

CONSENT

There are no blurred lines.

16 Days of Activism

Day 5

When It Comes to Consent, There are NO blurred lines

“They didn’t say no”...

“We were drunk”...

“She was asking for it because of what she was wearing”...

“You need to be more assertive.”

We have heard these lines before. People use them as an attempt to blur the lines around sexual consent, place blame on victims, and excuse perpetrators from the crimes they have committed. While those that use these lines may have fuzzy understandings of consent, the definition is crystal clear. When it comes to consent, there are no *blurred lines*.

What does consent look and sound like? Unconscious is NOT consent.

Enthusiastic: Consent comes from a place of enthusiasm. Rather than looking for a “no,” make sure there’s an active “yes.” If your partner agrees but seems worried or unsure, **they are not consenting**. “No,” or “I don’t know,” and silence are **not** consent.

Given freely: Consent must be given without pressure. It’s not okay to trick, coerce or threaten someone into saying yes. You can’t give consent if you’re unconscious or in an altered mental state such as being drunk or high.

Informed: You can only consent to something if you have all the facts. For example, if a partner says they will use protection during sex, but they do not, that is not consensual sex. Consent cannot be free and full if all parties involved are under-age. Therefore, child marriage is a non-consensual act.

Specific: Consent allows for specificity. You are entitled to consent to one thing and not another. You can consent to kissing or touching one day and not the next. What you agree to is up to you, and it is allowed to change.

Reversible: Consent can be revoked. You can change your mind at any time. And consent is important even among couples who have had sex before. Most sexual assaults do not happen by strangers in dark alleyways. Frequently, sexual assault is perpetrated by someone the victim knows, or even a romantic partner.

Some national studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner. Eradicating violence against women means obtaining consent in all situations, even marriage and long-term relationships.

Why is consent important?

Different people have different boundaries, and everyone deserves to have theirs respected. Use consent to create a safe sexual space. Most importantly, consent matters because the absence of it may mean domestic violence, rape or sexual assault—crimes that are punishable by law. We must fight for justice when consent is violated. Holding perpetrators legally accountable sends the message that consent is non-negotiable.

Engaging men and boys in conversations about the meaning of masculinity is another important part of raising awareness about consent. In order to root out rape culture, we must examine violent masculinities, and redefine what it means to be a man using feminist principles.

Use your voice and join in the conversation to ensure that there are **NO BLURRED LINES TO CONSENT**. Visit unwomen.org to learn more about the meaning of consent.



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