious injury, or extreme psychological harm that has not resolved within one month.

- Psychological or emotional scarring that results from being psychologically or emotionally injured.
- Includes both a psychological (of the mind) and physiological (of the body) response.
- Not to be confused with Stress, Discomfort, or Psychological Pain which are normal parts of experience.

33. **Acute Trauma Response:** Behavior, in the moment, when a person is exposed to an extreme or traumatic experience.

- Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn. Fatigue, Flood
- These are sub or unconscious reactions; not based in intention or decision making.
- People often describe the feeling as something that "comes over" them.

34. **Compounded Trauma:** Complicated trauma, with increased traumatic response, caused by exposure to additional trauma or poor response to a traumatic event.
- Normally created by three different situations:
    - A person experiences multiple traumas in short succession
    - A person experiences multiple traumas over a long period of time
    - A person experiences a significant trauma and then re-experiences it again, either through re-exposure to similar stimulus or from being forced to relive the experience through re-telling what happened to them before they're ready to or have enough support.
  - Creates additional harm, elongates the healing process, & leaves people more susceptible to additional harm.
35. **Secondary Trauma:** The emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another. (Also known as: Compassion Fatigue)
36. **Trauma Informed Practice:** An approach assuming any individual is more likely than not to have a history of trauma. Trauma-Informed support recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role trauma may play in an individual's life.
- It focuses on: Safety, Patience, Understanding, Consent, Collaboration, Accountability, & Empowerment
  - Used to create safer and more informed environments, policies, and behavioral practices.
37. **Consent Advocate:** A person with a passion for consensual interaction, trained in communication skills, who helps to make a space more consent focused and supports people involved in a Consent Incident.
38. **Selfcare:** The practice of taking action to preserve, protect, or promote one's own physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual health; particularly during stress.
- Examples: Taking Breaks, Eating Well, Managing your Mental Health, Getting Enough Sleep, Etc.
39. **Bystander Intervention:** Training designed to help people overcome an innate desire to avoid problematic situations.
- Recognizing a potentially harmful situation or interaction.
  - Choosing to respond in a way that might positively influence the outcome.
  - Acting to reduce harm.
40. **Intervention Techniques:** Skills used to change the course of an interaction. Usually used by an individual in response to an interaction between two or more other people.
41. **De-Escalation:** Techniques used to lower the emotional intensity, crisis level, instability, and/or danger in an interaction with one or more people.
- Taking a less authoritative, less controlling, less confrontational, and more consensual approach to help guide a situation towards the least harmful outcome.
  - Strategies used to slow down, create space, and use communication to defuse potentially dangerous or inflammatory situations; to deal calmly with people who are experiencing mental and emotional crises.
42. **Emotional/Psychological First Aid:** Interventions that promote safety, stabilize those who experience harm, and connect them with help and resources; designed to reduce emotional and psychological harm and the impact of that harm.
- The purpose is to assess immediate concerns and needs of an individual after harm occurs; not to provide on-site therapy.
43. **Consent Policy:** A limited statement outlining the expectations around consensual behavior in a space and/or within an organization.
- Establishes Informed Consent for a space.
44. **Consent Procedure:** A detailed how-to document outlining what happens when the policy is not upheld; how to handle things when something goes wrong.

45. **Common Language:** The set of words, and understanding of those words, that a group uses to understand each other. It makes communication and negotiation possible between people within that group.
46. **Confidentiality:** A set of rules, promise, or agreement that limits access or places restrictions on certain information. An agreement to hold information private within the bounds of consent from an individual or organization.
47. **Need to Know Circle:** A group of people, involved in an incident or process, who need to know confidential information in order to make a decision, ruling, or to enact a procedure. No one outside the circle should have knowledge of or access to the information.
48. **Confidential Space:** A space (physical or electronic) where shared information cannot be overheard, seen, removed, changed, or interacted with in any way by anyone not in the *Need to Know Circle*.
49. **Policy Enforcement:** The process by which an organization, or designate, interprets and holds people accountable to the policy/policies in place.
  - Enforcement should be the same, every time, no matter who is involved.
  - May be done through, or with the support of, an *Accountability Team*.
50. **Scope:** The extent of the work you're able to/choose to do. The combined objectives and requirements needed to complete a project.
51. **Behavioral Expectations:** Goals for the ways people should act in a space or setting; focusing specifically on what they do and how they conduct themselves, rather than beliefs, thoughts, or feelings.
  - Behavior is identifiable and describable: Physical, Verbal, Written, Interactions with people, property, objects, the space, etc.
52. **Positive Reinforcement:** Using a reinforcing stimulus following a behavior that makes it more likely that the behavior will occur again in the future; using a favorable outcome, event, or reward to reinforce, strengthen, or increase the prevalence of a specific behavior.
53. **Compassionate Support:** Giving assistance to help enable function or action is a way that shows kindness, caring, support of a person's identity, and respect while reducing or removing blame, shame, and judgement.
54. **Resources:** Anything that supports the ability to take action or create change: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, monetary, logistical, relational, etc.
55. **Harm:** Significant physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual injury; lasting damage or trauma.
56. **Responsive Behavior:** Choosing a course action that considers the situation at hand, the context that situation is happening in, and potential outcomes of the action taken.
57. **Reactive Behavior:** Taking a course of action without consideration; acting quickly based on subconscious and/or emotional process. A "knee jerk" action/behavior.
58. **Ethics:** Principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity, most often derived from personal exploration, experience, or internal process.
  - For harm, ethics are used to determine when someone has been hurt to a level recognized by the organization/group or culture/subculture of the people involved.
  - Requires no proof, only a collective understanding/belief by a significant percentage of power holders.

