

Rough draft

Check printed version: -- change to past tense, intro

CONSENT – Sex and Communication

Below are notes and discussion questions that we use to facilitate a workshop and discussion on communication and sex. We usually do a 15 minute intro to give people a sense of what we want to bring up and lay out some guidelines for the discussion. Then we do a puppet show to get people thinking about what communication around consent (including talking about STIs) looks like – when it's done well and when it's not done or when communication could be better. It's a humorous way to bring up elements of consent that can be difficult to talk about: intoxication, gender, hookups vs. long-term relationships. This leads into a group discussion. Below are some of the questions we use during the discussion. This is not a fixed outline – we don't try to bring up everything listed. It's useful as a way of guiding our conversation and having questions to help prompt discussion. We do that for about half an hour and then break into small groups to have more in-depth discussion and so more people can participate. We encourage people to talk about and come up with practical steps for how we can improve communication and consent in our own lives. Then we come back together to share ideas from the small groups and look at our growing definitions of consent.

I. **Intro to collective and our goals for the workshop**

INTRO:

- History of collective
- Zine

DEFINITION

Consent

- 1.** To give assent, as to the proposal of another; agree.
- 2.** *Archaic* To be of the same mind or opinion. *n.*
- 3.** Acceptance or approval of what is planned or done by another; acquiescence.
- 4.** Agreement as to opinion or a course of action *n.*

GOALS:

- We want to redefine consent – to question and broaden our ideas. Defining what consent means to each of us.
- **What does consent mean to you?**
- Being participatory and having upfront communication can apply to every area of our lives. We want to help create a society that's based on consent and not coercion.
- We want this workshop to focus on communicating, being upfront, and being positive. Equip you (and us) with examples of how to be more proactive in creating safe consensual spaces. (Will not focus on assault)
- We want to discuss dynamics / factors that might be influencing how we give or receive consent – age, power, relationships, etc.
- We want to look honestly at patterns in our own relationships
- One of our goals of this workshop is improving your sex life! We think that consent can be hott and liberating.

- We want to create an open area for a healthy conversation in this workshop. We want to provoke thought and further discussion. There aren't many places where there are right or wrong answers. There will be a lot of open and unanswered questions.

Support

- This discussion could be a trigger difficult memories or feelings. So, we want to encourage people to be aware of your emotional state. Just because this discussion is happening now does not mean that you need to deal with this stuff now.
- If you want to step out of the workshop for any reason, feel free. There are lots of social workers and supportive people around. Please grab someone to talk to if you feel like you need to talk.

NOT ASSUMING / Agreements and Confidentiality

- Usually go over agreement on having an open and inclusive discussion. Not judging
- Step up/ Step Back
- Our Definition of Sex -

We know this can be tuff subject to approach openly and honestly especially among strangers. So we're gonna open up to you and be a little silly and ridiculous and we hope you'll open up to us.

OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP / AGENDA

- Puppet show and then talk about
- Full group discussion
- Choose some of the small group questions since this is a pared down workshop
- Consent and communication could be week long workshops in themselves. Facilitators will be moving the discussions along so we can touch on a variety of areas.

II. **Puppet show**

As you watch puppet show please think about:

- the factors/ dynamics / issues that play into the way the characters give and receive consent.
- Positive / negative examples of consent
- Questions for each scene

Down There Health Collective

Consent Puppet Show

Song is sung to the tune of the Oompa Loompa song from Willy Wanka and the Chocolate Factory

Puppets - we made them all human-like and non-gendered

Music - between sets we played "Let's Talk about Sex" (but we mostly did this show around 2006!)

Scenes - we were behind a short screen and the puppets were in front of a back drop that could flip - party, bathroom, outside, living room

Scene 1: Clear Non-Consent

**An underline indicates a small puppet pops up to sing that part...*

PJ a clearly drunk puppet and Seal a sleazy sober puppet are chatting and dancing at party.

PJ: I don't feel so good... I'm going to the bathroom. I'll be back.

PJ teeters into the bathroom. Seal follows.

SEAL: *(concerned, yet smooth)* Hey, how ya doin'? I just wanted to come in and check on you.

Seal reaches out and touches PJ's shoulder, arm or side.

PJ: *(Takes a swig of the bottle in hand)* Yeah! Feelin' good, good time! *(Swiveling)* Whew! Don't worry about me... I'll come back to the party in a minute *(sounding upbeat)*

Seal steps toward PJ.

