

## Disability & Consent

### Lesson Plan for BC Curriculum

#### Materials

- Copies of the attached worksheet for the whole class (large print option included)
- Copies of the suggested pre-reading article OR access for students to devices to read it on
- Access to a screen/projector, and the appropriate laptop hardware to screen a short film
- Copies of the film transcript for those who prefer to read along
- Patience and a willingness to get curious with the class

#### Background Information

This lesson plan draws on ideas of disability justice, relationality, and care to explore the idea of consent beyond verbal assent to sexual encounters. Working to move past the idea of disability as a personal problem and inherently non-sexual/undesirable, this lesson aims to get students to consider how consent extends to disability and mobility aids, and to reconsider what sexuality, consent, bodies and communication *should* look like.

#### Curricular Competencies

##### PHE 9/10

- Explore and describe factors that shape **personal identities**, including social and cultural factors
- Propose strategies for **avoiding and responding** to potentially unsafe, abusive, or exploitative situations
- Analyze strategies for **responding** to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying
- Develop **skills** for maintaining healthy relationships and responding to interpersonal conflict

##### English Language Arts 9/10/11

- Recognize **how language constructs and reflects personal and cultural identities**
- Explore the impact of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in oral texts
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world

##### Social Justice 12

- Explain different perspectives on past and present people, places, issues, and events, and distinguish between worldviews of the past or present (perspective)
- Make reasoned ethical judgments about controversial actions in the past or present after considering the context and standards of right and wrong (ethical judgment)

## Rationale

In this lesson, students will explore consent as an expansive concept expanding beyond solely verbal agreement to sexual encounters. Students will explore how consent exists in day to day encounters between both romantic partners and platonic friends, how it can manifest in both verbal and non-verbal communication, and how it extends to mobility aids and disabled bodies. Students will also consider how language and communication play a role in consent to critically engage in questions like “who gets to say no and how?” as well as how consent and access needs show up in their own lives.

This lesson can be used in a more traditional sex-ed/relationship health context in PHE curriculum, or can be used to explore language, power, and communication in an ELA or Social Justice context.

Further resources on disability and sexuality can be found at:

<https://www.actioncanadashr.org/resources/sexual-health-info/hub/sex-sexual-health-and-disability> OR <http://meloukhia.net/2016/11/wheres-the-sex-ed-for-disabled-kids/>

## Lesson Plan

1. Have the students complete the first half of the worksheet *Consent and Communication: What Does it Mean for Me?*
2. Have the students read the following article <https://care.ucr.edu/education/what-is-consent> AND/OR [https://www.scarleteen.com/article/disability\\_relationships\\_sexuality/a\\_brief\\_guide\\_to\\_consenting\\_with\\_a\\_nonverbal\\_partner](https://www.scarleteen.com/article/disability_relationships_sexuality/a_brief_guide_to_consenting_with_a_nonverbal_partner)
3. Watch the film **Disability & Consent**.
4. Discuss the film as a class. Optional guiding questions (adapt as needed based on the subject):
  - a. What was the message of the film?
  - b. What are some of the different ways that consent can be communicated?
  - c. Are there things that you didn't think of as needing/being a form of consent before? If so, what/why?
  - d. What are some challenges that the individuals experienced around consent?
    - i. Are any of these similar to challenges that non-disabled, other LGBTQ+, or other groups face?
    - ii. What challenges are specific to disabled, or disabled LGBTQ+ people?
  - e. (If previous education allows for connections to colonialism, racism, power and privilege)
    - i. Who gets the power and privilege to say yes or no to things?
    - ii. What/Who do understandings of consent as solely verbal leave out?
    - iii. How can we relate ideas of non-verbal consent to the land?
      1. Who gets to give or receive consent when it comes to the land?
      2. How can Indigenous ways of knowing and being help us understand the land as a being too?

3. What beings get access to consent? OR Who consents on their behalf?
  - iv. What protective factors or social contexts make it safe for people to give or withdraw consent?
  - v. What types of bodies or people are left out of usual consent narratives?
5. Have student complete the second half of the worksheet.
6. Discuss any potential changes in answers over the lesson as a class. Optional guiding questions:
  - a. After reflecting, do you prefer to use verbal or non-verbal consent in your own life (i.e., in agreeing to a hug, to touch, to activities more broadly)
  - b. (How) did your answers change?
  - c. Is there anything that you consider to be a form of consent now that you didn't before?
  - d. Are there any things that are not part of your physical body that you consider consent to extend to (i.e., mobility aids, clothing, etc.). (This can be related to ideas of people and relationships extending beyond the body – Indigenous ways of knowing).