59. **Morals:** Standards of behavior or beliefs concerning what is and is not right or prudent, often derived from story, other information, or external source.
  - For harm, morals are used to determine when someone has been hurt to a level recognized by a moral doctrine (often, but not always religious).
  - Requires no proof, only an understanding of right/good or wrong/bad by a moral authority.
60. **Support:** To give material, financial, logistical, physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual assistance (*resources*) as a way to enable function or action.
61. **Judgement:** To form an opinion about something or someone; to regard someone, something, behavior, etc. as either good or bad.
62. **Consequence:** The result of an action/behavior; an understandable reaction to the impact of behavior engaged in by an individual.
63. **Punishment:** The infliction or imposition of a penalty as retribution for an offense; something done to a person, which they will not like, hurt them, and/or cause physical/mental/emotional/spiritual/social distress as a way to address wrong doing.
64. **Harm Transfer:** The process by which harm, when done in one area or to an individual/group, is pushed or moved into another area, person, or group in an attempt to redress, hide, or weaponize the harm. *Punishment* is the most common.
65. **Responsibility:** Having an obligation to deal with a situation; being accountable for behavior or impact.
  - Applies to both action and inaction. Applies to impact regardless of intent.
66. **Accountability Process:** The series of interconnected steps an organization, group, or *Accountability Team* uses to enforce *Accountability* and *Responsibility* within its *Scope*.
67. **Accountability Team:** A group of people (typically 3-10), ideally trained and knowledgeable, who work to create & maintain accountability *Policy & Procedure*, manage incidents, run accountability processes, monitor resolutions, and/or work to create a safer and more accountable environment for an organization/group.
68. **Consent Incident Process Roles:** Director, Investigator, Writer, Educator, Reviewer, Advocate, First Contacts, Support, and Constituents.
69. **Accountability Resolution Strategies:** A set of tools, techniques, and behavior changes used by an Accountability Team as recommendations to hold people accountable for a Consent Incident.
70. **Consent Incident Evaluation:** Making a judgement or coming to a decision about the severity, impact, and needs surrounding a Consent Incident. May include determining suggested outcomes for the harmed, the accused, and the organization or event committee.
71. **Good Apology:** An authentic and clear statement acknowledging that harm was done and responsibility exists with the person apologizing. Includes statements of remorse, empathy, validation, authentic regret, and a willingness to make amends and/or change the behavior.
  - Personal/Private Apologies are inherently different from Public Apologies, being more intimate, including more detail, and often being less crafted for public opinion. These should not be confused.
72. **Teachable Moment:** An event or experience which presents a good opportunity for learning something about a particular concept, idea, or aspect of life.
73. **Boundary Testing:** Pushing against someone's stated "No". Testing how far someone is willing to hold *Boundaries* or their ability to exert *Agency* in self-defense.
  - Boundary testing is almost always a *Consent Incident* as it does not respect the consent of the person being tested. And, it is also normal behavior at certain *Developmental Stages*.



74. **Ageism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age; using a person's age to determine how smart, wise, right, good, able, etc. they are.
75. **Ableism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination on the grounds of a person's perceived ability to do tasks; using a person's perceived ability to determine how smart, wise, right, good, able, etc. they are.
76. **Sexism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination on the grounds of a person's perceived biological sex; using a person's perceived sex to determine how smart, wise, right, good, able, etc. they are.
77. **Confirmation Bias:** A tendency to favor information that confirms an existing belief or hypothesis; giving more weight to evidence that confirms an existing belief and undervaluing evidence that could disprove that existing belief.
78. **Self-Serving Bias:** A tendency to favor information and perception that makes one appear better, smarter, prettier, etc.; a tendency to attribute positive outcomes to one's behavior or character and blame negative outcomes to external or outside factors.
79. **Negativity Bias:** A tendency to favor information and perception that has bad, troubling, etc. meaning; a tendency to register negative stimuli more readily and dwell longer on it.
80. **Developmental Stages:** An age period when certain needs, behaviors, experiences, and capabilities are common and different from other age periods. Certain behaviors, mental states, intellectual capabilities, emotional expressions, responses, etc. are expected/considered normal at specific stages.
  - Examples: Prenatal, Infant, Toddler, Early Childhood, Middle Childhood (or Tween), Adolescence, Young Adulthood, Adulthood, Late Adulthood, Elderly, Moribund.
  - Age is only a guide for Developmental stages. There is a lot of variation and other factors that can change when an individual enters or exits a given stage.
81. **Misattribution:** An incorrect assumption about cause, meaning, origin, or intent; to attribute a belief, intent, reason, and/or meaning to someone who doesn't actually hold it.
82. **Consent Modeling:** To practice *Consent* in such a way it can be perceived by others and impact/change their Consent Practices; in healthy or unhealthy ways. Examples of healthy modeling are: 1) Maintain good Consent Practices yourself. 2) Practice good Consent where others can see you. 3) Call out non-consensual behavior when you perceive it.
83. **Active Listening Skills:** A communication skill, learned and developed with practice, that aids a person in being present with, concentrating on, and remembering what is being communicated by someone else.
  - Examples: Attention. Asking open-ended questions. Clarification. Validation. Paraphrasing. Summary. Empathy and feelings reflection.
84. **Code of Conduct:** A set of rules outlining the norms, rules, and responsibilities of an individual in an organization; a definition of proper behavior within a space that reflects the core values and goals of the group in charge of that space.
85. **Mandatory Reporter:** An individual who holds a position that requires them to report to the appropriate agency cases of abuse or imminent danger they have reasonable cause to suspect.
86. ...



# Consent and Youth

## Some Starting Questions to Consider:

### How do you feel about Consent?

- How has it been presented to you in the past?
- What have your experiences with Consent been?
- How was it handled in your family growing up?
- What good experiences have you had?
- What bad experiences have you had?

### What do you already know about Consent?

- Have you thought about it before?
- Have you ever had a class about it?
- What have you encountered in media, books, music, etc. that may have impacted you?
- Up to this point, has the topic of Consent only been about sex, or has it been more expansive?
- What do you know about Consent during sex and sexual interactions?
- What do you believe about Consent? Is it good? Unnecessary? Simple? Problematic?
- What else do you want to know?

### What do you know about working with youth?

- Do you have formal training? Informal training? School classes?
- What have you encountered in media, books, music, etc. that may have impacted you?
- Is it an age group you're comfortable working with?
- Do you feel like you want or need to know more?

### What might impact your ability to work with youth?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Previous knowledge/experience</li><li>➤ Your experiences as a child</li><li>➤ Relationships with the youth involved</li><li>➤ Personal Biases</li><li>➤ Fear of making a bad/wrong decision</li><li>➤ Fear of being judged</li><li>➤ Fear of how others will perceived you</li><li>➤ Organizational legacy / History</li><li>➤ Policy &amp; Procedure</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Amount of training and practice</li><li>➤ Type of situation</li><li>➤ Number of youth</li><li>➤ Age/Age Range of the youth</li><li>➤ Behavior of the youth</li><li>➤ Organizational support</li><li>➤ Amount &amp; Clarity of information</li><li>➤ Power dynamics</li><li>➤ Personal Investment</li></ul> |
|---|--|

# Talking about Consent with Youth

**When modeling and practicing consent with youth, it is helpful to think about the developmental stage the person is at and what their needs are.**

- Is a child allowed to say no to others touching their body or otherwise putting their power over them?
- Is the child allowed to set and enforce their own boundaries? Do they have space to explore their boundaries?
- Are we setting up youth to develop a consent praxis as they grow older? (Through childhood into adolescence into adulthood?)

**To have healthy consensual relationships, youth need to develop a sense of trust that their needs will be met when they are at their most vulnerable.**

- If youth don't learn autonomy, they may struggle transitioning through these stages.

## **Here are some Development Stage Issues around Consent:**

### **1. In the 0-3 range youth are soaking up information like a sponge.**

- Their world tends to be made of things they can feel and sense.
- Consent education at this stage consists of:
  1. Modeling consensual behavior.
  2. Practicing Consent, where you can, to give a solid foundation and early base for consensual interaction.

### **2. In the 3-7 range youth are learning about relationships and developing social skills**

- They are most concerned with connection and interpersonal relationships, usually centered around how they apply to themselves.
- They are more likely to respond to direct and concrete examples.
- Consent education at this stage consists of:
  1. Early education and discussing what Consent means.
  2. Providing a strong physical and felt sense of body autonomy and the ability to say no to things that are unwanted.
  3. Continuous modeling and concrete reinforcement of what Consent is and what it means.