SEAL: Hey...I've been thinking about US. Missing US...

PJ: Well...

Seal moves in for a kiss. PJ pushes Seal aside, bends over the toilet and vomits.

PJ: I don't feel so clear-headed; I've had a lot to drink.

SEAL: Come on, this is a party - let's have some fun. Here, have a breath mint. *(Goes in for a kiss again.)*

PJ: Hey, what the fuck? Give me a minute... *(Sounding pissed)*

SEAL: Just relax, don't be so uptight- you never used to be so uptight- enjoy yourself.

PJ: Seal, I don't know about this, I don't feel so good.

Seal: Come on

Seal pushes PJ backward and closes the shower curtain.

PJ: Hey wait *(distressed)*

A moment later...

PJ: *(muffled)* Let's just go back to the party.

SEAL: Just another minute, baby.

A few minutes go by. Seal quickly leaves while the party goes on around Seal.

Rat Chorus:

Do you feel an inebriated person is capable of giving consent?

Do you make people feel unfun or unliberated if they don't want to try certain things?

High, long pause, higher

Scene 2: Clear Consent Scene

Puppet #1: You look hot tonight.

Puppet #2: You too, and I like your dance moves.

Puppet #1: Thanks, but I can hardly move with all these folks here!

Puppet #2: Do you want to go for a walk to get away from the crowd?

Puppet #1: Sure, I thought you'd never ask. Let's go to that park on the corner.

2 puppets, say goodbye to other puppets, begin to walk. Party puppets disappear, music fades, trees appear and you hear murmuring between the two puppets (“It’s so nice out here!” “What a beautiful night” “that DJ rocked” “did you see what PJ was wearing?”)

Puppet #2: I'd really like to kiss you, is that ok?

Puppet #1: Yeah!

Puppets kiss, smooching sounds, enter rats.

Puppet #1: Hey, do you wanna go over there where it looks more private?

Puppet #2: yeah, good idea. It's cool that we're the only ones out here.
(More smooching sounds)

Puppet #1: Mmm hmm. Do you mind if I take off your shirt?

Puppet #2: Sure. Can I take off yours?

Puppet #1: Yeah!

Trees move in, Shirts Fly Up.

Puppet #2: “Ouch, can we shift over? I'm on a rock!” *(Smooching noises & murmuring like)*

Puppet #1: Is that better?

Puppet #2: Mmmm, that feels really good. Do you wanna take off my pants?

Puppet #1: yeah, thanks for asking. Can you take off mine?

Puppets go horizontal. Pants fly up.

Puppet #1: Can I go down on you?

Puppet #2: Na, I'm not into that but I'd like to keep going with this 'cause you feel real good.

Puppet #1: That's cool. I like this.

Puppet #2: What else do you like?

Puppet #1: Actually, I'd really like to touch you there too.

Puppet #2: Yeah, go for it! That's my favorite!

Puppet #1: Cool!

Puppet #2: Mmm mmm mm. Can you do it a little faster?

Turns to smooching sounds, murmuring, music fades on, trees cover puppets and all disappear. Back to the party scene again

Rat Chorus

What are some non-verbal ways to obtain or give consent or non-consent?

How might you express that something happening is not OK?

Do you think consent can be erotic?

Scene 3: Sexually Transmitted Infections Disclosure Scene

Puppets making out, smoochie sounds...

Puppet 1: Hey, wait a second, there's something I want to talk to you about.

Puppet 2: Ok. What?

Puppet 1: Can we talk about STIs?

Puppet 2: Sure. I've been tested and I'm clean. Why? Is there something wrong with you?

Puppet 1: Ah... no, never mind.

(more smooching)

Rat: Cut. Take 2. Let's try that one again.

Puppets making out, smooching sounds...

Puppet 1: Hey, wait a second, there's something I want to talk to you about.

Puppet 2: Ok. What?

Puppet 1: Well, before this goes any further I wanted to let you know that a year ago I had a break-out of genital warts from HPV. The warts are gone but I don't know if I still have the virus.

Puppet 2: Well, I'm glad you brought this up. I don't know that much about HPV so let's just smooch for now and learn more about it together later.

Puppet 1: Can we smooch *and* dry hump?

Puppet 2: Yeah! I love dry humping!

Puppet 1: Mmmm hmmm!