Ultimately, students should leave this lesson understanding that consent looks different and is communicated differently by everyone, including those with disabilities. Consent also extends beyond sexual encounters to everyday life for everyone, but especially disabled people who need to navigate pain, disregard for their bodies, and mobility aids.

For students in upper grades, connections should start to be made between consent, communication, and oppression across contexts.

# Consent and Communication: What Does it Mean for Me?

## *disability and consent film worksheet*

### **CONSENT (DEFINITION):**

“Voluntary agreement to [...] what another proposes or desires” – Oxford English Dictionary (2022)

Consent is something that is important to all of us in our day to day lives. While consent is often referred to specifically in relation to sexual or intimate situations, it can and does extend into other areas. Consider a variety of situations and relationships (friendships, etc.), to answer the questions in Part One in ways that feel honest and comfortable to you.

*Complete the questions in Part Two after watching the film.*

### **Part One: Pre-Watching Questions**

1. What situations have you heard the word consent used in?
2. When should you ask for consent? Who do you ask for consent from?
3. How do you know if consent has been given? Be specific!
4. How do you communicate when you consent to something?
5. What situations or communication methods make you feel safe to give/receive consent?

# Consent and Communication: What Does it Mean for Me?

## *disability and consent film worksheet*

### **Part Two: Post-Watching Questions:**

1. What situations does consent apply to?
2. When should you ask for consent? Who do you ask for consent from?
3. How do you know if consent has been given? Be specific!
4. How do you communicate when you consent to something?
5. **Bonus:** Who gets access to consent? Do you think its easier for some people to say yes or no to things than others?

### **Reflect (Choose one or more of the following to reflect on (verbally, mentally, or on paper))**

- Did your answers change at all after watching the film? If so, how?
- Are there any things that are not part of your physical body that you consider consent to extend to (i.e., mobility aids, clothing, etc.)?
- What forms of consent (communication type) have you given or received before? Were you aware that it was a form of consent?

# Consent and Communication: What Does it Mean for Me?

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*Complete the questions in Part Two after watching the film.*

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1. What situations have you heard the word consent used in?

**2. When should you ask for consent? Who do you ask for consent from?**

**3. How do you know if consent has been given? Be specific!**

**4. How do you communicate when you consent to something?**

5. What situations or communication methods make you feel safe to give/receive consent?

**Part Two: Post-Watching Questions:**

1. What situations does consent apply to?

2. When should you ask for consent? Who do you ask for consent from?



**3.** How do you know if consent has been given? Be specific!

**4.** How do you communicate when you consent to something?

**5. Bonus:** Who gets access to consent? Do you think it's easier for some people to say yes or no to things than others?

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## Disability & Consent Documentary Transcript

### **Tia (She/Her) 0:02**

What disability has really impacted in terms of my sexuality is the importance of like boundaries... and like consent. It's like so much more important because of my disability and because like consent is such a, now is such a big part of like everyday life... of like, please don't touch me like, like, no matter what, like, do not touch my back, like no, I'm really serious. Do not touch my back. No is a full sentence. I think that some celebrity said that on TV. [Laughter]

### **Sonny (They/Them) 0:44**

But there's a lot of assumed consent in life. Like if someone comes up and starts talking to you, and starts telling you, you know, emotionally wrought details of their life or just details of their life, there's an assumed idea that that is something you can take on in that moment or have space for

### **Tia (She/Her) 1:01**

like most people don't want to be hurtful. Like most people don't understand like, that they are hurting you. And so, like that comes down to I guess communication of like really outlining that. But it also comes down to like, it's hard on you to really like put yourself out there to like really say and be vulnerable and say, "you are hurting me right now"

### **Sonny (They/Them) 1:24**

It's just recognizing that people have limitations, whether it be on their time, their capacity, their ability, their emotional bandwidth

### **Tia (She/Her) 1:33**

I feel like my disability has given me more reason and more courage to really stand my ground. And like in certain situations and really say no.

### **Sonny (They/Them) 1:40**

having nonverbal cues set up I think is really important. Especially talking in the context of like partners or sexual situations, um like having established ways to communicate things that might be important or withdraw consent. Having systems for that, especially nonverbal systems, I think are really important.

### **Em (They/She) 2:02**

If I go nonverbal... I mean, generally, I tend to avoid, obviously, physical relationships, uh but if I were to be in a physical relationship with somebody, like, I know for a fact that I would need to have that conversation beforehand of if I go nonverbal... this is like the quote unquote, protocol.

### **Sonny (They/Them) 2:21**

One of the things I figured out way back when with anxiety attacks is how I'd let my mom know that I was having an anxiety attack, because I do like this kind of motion...um, and so I've been

using that lately to communicate what I'm nonverbal and it's, it works pretty well. Except it's a little close to stimming.