### **3. In the 8-12 range youth are developing abstract thinking and forming a sense of how the greater world works.**

- They are able to recognize ideas like right & wrong, fair & unfair, and the basics of autonomy.

# Talking about Consent with Youth

- They are moving into a more complex understanding of the world and starting to look outside of themselves.
- Consent education at this stage consists of:
  1. Direct and more formal education about Consent concepts and ideas.
  2. Continued reinforcement of Body Autonomy and the ability to choose when to say “yes” or “no”.
  3. Introducing Consent as a sexual concept and as a necessary component to sexual interaction.
  4. Continued modeling of Consent and Consensual Interactions.
  5. Pointing out non-consensual behavior and talking about why that behavior is non-consensual.

## **4. In the 12-17 range youth are exploring identity, boundaries, and growing into new bodies.**

- Teenagers tend to be overwhelmed by change: bodies, social situations, responsibilities, the future, etc.
- They are often very concerned with how they are seen and related to by others.
- Consent Education at this stage consists of:
  1. Direct and explicit education around everyday life consent, sexual consent, and responsibility for consensual behavior.
  2. Specific reinforcement of Body Autonomy as it relates to sex, sexual situations, and substance use.
  3. How to practice Consent as a being with Agency and the right to make decisions for themselves.
    - How to take responsibility for mistakes and non-consensual interactions.
    - How to recognize what non-consensual behavior looks like in others.
  4. Communication Skills training.
  5. Start to introduce more complexity around choice, interaction, and Agency.

## **5. In the 17-23 range youth are solidifying their core identities.**

- They are trying to find their place in the world and exploring what life looks like going forward.
- In our current society, youth at this stage often feel lost between being a child and being a functional adult.
- Consent Education at this stage consists of:
  1. Direct and explicit education around everyday life consent, sexual consent, substance use, and responsibility for consensual behavior.
  2. Consent as it relates to their specific life path.
  3. Reinforcement of Responsibility and Agency as an adult.
  4. How to stand up for Consent: for the self, for others, and systemically.
  5. Bystander Intervention Training, Trauma Training, Communication Skills Training, and other skills to increase skill and practice.

# Talking about Consent with Youth

**Developmental theories are useful to consider in relation to each other and in relation to consent.**

- For example, an older child is learning social rules and how to develop relationships while they are pushing and questioning boundaries. A young child can begin to learn about boundaries and imitate model behaviors from a very early age.

## Here are some classic Developmental Theories:

### • Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

- Trust v Mistrust (infancy-18mos): Having needs met or not helps child develop trust with adults.
- Autonomy v Shame v Doubt (18mos-3yrs): Child is taught about boundaries.
- Initiative v Guilt (3-5yrs): Children start to use autonomy to initiate play.
- Industry vs Inferiority (5-13yrs): Youth are learning how to take their space, pushing up against the boundaries to figure out where they fit in their families/social group.
- Identity v Role Confusion (13-21yrs): As teenagers, are they given the space to practice different roles with autonomy?

### • Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Childhood Development

- Sensorimotor (0-2 years old):
  - Young children use five senses to understand the world. Children can begin to learn physical boundaries as early as this stage.
- Preoperational (2-6/7 years old):
  - Youth at this stage see the world symbolically. They recognize patterns but are not able to explain them. They can practice rules but don't necessarily understand their purpose.
- Concrete Operational (7-11/12 years old):
  - Youth start to understand rules, and start to question and challenge them.
- Formal Operational (12 years old - adulthood):
  - Youth begin to look at world abstractly as they age, and are able to connect different concepts and ideas.

### • Kohlberg Moral Development Level

- Preconventional Level (young childhood): Morality of self-interest: youth at this stage avoid punishment and seek concrete rewards.
  - Children may gradually begin to realize that people have different viewpoints and focus moves from obedience/punishment to individualism and exchange.
  - If an adult shows consent to their children, and boundaries are upheld and rewarded, the children are more likely to practice it with others.
- Conventional Level (older childhood through adulthood): Morality of law and social rules
  - Youth seek approval to form good interpersonal relationships, and eventually to maintain social order.
- Post-conventional Level (possible age 12 or older): Morality of abstract principles
  - People affirm agreed upon rights and personal ethical principles
  - Develop a complex sense of social contract and individual rights. The final rung of the ladder is understanding universal principles (a person sets their own moral guidelines, which may or may not fit the law). Kohlberg believed most people don't reach this stage.

### • Ainsworth & Bowlby Attachment Theory

- Secure attachment: Children are confident, reciprocal, non-reactive, resilient
  - Secure attachment is developed in childhood when the child regularly has their needs met. They feel comfortable, nurtured, safe, in touch with their parents and exhibit a clear understanding of how they should be treated.
- Anxious-preoccupied: Emotional hunger, fantasy bond, lack of nurturing, turbulence
  - This style of attachment forms when the child receives an inconsistent amount of love and care; the child is oftentimes left feeling empty and confused.
- Dismissive-Avoidant: Isolation, ambiguity, ambivalence, emotionally-distant
  - Attachment style is developed in childhood when only a portion of the child's needs are met. For instance, they may be fed but left emotionally neglected. May feel uncomfortable with affection and love or emotional intimacy.
- Fearful-Avoidant: internal conflict, dramatic, unpredictable, avoidant
  - Fearful-Avoidant attachment develops in childhood when the child is neglected or abused in their household. Can lead to pattern of dysfunctional relationships in adulthood. Feel "push-pull" dynamic that shares both the characteristics of anxious and avoidant attachment styles.

# Modeling Consent for Youth

## 1. Practice consent with other adults where Youth can perceive you.

- Have good Consent Practices and Model them for youth.

## 2. Practice consent with Youth directly.

- Encourage their agency.
- Ask for Consent, in an age-appropriate way, before interacting.
- Respect their “no”
  - In an age-appropriate way
  - Where it doesn’t compromise their safety
- Encourage their “yes”
  - Give age-appropriate praise for making healthy choices about their body and self.
  - Give space and time for Youth to make decisions for themselves in an age-appropriate way.

## 3. Call out non-consensual behavior when you see it.

- Do this with other adults where Youth can perceive you.
- Do it when you perceive Youth forget to ask for Consent with each other.
- Do it when it comes up in Media, Stories, etc.
- Do it when you perceive Youth violating each other’s Consent.

## 4. Practice Consensual Touch

- Physical touch is important—and so are boundaries!
  - “Is it okay if I touch your \_\_\_\_?” (Always use adult/technical names for body parts.)
  - “May I have a hug/fist bump? May I hold your hand?”
- Non-Verbal Body Cues – Check in with their unspoken messages
  - The following are all terrific cues they don't want to be touched. (Respect that need!)
  - Are they fussy or whiny?
  - Are they avoiding eye contact or pushing away?
  - Are they fidgeting or covering their body?
  - Are they sweaty?
- Support Youth’s Autonomy (even young kids!)
  - Pretend with your young kids. Give them scenarios to practice saying no.
  - When they say “no” work with them to find other solutions.
  - Watch for things that prevent them from saying “no”. (Teaching them to say “no” may one day save them.)
  - Provide choices even if they seem pointless. It empowers kids.
  - When asking them to do something, give at least 3 options to choose from. (e.g. Greeting can be a hug, fist bump, or wave/do a dance)
  - Negotiating and compromising allow them to learn important lessons.