Rat Chorus

Are you informed about STIs?

Do you get tested regularly?

How do you talk to partners about STIs?

Scene 4: Blurry Consent

At the end of the party, as other puppets are leaving. Puppets are standing together, (waving goodbye if they have arms that move). In the living room. PJ stumbles out. B – Bigger puppet, L – Little Puppet

B- Bye, thanks for coming over

L- (To the drunk puppet) get home safe! Drink lots of water! Call us tomorrow!

B- See you later

L- (To B) wow, what a party! Our friends are crazy! Ha-ha. And you! You had some hott moves out there on the dance floor, babe!

B- Thanks sweetie, it sure was a wild party! Look at the house. Ahh – it's a mess, but I'm too tired to deal with it now.

L- Yeah, it's been a long night, but I've still got some energy left.

B- Really?! I'm exhausted!!! Let's clean up tomorrow.

L- You can't be *that* tired. I don't want to go to bed yet - com'on, hang out with me.

B- *(Sighs)* Ok.

They "sit" down on the couch

L- You were so hot tonight; I love it when you dance like that.

B- Yeah, that's why I am so worn out.

L- Here, let massage your shoulders.

B- MMMmmmm, that feels good. It's getting me in the mood - to go to bed.

L- It makes ME want to (leans in to kiss) "smmmmmmmochchhhhh." *(Noise, not word)*

B- *(Scoots away, makes hesitant noise like)* "Ehhh uhh."

L- What's wrong with you - don't you want to kiss me?

B- Well, yeah sure. I'm just tired.

L- Oh babe, but its not that late. Maybe we could just fool around for a minute.

B- Uhh, well... *(Really hesitant, unsure.)*

L- *(Interrupts)* You know I'll make you feel good.

B- Yeah, I know, it's not that. It's just...

L- Baby, please, why do you have to make it so hard?

B- I'm not trying to be difficult, I really am just tired.

L-Fine, we can just go to sleep if you want. *(annoyed and sarcastic.)*

B- Don't be mad, I'm sorry.

L- You don't *need* to be sorry.

Moves in, makes kissy noises...they kiss and puppet rub for a few secondsz

L- Maybe we should go to bed for this... *(Said is sexy voice, implying...)*

B- Yeah, fine *(resigned)*

They walk off the "set" together, presumably to the bedroom. Discussion could be based around the above questions

Rat Chorus

Do you view consent differently for people of different ethnicities, genders, sexes, ages or class?

Do you assume consent in a relationship?

(high, long)

How do you define consent?

III. Puppet show Discussion (15 minutes)

- What did you notice in the puppet show? First / Second / Third / Fourth Scene
 - What are some of the un-spoken issues at play?
 - Positive / negative examples of consent?
 - Think about how you perceived the characters? did you assign them a specific gender? races? what assumptions could you make about their past? the relationships the characters are in?
 - What are clear ways they expressed consent or non-consent? What seemed to work?
 - What problems did you see? What might be the root of some of the problems?
 - What are some factors that can get in the way of real, honest consent?
- ** Bring up questions from scenes ***

IV. Large Group Discussion

Factors that play into the ways we give / receive and understand consent

[The following issues below should be brought up. Otherwise ask about them directly]

B. Recognizing Boundaries - your own and others

- How do you give yrself or someone else space to figure out what you/they want?
 - o Do you know what you want? How do figure this out for yourself?
 - o How do you communicate what you want or don't want?
 - o Have you ever been unsure? What did you do?
 - o How do you give a partner space to communicate what they want
- How do you know when someone else is consenting?
 - o How do you know when someone wants to be kissed or to kiss you?
 - o How are you sure they are fully present?
 - o That they are excited to be doing what they are doing?
 - o Do you account for cultural differences?
- How do people communicate their boundaries?
 - o Have you interpreted passivity or silence as consent? What factors were at play?
 - o Do you feel it's the other person's responsibility to say something if they aren't into what you're doing?
 - o How often do you check in as things progress?
 - o What signs do you look for? Verbal? Other signs?
 - o When do you feel its ok to use non-verbal signs? When isn't it?
 - It is commonly interpreted that silence=consent and verbal signs=non-consent.
 - o Are the signals you are sending clear? Do your words match your body language? (ex. saying no while continuing movement); consistency in words and actions? How do you address it when someone else's words and body language don't match up? (ex. saying yes but moving away or not responding)
 - o How do you react when someone expresses non-consent?