### **Sonny (They/Them) 2:41**

Being able to negotiate, like how do we meet each other's needs, when that doesn't necessarily fall within our capacity. And I think it's a really good exercise in boundaries. Specifically in thinking about boundaries, not as being something like "you can't do this," like I, you know, or "I need you to do this," it's not about the other person's behavior. Boundaries are about what you are willing to do, or what you're willing for what you're not willing to do. So boundaries, like I can set a boundary like I... you know, will remove myself from an environment I find overstimulating, but I can't set a boundary that's, I need you to leave an environment I find overstimulating with me, because I don't want to dictate someone else's behavior.

### **Em (They/She) 3:27**

One day, I could be very much like touch inclined because like that day, apparently, my senses are like, really craving that type of touch. And then another day, I could be completely against touch and be like, absolutely don't touch me,

### **Sonny (They/Them) 3:43**

Your needs, don't like usurp someone's consent, and figuring out how to navigate that in a healthy and constructive way, it can be really hard because you can have really intense needs that relate to another person and that affects someone else's life and that that will happen... and that is okay. But trying to respect each other's like capacity, each other's like, ability to give and withdraw consent is incredibly important.

### **Tia (She/Her) 4:19**

It's very common that when, when certain types of demographics of people move through crowds, they'll like touch the backs and like lower waists of like feminine people as they like go by. Very similarly, I found that like when I was using my walker and my wheelchair, as people walked by, or as they're standing near me, they would like lean on my wheelchair or they like, they'd like set a box down on like the handle near me, or in like, hover over me or like, like, like walk like touch it as they go by.

Like when people were setting you know, the box down on the corner of my wheelchair. It felt like they're setting it on my shoulder.

### **Sonny (They/Them) 4:56**

With ADHD, I can be very in the mood in one moment and very not in the mood next. Because it's difficult to keep my mind engaged with something entirely, unless I'm fixated on it.

[Laughter] In which case, it's very easy. That has its own challenges. But it can be really difficult to like stay in the moment. And that means that sometimes I'll be in the moment one moment, and the next I'm like, I'm actually not enjoying this anymore, which I mean, goes back to the conversation of consent in that you can give consent at the beginning of something, but consent needs to be like, continuous. There needs to be continuous consent, and there needs to be a system for withdrawing consent, in my opinion,

**Tia (She/Her) 5:40**

If you do this to me, you're gonna cause me pain. And sometimes I have to really lay that out. And like, look them in the eye and say, like, "if you continue this behavior, you are going to cause me pain, like, do you want to be the reason why you are hurting me." And that can go for anybody, anybody can, can say that or feel that way, no matter their gender, sex, race, ability, anything,

**Sonny (They/Them) 6:01**

There's a lot of shame around being like, hey, I want to stop. I don't want to do this, or I want to do something else. Or being like, actually, this isn't working for me anymore... but this might, can we try this instead? And being able to, like, communicate those things without having like, shame or awkwardness or, you know, over, you know, compensating for feeling, yeah, insecure, or anything like that, and having like, an open communication about like, "hey, like, sometimes I just stop being engaged with something. And that doesn't mean it was bad. That doesn't mean, you were doing something that I was, it just means that like, I want to switch it up, and I need a different kind of stimulus."

**Em (They/She) 6:39**

If like somebody is telling me that not to do something one time, it could be very easy for me to just assume that they want me to never do it again. And I may just never do it again, assuming that they just didn't want that if they're not specific enough with their words,

**Sonny (They/Them) 6:53**

I guess yeah, there's a lot of guilt around withdrawing consent. Because it makes you feel like you're you're taking something away from someone or they're not like you know, that you might disappoint them or make them feel bad. And that's just like, not healthy. And that in itself is a bit like coercive, even if it's not intending to be coercive on anyone's part. Even if it's something just going on in your head. It's almost like, like you're being societally coerced.

**Em (They/She) 7:18**

I definitely think for like, access, like access needs, like, often it's not as complicated as people think it is... um, and for me, mainly, it's all about just knowing what the boundaries are, and being aware of how I'm doing because often I'll show signs beforehand, and then I'll remove myself. And it's just not taking it personally,

**Sonny (They/Them) 7:43**

Especially, especially, for people who are raised as girls or women, there's an idea that sex is not necessarily for you. And I think that's incredibly harmful... um, and I don't think it's unreasonable to expect to enjoy everything you do in a sexual situation. And if you're not enjoying it, not if you're tolerating it, tolerating it is not enough, you should want to do something you should enjoy doing something. Consent is not like, oh, I'll take consent away when it gets to a point where I'm, you know, so uncomfortable or so unhappy. Like you should, like it should be enthusiastic.

**Megan Ingram (They/She) 8:23**

Yeah.