# Modeling Consent Virtually

## 1. Practice consent with other adults when they're on a call or video chat.

- Have good Consent Practices and Model them.
- Youth will pick up on it and start to integrate better consent practices.
- The adults will also pick up on them, feel safer, engage in greater trust, and be reminded to practice consent themselves.

## 2. Ask things like:

- "Are you ready to get started?"
- "Are you ready to tell us about X?"
- "Do you feel comfortable with subject X?"
- "Would you like to take over for me?"
- "Is it okay if I take this one?"

## 3. And wait for an answer before continuing.

# Modeling Consent Virtually

## 1. Practice consent with parents when they're present, on a call, or on video chat.

- Have good Consent Practices and Model them for parents.
- Youth will pick up on it and start to integrate better consent practices.
- The adults will also pick up on them, feel safer, engage in greater trust, and be reminded to practice consent themselves.
- Stay calm and respectful. Remember, they are trusting you with their child, which is rarely easy.
- Give them space to ask questions and express concerns.
- Remember, when you work or volunteer for an organization, you're representing the whole organization.

## 2. Ask things like:

- "Is it okay for me to talk with X?"
- "Would you be more comfortable to stay in the room with us?"
- "Do you feel comfortable with subject X?"
- "Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?"
- "Now that we're finished, do you have any questions?"

## 3. And wait for an answer before continuing.

# Consent Practices with Youth

## Using Your Reactions as a Roadmap to Their Needs.

This can be especially helpful for youth at an age where they are not fully able to verbalize their own needs.

- *If you feel annoyed/irritated/worried:* that child may be bored and needs attention. Try involving them in what you are doing.
- *If you feel angry/ challenged/threatened:* child needs choices/to help out. Ask them for help.
- *If you feel hurt/ disappointed/ disgusted:* that kid is hurt and needs validation. Apologize.
- *If you feel hopeless/ inadequate/ helpless:* this child may be terrified and feeling unlovable. Find a task to teach them step-by-step that they can succeed in, then praise their innate ability. Do not criticize them.

## Effective Apology

- Acknowledge feelings/hurt, apologize, and then ask how you can make it up to them.
- Acknowledging we are human and make mistakes.
- Focus on making amends.
- See next page for more details.

## De-Escalation

- Self-Imposed Time Outs
- Ask: “Do you need a break?” “Could we come back together and talk about this later?”
- If visiting family or in a group setting, be your child’s ally and help them enforce their boundaries to other adults and take space or take a break if they need it.

## Mindfulness and Emotional Co-Regulation

- Teach youth to check in with their bodies, emotions, and feelings at an early age.
- Start by asking kids questions. Set the wheels of repair in motion:
  1. “What do you feel right now?”
  2. “What do you want (or not want)?”

## Practice Deep Breathing Together

- Take deep slow breaths.
- 4/3/4 Breathing - Breathe in for a count of 4, hold for 3, breathe out for a count of 4.
- Breathe from your diaphragm (for kids, have them put one hand on their stomach and one hand on their chest, noticing how each part feels or move when they breathe in and out).

## Body Scan

- First start helping young kids become aware of their different body parts: have them wiggle their toes, kick their legs (gently), shake their hips, or stretch their arms.
- Try asking: How do your legs feel? How does your stomach feel? How about your head?
- If able, practice body relaxation: Start at your toes and slowly work your way up the body, progressively relaxing one muscle at a time.



# Crafting a “Good Apology”

## 1) Start with authenticity

- If you’re not actually sorry for the harm caused, don’t apologize.
- And, even if you don’t believe you did anything wrong, there may still be consequences and a need to take responsibility.

## 2) Make a clear statement of apology:

## 3) Acknowledge the harm done:

## 4) Empathize with the harm done:

## 5) Acknowledge your responsibility:

## 6) Express authentic regret:

## 7) Ask what you can do to help:

## 8) Make Amends:

- State what you’re going to do to keep it from happening again
- Make reparations where appropriate
- Get support to help your change and stay accountable
- Accept the other person may never forgive you
- Change your behavior so the harm doesn’t, or is much less likely to, happen again.
- See “Amends Process” below

## 9) Change Your Behavior

- So the harm doesn’t, or is much less likely to, occur again.

### Personal/Private Apologies:

- Include more detail
- Can include an explanation (never excuses) or context for why the harm happened
- Should focus on restoring agency for the other person
- Increases self esteem & Emotional Intelligence
- Can include a request for forgiveness

### Public Apologies:

- Should be with the consent of all involved parties
- Should have a consistent message across all parties
- Need review, suggestions, and diverse input prior to publishing
- Engages and restores the faith of community
- Should be written and carefully drafted
- Should have a point of contact, especially if posted on social media

“I’m sorry for {specific event that caused harm}.”

“I see you were harmed by my {state the specific behavior}.”

“I see how much it hurt and {state the specific impact} it had on you.”

“It was my fault. I shouldn’t have done it.”

“I feel {bad/ ashamed/ terrible/ etc.} my behavior led to you being hurt.”

“When you’re ready, I would like to know what would help repair the damage I caused.”

# Consent Practices with Youth

## Activities appropriate for ages 5-12:

### **Role Reversals**

- Role-playing and practicing consent with the kids in your life is a great technique for building communication skills. Incorporate play into a child's education around consent.
- For this activity, the roles are reversed: Adult, play the role of the child, and the child plays the role of you!
  - Show them what asking for consent looks like and have them model saying yes or no.
  - Show them what not asking for consent looks like and have them instruct you on how to do it.

### **Yes, No, Maybe So Game**

- Practicing making choices teaches kids they have the right to make them.
- Have the youth help set the rules of engagement. These could look like: clockwise turn taking, no yelling, everyone gets to respond.
- Start off the questions to model silly, serious, boring questions:
  - Do you want to go to the moon?
  - Do you want to make my bed?
  - Do you want to do a summersault? (let them do it if they say yes).
- Encourage kids to tell their truth but allow them to goof around.
- This can be a way to diffuse feeling unsure. If they seem nervous remind them that any answer is ok, and you like them no matter what.

## Activities for Adolescents and Young Adults

### **Incorporate discussions around the meaning of consent into lessons, workshops, or other programming.**

- Pose questions that ask what they think about Consent topics like: capacity, sharing information, autonomy, setting boundaries, saying "yes" or "no", and issues of power.
- Work in groups to define the words consent and power.
  - Start a "finish the sentence" group game to complete the definition "consent is" word by word.
  - Create a concept map by asking the group to each offer one word that comes to mind when you say the word "consent".

### **Create informal and/or virtual space for adults and youth to converse with one another about a topic they care about.**

- For example: consent, news and media, ageism, identity, etc.
- Informal, yet structured, discussion space allows youth to get comfortable with talking about difficult, complex, or emotional topics.