- Consent in long-term relationships vs. hook up?
 - o What assumptions do you make once someone's consented?
 - o Have you made assumptions about consent with a long-term partner?
 - o How do different types of relationships impact how and when we talk about consent? (ahead of time / in the moment)
- How can you communicate about safe sex and Sexually Transmitted Infection's (STIs)?
 - o When might be a good time to bring this up?
 - o What is safe sex to you?
 - o How can you help partners feel comfortable talking about it / bringing it up with you?
 - o Where can you get more info on safer sex and STIs?
 - o How does how you feel about someone, your assumptions about them, or the type of relationship affect how you talk about STIs?

C. Power and Privilege

- What power dynamics might factor into communication and consent? (privilege, gender, sexual preferences, size, race, age, class, organizational structure, sexual histories)
 - o How does age play into communication and sex?
 - o How do you address different histories or unequal power dynamics?
 - o How do you honor the experience of the person you're with when it has been different than yours?
 - o How do you bring differences up and communicate about them?
 - o How does racism factor into how we think about people's sexuality? History of racism and rape...
- How can we talk about histories of sexual assault?
 - o How can we bring it up? When?
 - o What about coming from a background where sexual assault is the norm?
- How does inebriation effect consent giving / asking?
- Trying to prove something - cool, liberated, ready (reaction to non-consent)

V. **Small Group Questions** - Choose a couple if there is time

VI. (Re)defining consent and Closing (15 min)

DEFINITION OF CONSENT

- What are some key thoughts/ phrases / words for a "holistic" "Yes! Yes! Yes!" (which implicitly includes No).
- Did your definition change throughout the workshop?

WRAP UP

- Hope we opened up questions for people.

- This is an ongoing process in understanding our desires and boundaries and communicating this with others.
- Encourage you to talk about this in your communities, to break down barriers to talking openly about this. Improving communication and understanding is both healthy for our relationships and can prevent problems.

V. Small Groups - Practical “tools”

- ❖ Introduce yourselves
- ❖ Come up with ideas and practical examples to share with everyone else wherever possible

1. Giving and recognizing consent / non-consent

- a. What are ways to express that you are into doing something?
- b. What are ways to express that you are not into doing something?
- c. What signs (verbal and non-verbal) do you look for to know what another person wants to do?
- d. What are signs (both verbal and non-verbal) that you look for to know someone is not into going any further or doing something in particular?
- e. How and when can you bring up what you need to feel safe? How can you bring up your boundaries, history and needs?

2. How to talk about consent / communication with a partner

- a. When do you bring up that you want to talk about what you are and are not comfortable with?
- b. Is this different for a long-term partner vs. a casual hook up?
- c. What are some ideas for improving communication around sex?
- d. What can you do if you or your partner aren't sure what you want in the moment?

3. Making consent hott

- a. Do you think communication about sex can be hot? Why or why not?
- b. How can we incorporate clear consent into “doin’ it”?
- c. How can we make it fun and erotic?

4. Communicating about safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases

- a. What is safe sex to you?
- b. How can you bring up your feelings about safe sex and STIs?
- c. When can you bring this up?
- d. How can you help partners feel comfortable talking about it / bringing it up with you?
- e. How does how you feel about someone, your assumptions about them, or the type of relationship affect how you talk about STIs?

5. Supporting your friends

- a. What are some ideas for helping your friends talk about what they want and don't want and safer sex?
- b. How can you support your friends (and how can they support you) in being clear about what you want and don't want?
- c. Are there any situations (like a party or when there might be drinking) that you would want to make a plan with friends? What would the plan look like?
- d. How does drinking or drugs play into consent and communicating boundaries?

Consent Puppet Show

End of scene questions

Scene 1:

- Do you feel an inebriated person is capable of giving consent?
- Do you make people feel unfun or unliberated if they don't want to try certain things?

Scene 2:

- What are some non-verbal ways to obtain or give consent or non-consent?
- How might you express that something happening is not OK?
- Do you think consent can be erotic?

Scene 3:

- Are you informed about STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections)?
- Do you get tested regularly?
- How do you talk to partners about STIs?

Scene 4:

- Do you view consent differently for people of different ethnicities, genders, sexes, ages or class?
- Do you assume consent in a relationship?
- How do you define consent?