### **Have youth make a presentation for other youth, parents, or community members to teach the practice of consent or creating a safe space for "no."**

- Support youth in the development process.
- Have them define their goals and what they want to accomplish.
- Offer a "train the trainer" or "peer education" training for youth to actively engage in consent education.
- Use as a way to bring community-wide action to build consent culture and accountability.

# When Consent Goes Wrong

**Remember:** Consent Incidents are a normal part of everyday life.

- Consent gets broken. People do it to us and we do it to others.
- The important thing is what you do about; what you do next.

## **Respond, don't react**

- Your response needs to be calm, thought out, careful, and measured.
- Take the time needed.
- Slow things down.

## **Have good Policy and Procedures**

- Use them. Be Consistent.

## **Be Trauma Informed**

- Know common reactions to harm.
  - Confusion & Disorientation
  - Strong Emotion – Often multiple emotions at the same time.
  - Acute Trauma Responses
  - Denial or Diminishment
  - Questioning & Self-Blame
- Get Trauma training and practice.

## **Have Someone who can help**

- Make sure you, or someone else, has the mental and emotional energy to deal with an incident when it comes up; during an event or after.
- Constantly practice good Selfcare – The work takes a lot of mental and emotional energy.
- Find someone with good training.

## **Practice De-Escalation Work**

- Calming emotional reactions and elevated behaviors.
- This is also a trained skill with specific techniques.
- It is different in person (vs) on the phone (vs) over email (vs) by text

## **Have a back-up plan**

- Ways to deal with things at a later date/time.
- Other people who can step in.
- Resources you can give out.

## **Be Active – “Do Something About It”**

- Follow the steps outlined in your Procedures.
  - The same way every time. No exceptions.
- Know your Organizational Ethos and Values.
  - Center your mission, values, diversity, and capacity.
- Make decisions.
  - Even when it's hard.
  - Even when people will disagree with you.
  - Even when people will be unhappy.
- Avoid bystander effect, victim blaming, perpetrator ostracizing, micro-aggressions, cultural & organization legacy patterns, etc.
  - More information on these in other workshops.

# Consent Incidents

## What is a Consent Incident?

It can be a lot of things. Consent covers a lot of ground.

**Consent Incident:** An event or occurrence, involving consent, where something has gone wrong. Consent may have been broken, bent, misinterpreted, confused, violated, coerced, or otherwise not upheld.

- An umbrella term for anytime someone perceives their consent has been broken by another.
- There is no initial assumption of guilt or fault. There is no assumption of victim or perpetrator.
- It is an event that happened which needs consideration, review, and outside support.
- Primary Actors: The Person Harmed, The Person Accused, & The Person Responsible for Harm

**Consent Violation:** An experience where someone believes their consent was broken, a boundary was crossed, or harm was caused during a Consent Incident.

- Where a person's agency or consent is taken away by someone else without their explicit permission.
- Only the person who experiences the harm can determine if an incident is a violation.
- A consent violation can happen regardless of the intent of the person who commits it.

## How to Handle a Consent Incident

### **1. If you perceive non-consensual behavior happening:**

- Say something and stop it. Don't allow harm to happen.
- Call it out and talk to the people involved.
- Use it as a teachable moment.

### **2. If someone tells you their consent was violated by someone else:**

- First and foremost, just listen to them and validate their feelings.
- Give them space to express what they need to about what happened.
- Focus on their Agency and Consent.
- Ask them what they would like to do next. Wait until they give you an answer.
- Support them, as best you're able, in moving forward.
- Be clear about your own boundaries and obligations.
- Follow your Policy & Procedures.

### **3. If someone tells you that you violated their consent:**

- First, take a deep breath and pause.
  - Try to remember that they are taking a huge risk in giving you this feedback.
- Do your best to listen to what they have to say without arguing, getting defensive, or trying to contradict.
  - Use Active Listening Skills.
  - This isn't easy, but gets easier with practice.
  - If you can't listen without becoming reactive, say so and schedule a time to continue the conversation.
- Let them know you heard them, you understand they're hurting, you feel bad about what happened, and would like to find a way to move forward.
  - Do not expect forgiveness in the moment.

- Do not try to give your perspective or thoughts. That can happen later.
- Never attempt to argue, correct, or tell them in any way why they're wrong. This will make things significantly worse.
- Support them, as best you're able, in moving forward.
  - Be clear about your own boundaries and obligations.
- Follow your Code of Conduct, Policy, & Procedures.
- Most often, the thing people need is to feel known and that someone cares about them.
  - Listening, validation, and showing a willingness to support them goes a long way to getting these needs met.

**Harm Reduction:** A set of principles and strategies for both reducing the overall harm present in a situation and preventing further harm from occurring.

### **Tenets of Harm Reduction:**

1. Harm that has happened cannot be removed. Harm cannot be prevented from happening in the future.
2. Additional harm can be prevented and impact of the harm that was done can be reduced through appropriate intervention, education, and support.
3. Non-judgmental interactions with both the person who experienced harm and the person responsible for it is essential to the process.
4. Issues of power, privilege, oppression, trauma, past experience, and other social inequities impact a person's vulnerability to and capacity in dealing with harm.
5. The real and sometimes tragic impact harm has on a person must be seen, acknowledged, and validated; be it physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual.

**Harm:** Significant physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual injury; lasting damage or trauma.

- Harm is different/separate from hurt, pain, discomfort, confusion, loss of privilege, and/or unwanted feelings.
- Harm can be intrinsic (when we harm ourself), extrinsic (when we're harmed by another), or a combination of the two.
- Harm can singular (a harm experienced), multiple (a number of harms experienced), isolated (experienced in a given moment), compounded (experienced over time), similar (a single type of harm), manifold (made up of multiple types), etc.

There is no easy definition of harm and what we believe about harm is often wrong.

- People often have an intrinsic, and unexamined, understanding of what harm is based on how they grew up, where they were raised, and what they've experienced in life.
- Different cultures tend to look at harm in different ways, including issues of responsibility, if harm is bad, who is able to be harmed, what recompense for harm should be, and on and on from there.
- People often shy away from thinking and talking about harm due to fear of it.

Practicing Harm Reduction, at its core, means paying attention to harm and harmful situations, and then working to reduce the amount of harm.

- Doing this takes more time and can be more difficult than you would expect.

# Harm Reduction: Organizational Goals

## 1) Protect someone who has already been harmed from experiencing more harm.

- People often experience *Compounded Harm*, especially in the legal system.
- Highly benefits from Trauma Informed Practices (See C&L #6 - Working With Trauma).
- Proper handling of an Incident *Procedure* by an invested and trained *Accountability Team* goes a long way to preventing further harm.

## 2) When harm happens, don't perpetuate further harm or make the situation more harmful than it needs to be.

- Stay focused on *Compassionate Support* for everyone involved.
- Make sure you have support and are managing your own physical, mental, and emotional capacity.
- Protect the people involved in an incident through:
  - Confidentiality
  - Patience
  - Avoiding judgmental language and behavior
  - Transparency about the process (not the information collected)
  - Appropriate Boundaries
  - Verbal and Logistical Support
  - Timely and measured completion of the process
  - Compassion and Understanding
- Recognize that punishment, especially punishment enforced through power or force, is the introduction of more/additional harm.

## 3) When harm happens, work to avoid similar harm happening again in the future.

- Examine the current incident for patterns or repetitions.
  - Has something like this happened before? How often?
  - What influenced or caused the previous incidents? Is it the same?
  - Are there any underlying structures that help or support this happening?
  - Are there any underlying beliefs or assumptions in my organization, group, community, etc. that help or support this happening?
  - Have Policies or Procedures changed since the last time it happened? Did that have any effect?
  - Have we done any education on the subject? Did that have any effect?
  - Are we looking at this incident systemically and not just focusing on the event itself?
- Evaluate current structures and systems to see if anything needs to change.
- Make changes at the organizational level to help prevent similar harm from happening again.

# Mandatory Reporting: The Basics

**Mandatory Reporter:** an individual who holds a position that requires them to report to the appropriate agency cases of abuse or imminent danger they have reasonable cause to suspect.

## 1) **Mandatory Reporting exists to try to protect vulnerable populations from abusive and dangerous situations.**

- It has a complicated history and relationship with oppressed people.
- And it is still a necessary system.
- Different states and organizations have different requirements.

## 2) **All of you are Mandated Reporters.**

- And you don't need to be an expert.
- Stay alert for information of abuse or harm.
  - Don't try to figure out if it's the "right" type of abuse or harm.
  - Don't try to figure out if it's abusive or harmful "enough".
  - Don't try to figure out if you have "enough information" to report.
- Note down what you heard, saw, read, etc.
  - Note the names involved.
  - Note where and when you got the information.
- Then talk with a supervisor or someone who handles Mandatory Reporting in your organization.

## 3) **Types of situations that may need reporting:**

- Abuse of a Minor - Someone currently under the age of 18.
- Abuse of an "at risk" adult - Someone elderly or who has been declared incompetent by the state.
- Imminent Risk of Suicide or Harm to another.
  - Note, this does not include feelings, thoughts, desires, off-hand comments, ideation, self-harm, etc.
  - This category deals with something you are reasonably sure is going to happen in the near future.



Please note: While the Code of Conduct suggests that reports be made within a year of an incident with the exception of special circumstances, President Riccobono clarified on the [February presidential release](#) that all current reports submitted will be reviewed, regardless of when the incident occurred, until at least August 1, 2021. This is part of our ongoing commitment to transformative change and accountability and we want those who have been harmed to have an opportunity to be heard. If you have feedback or concerns, please reach out to the Survivor Task Force at [survivors@nfb.org](mailto:survivors@nfb.org).

Our code of conduct outlines the policies and standards that all National Federation of the Blind members, especially our leaders, are expected to adopt and follow. To report a potential violation of this code, please consult section IX below. Reports can be filed using the [code of conduct complaint form](#) or by calling our dedicated voicemail box at 410-659-9314, extension 2475.

For additional information, please review the [Code of Conduct Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Responsible leaders of the Federation should also consult the [guidance on obligations of elected leaders document](#) which provides information about how to share anonymous information into the code of conduct process.

## I. Introduction

The National Federation of the Blind is a community of members and friends who believe in the hopes and dreams of the nation's blind. The Federation knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back. To help carry out the Federation's vital mission, this Code of Conduct sets forth policies and standards that all members, employees, and contractors are expected to adopt and follow.

## II. Diversity Policy

The National Federation of the Blind celebrates and embraces diversity and full participation as core values in its mission to achieve equality, opportunity, and security for the blind. We are committed to building and maintaining a nationwide organization with state affiliates and local chapters that is unified in its priorities and programs and is directed by the membership. We respect differences of opinion, beliefs, identities, and other characteristics that demonstrate that blind people are a diverse cross section of society. Furthermore, the organization is dedicated to continuing to establish new methods of membership and leadership development that reflect the diversity of the entire blind community. In promoting a diverse and growing organization, we expect integrity and honesty in our relationships with each other and openness to learning about and experiencing cultural diversity. We believe that these qualities are crucial to fostering social and intellectual maturity. Intellectual maturity also requires individual struggle with unfamiliar ideas. We recognize that our views and convictions will be challenged, and we expect this challenge to take place in a climate of tolerance and mutual respect in order to maintain a united organization. While we encourage the exchange of differing ideas and



experiences, we do not condone the use of demeaning, derogatory, or discriminatory language, action, or any other form of expression intended to marginalize an individual or group. The National Federation of the Blind does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, marital status, age, genetic information, disability, or any other characteristic or intersectionality of characteristics.

## III. Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

The National Federation of the Blind will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, background, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, marital status, age, genetic information, disability, or any other characteristic or intersectionality of characteristics. Harassment on the basis of any of these characteristics similarly will not be tolerated. Although this Code of Conduct establishes a minimum standard prohibiting discrimination and harassment, nothing in this Code should be interpreted to limit in any way a person's right to report abuse or harassment to law enforcement when appropriate.

Sexual harassment is prohibited by state and federal law and also will not be tolerated by the National Federation of the Blind. Complaints of harassment may be lodged by any person against any other person regardless of gender identity. Sexual harassment is defined as "unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical contact, or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature." The following conduct is either considered conduct that by itself is sexual harassment, or that has the potential risk of causing sexual harassment to occur, and this conduct is therefore prohibited:

- unwelcome inappropriate physical contact or touching;
- repeating of sexually suggestive jokes/references/innuendoes and comments about an individual's body/sexual prowess/physical attributes/dress;
- the use of sexually derogatory language/pictures/videos toward/about another person;
- the use of inappropriate sexual gestures;
- sexually suggestive propositions; and
- explicit or implicit threats that failure to submit will have negative consequences.

Under this policy, harassment can be verbal, written, or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law; or that of their relatives, friends, or associates, and that a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment; b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or involvement in the organization; or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's opportunities for participation/advancement in the organization.

Harassing conduct includes epithets, slurs, or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts including bullying; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the organization's premises or circulated by email, phone (including voice messages), text messages, social networking sites, or other means.

## IV. Social Media and Web Policy

All members, employees, and contractors of the Federation should follow these recommended guidelines when making comments online, posting to a blog, using Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn/YouTube/Pinterest/Instagram/similar tools, and/or using other platforms that fall under the definition of social media:

- Promote the mission and branding message of the organization in comments/posts.
- Recognize that you are morally and legally responsible for comments/pictures posted online.
- Be aware that the audience includes members and nonmembers of the NFB, both youth and adults, representing diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- Refrain from using profanity/derogatory/offensive language or making political endorsements that might reasonably be attributed to the Federation.
- Post/respond with integrity. Though you may disagree with a post, be respectful and factual. Do not fight or air personal grievances online.
- Do not post materials that are inappropriate for children/minors to view/share/read.

## V. Conflict of Interest Policy

NFB officers, national board members, state affiliate presidents and their boards, division presidents and their boards, and local chapter presidents and their boards, employees, and contractors with independent decision-making authority on behalf of the organization (hereafter Federation leaders) are expected to avoid all conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest arises when a person's personal or professional interests interfere, or even just appear to interfere, with the interests of the Federation. A conflict may arise if a Federation leader takes action or has personal interests that make it difficult for the Federation leader to effectively perform their duties to the Federation. The common factor in all conflict of interest situations is the division of loyalty or the perception of a division of loyalty, between the leader in performing their duties as a Federation leader of the organization and their personal and other interests. In specific, Federation leaders are expected to take appropriate responsibility to protect the Federation from misappropriation or mismanagement of Federation funds (including funds of an affiliate, chapter, or division in which Federation leaders assume leadership roles).

Federation leaders are expected to disclose the existence of any potentially conflicting personal financial interest or relationship to the full National Federation of the Blind Board of Directors and seek its review and approval, as specified below. For example:

- A Federation leader must seek board review and approval of their receipt of salary or compensation of any kind from the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division).
- A Federation leader must seek board review and approval of receipt by their spouse, parent, child, sibling, or other close relative of salary or compensation of any kind from the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division).
- A Federation leader must seek board review and approval of any ownership interest exceeding 5 percent in or of any salary, compensation, commission, or significant tangible gift from any commercial venture doing business or seeking to do business with the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division). This process will also apply to the review of such interests involving spouses, parents, children, siblings, or other close relatives such as aunts, uncles, and cousins.
- In reviewing matters brought pursuant to this section, the officer or national board member seeking national board review and approval will refrain from voting.
- Federation leaders shall take appropriate steps to avoid unauthorized or inaccurate appearances or official endorsement by the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division) of any product, service, or activity that has not been so endorsed. For example, because the Federation never endorses political parties or candidates for elected office, any Federation leader participating in the political process must take care to avoid creating an appearance of official Federation endorsement. With respect to this

Section, it is assumed that it is not a conflict of interest for an employee or contractor under the ultimate supervision of the national President to receive a salary and other compensation performed for the Federation. Nothing in this Code prohibits an employee or contractor from holding office in any state affiliate, local chapter, or division of the Federation.

## VI. Policy While Interacting with Minors

For purposes of this Code of Conduct and consistent with most legal standards, a minor is any individual under the age of eighteen. Any adult member, employee, or contractor of the Federation while interacting with a minor must recognize that a minor cannot legally give consent for any purpose even if said minor is verbally or otherwise expressing consent. For example, a minor may say that they consent to physical interaction. However, such consent is not valid or legal and should not be accepted. A parent or guardian must be informed and consulted about any action requiring consent from the minor. Federation leaders, members, employees, and contractors shall report any inappropriate interactions between adults and minors to the minor's parents and law enforcement when appropriate.

## VII. Alcohol and Drug Policy

Although alcoholic beverages are served at some Federation social functions, members, employees, and contractors may not participate in any such functions in a condition that prevents them from participating safely and from conducting Federation business effectively or that might cause embarrassment to or damage the reputation of the Federation. The Federation prohibits the possession, sale, purchase, delivery, dispensing, use, or transfer of illegal substances on Federation property or at Federation functions.

## VIII. Other General Principles

In addition to the other policies and standards set forth herein, all members, employees, and contractors shall adhere to the following standards:

- Members, employees, and contractors shall practice accountability and transparency in all activities and transactions.
- Members, employees, and contractors shall foster a welcoming environment at NFB meetings, events, and conferences to create a cooperative and productive atmosphere for all members and nonmembers alike.
- Members, employees, and contractors shall interact with one another in a professional manner and follow proper channels of authority and communication.
- Members, employees, and contractors shall positively promote the NFB through verbal and written communication.
- Whenever possible, members, employees, and contractors are encouraged first to handle conflicts or complaints involving other members, employees, or contractors privately, directly, and respectfully. However, nothing in this standard is intended to limit a member's, employee's, or contractor's right to pursue organizational change through appropriate methods or to limit anyone's right to file a complaint for violation of this Code when necessary

## IX. Violations and Complaint Procedure

Violations of this Code of Conduct, after first being established through the process set forth below, are subject to disciplinary action by the Federation. Such disciplinary actions may include but are not limited

to counseling, verbal and/or written reprimand, probation, suspension, or termination of officer/leadership duties, and/or suspension or expulsion from the Federation.

- Any complaint for a violation of this Code of Conduct shall be filed with the Office of the President. Complaints may alternatively be filed with the chairperson of the National Federation of the Blind Board of Directors or an executive officer of the Federation: vice president, treasurer, or secretary. Before implementing the procedure below, the President may attempt to determine whether a given complaint can be resolved in an informal or alternative manner without appointing a committee under this Section. For example, a complaint filed under this Code may be best mediated by an affiliate board with guidance from the President and national board. However, if a complaining party is not willing to engage in a less formal procedure after discussion with the President, the President shall appoint a committee to investigate the complaint pursuant to the procedure outlined herein. When informal resolution is not successful or is not pursued, then the President shall appoint a committee of no more than four persons to investigate the complaint and provide a recommendation for action or lack thereof. The committee shall be comprised of persons not directly involved in the matters being raised and who can be unbiased, impartial, and fair about the individuals and issues addressed in the complaint. Every effort shall be made to appoint a committee reflecting the broad diversity of individuals in the Federation. If the alleged complaint involves the Office of the President or if there is a conflict of interest involving the President wherein the President cannot act impartially and fairly, a vice president or the chairperson of the board shall be designated to handle the investigation process as outlined herein.
- Complaints and supporting documentation filed pursuant to this Section shall be treated as confidential to the fullest extent possible.
- All complaints shall be filed as promptly as possible. Except under extreme circumstances, no complaint shall be accepted or investigated after a year from the time of the alleged violation of this Code.
- Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation of this Code must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense and can be investigated pursuant to the provisions of this Section.
- Any person dissatisfied with the resolution of a complaint may file an appeal with the National Federation of the Blind Board of Directors, which may, in its discretion, take such action as it deems necessary. No national board member shall participate in the consideration of an appeal under this Code if such board member is the subject of the complaint or if such board member cannot be unbiased, impartial, and fair while considering the matter.
- The President shall appoint a Code of Conduct committee that will review data and procedures regarding complaints filed under this Code. The committee will monitor actions under this Code and make recommendations to the national board from time to time.

## X. Minimum Standard

This Code of Conduct is intended to outline a minimum set of standards expected of Federation members, employees, and contractors. It sets forth the spirit that the Federation expects of all of its participants toward each other and toward those who work with the Federation at all of its levels. It is intended to be interpreted broadly to instill a respectful, cooperative, and welcoming spirit within members, employees, and contractors and in the activities of the Federation.

Note: The Board of Directors of the National Federation of the Blind unanimously adopted this revised Code of Conduct on December 5, 2020. In adopting this Code, the Board expressed its clear intent that this Code shall be reviewed annually or at any other time as necessary.

This Code was first adopted on January 26, 2018.

(Revised December 5, 2020)

# **NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND SEXUAL ABUSE AND MOLESTATION POLICY (dated December 20, 2012)**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) does not permit or allow sexual abuse or molestation to occur in the workplace or at any activity sponsored by or related to it. In order to make this “zero-tolerance” policy clear to all employees, volunteers and staff members, we have adopted mandatory procedures that employees, volunteers, family members, board members, individuals and victims must follow when they learn of or witness sexual abuse or molestation.

Sexual abuse takes the form of inappropriate sexual contact or interaction for the gratification of the actor who is functioning as a caregiver and is responsible for an individual’s or child’s care. Sexual abuse includes sexual assault, exploitation, molestation or injury. It does not include sexual harassment, which is another form of behavior which is prohibited by the NFB. The NFB’s sexual harassment policy is provided to each employee as part of the National Federation of the Blind’s Employment Policies.

## **Reporting Procedure**

All staff members, employees, or volunteers who learn of sexual abuse being committed must immediately report it to the Executive Director of their department. The Executive Director must immediately inform the NFB’s President of the report. If the victim is an adult, the abuse will be reported by the Executive Director or President to the relevant local or state Adult Protective Services (APS) Agency. If a child is the victim, the Executive Director or President will report it to the relevant local or state Child Abuse Agency. Appropriate family members of the victim must be notified immediately of suspected child abuse.

## **Investigation & Follow Up**

The NFB takes allegations of sexual abuse seriously. Once the allegation is reported we will promptly, thoroughly and impartially initiate an investigation to determine whether there is a reasonable basis to believe that sexual abuse has been committed. Our investigation may be undertaken by either an internal team or we may hire an independent third party. We will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or regulatory agencies and we may refer the complaint and the result of our investigation to those agencies. We reserve the right to place the subject of the investigation on an involuntary leave of absence or reassigning that person to responsibilities that do not involve personal contact with individuals, students, or children. To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with our legal obligation to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, we will endeavor to keep the identities of the alleged victims and investigation subject confidential.

If the investigation substantiates the allegation, our policy provides for disciplinary penalties, including but not limited to termination of the actor’s relationship with our organization.

There are a number of “red flags” that suggest someone is being sexually abused. They take the form of physical or behavioral evidence.

**Physical evidence of sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to:**

- Sexually transmitted diseases;
- Difficulty walking or ambulating normally;
- Stained, bloody or torn undergarments;
- Genital pain or itching; and
- Physical injuries involving the external genitalia.

**Behavioral signals suggestive of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:**

- Fear or reluctance about being left in the care of a particular person;
- Recoiling from being touched;
- Bundling oneself in excessive clothing, especially night clothes;
- Discomfort or apprehension when sex is referred to or discussed; and
- Nightmares or fear of night and/or darkness.

**Retaliation Prohibited**

The NFB prohibits any retaliation against anyone, including an employee, volunteer, board member, student or individual, who in good faith reports sexual abuse, alleges that it is being committed or participates in the investigation. Intentionally false or malicious accusations of sexual abuse are prohibited.

Anyone who improperly retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation of sexual abuse, or intentionally provides false information to that effect, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF SEXUAL ABUSE POLICY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received and read the sexual abuse policy immediately preceding my signature below. I understand that I am bound to follow the policy and understand the consequences in the event that I fail to do so.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Employee/Volunteer Signature

# **Practice Consent Everywhere**

**Remember: A good and consistent Consent Practice improves your life and the lives of the people around you.**

At home, in the workplace, or at school a good and consistent Consent Practice will make for a safer, happier, and more efficient space.

## **A Strong Consent Practice:**

- Prevents misconduct.**
- Reduces mental and emotional disruption.**
- Increases Capacity and Autonomy.**
- Builds trust and connection.**
- Creates a more stable and safer space.**
- Reduces the opportunity for harm.**

## **A Strong Consent Culture:**

- Gives people a way to talk about they want and don't want.**
- Accepts that anything other than a clear and explicit "yes" is essentially a "no".**
- Gives people a way to speak up when something uncomfortable happens, ideally before it becomes a problem.**
- Acknowledges Power and Agency imbalances.**
- Works to support a person's Agency.**
- Helps people want to be in your space.**

# Resources

- For info on upcoming classes, see the Consent Academy’s website: [www.consent.academy](http://www.consent.academy)
  - Other Links: <https://www.consent.academy/external-resources.html>
  - Language and definitions around Consent Incidents: <https://www.consent.academy/consent-incidents.html>
- The Consent Primer, [book] by the Consent Academy: <https://www.consent.academy/book.html>
- For more resources, go to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center: <https://www.nsvrc.org/>
- For a list of national crisis hotlines, please visit the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI): <https://www.nami.org/help>
- For counseling services visit: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>

## **Staff Recommendations and Favorites:**

- Origin of the word “consent”: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/consent>
- Betty Martin’s “Wheel of Consent”: <https://bettymartin.org/videos/>
- “Consent Castles”, Robot Hugs. Another way of thinking about consent frameworks and guide to building one: <https://www.robot-hugs.com/comic/consent-castle/>
- “Sex & Consent: It's Time To Go Beyond The Rules”, Jaclyn Friedman: <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/sex-consent-laws-yes-means-yes-jaclyn-friedman>

## **Consent for Kids:**

- “Talking About Consent and Healthy Relationships at Every Age”, Planned Parenthood: [https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/5914/4442/3007/TalkingConsentatEveryAge\\_r4.pdf](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/5914/4442/3007/TalkingConsentatEveryAge_r4.pdf)
- “MindUp” Mindfulness Curriculum: <https://mindup.org>
- Advocates for Youth: <http://3rs.org/3rs-curriculum/about-3rs>
- What is Sex? is a podcast with youth sex educators and YES! co-founders Rebecca Klein and Isy Abraham-Raveson. Each episode features one anonymous question submitted by a kid: <https://feeds.buzzsprout.com/894604.rss>
- “Mistaken Goal Chart” by Positive Discipline (Jane Nelsen): <https://www.positivediscipline.com/sites/default/files/mistakengoalchart.pdf>
- Consent as Tea, YouTube, Blue Seat Studios: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU&t=2s>
- Consent for Kids YouTube, Blue Seat Studios: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3nhM9UIJjc>
- The Gottman Institute’s “Beyond the Talk: Teaching Your Kids About Consent”: <https://www.gottman.com/blog/beyond-the-talk-teaching-your-kids-about-consent/>
- Teaching adults how to teach consent to kids: <https://comprehensiveconsent.com/about/>



# **THANK YOU FOR SPENDING TIME WITH US TODAY!**

What's your best take away?

## **3 Things I am going to implement, in my own way, to foster better Consent Culture:**

1.

2.

3.

## **Check Out Our Book: The Consent Primer** **(Available on Amazon)**



(Image: The Consent Primer Cover)  
(The Consent Primer: Foundations for Everyday Life – Picture of a stoplight – green light lit.)



If you have questions, comments, or would like to reach the Consent Academy, please contact us via email at:

**[theconsentacademy@gmail.com](mailto:theconsentacademy@gmail.com)**

For future consent classes, consultations, and other consent opportunities please visit us at:

**[www.consent.academy](http://www.consent.academy)**

