



Understanding Consent 2

Learner Outcomes

P10 Examine various attitudes, values and behaviours for developing meaningful interpersonal relationships

P11 *Examine the relationship between commitment and intimacy in all its levels*

- *identify expectations and commitments in various relationships*
- *examine a range of behaviours for handling sexual involvement*

P12 *Examine aspects of healthy sexuality and responsible sexual behaviour*

- *examine a range of behaviours and choices regarding sexual expression*
- *describe sexually healthy actions and choices for one's body, including abstinence*
- *analyze strategies for choosing responsible and respectful sexual expression*

P14 Evaluate resources and support systems for each dimension of health and well-being for self and others

- identify support systems and resources for unhealthy relationships and strategies for contacting/using them

This lesson addresses all of the specific outcomes listed above. Instruction in human sexuality (***bolded and italicized*** outcomes) requires schools to provide notice to parents about the learning outcomes, topics and resources.

How To Use

This lesson plan contains numerous activities to achieve the learner outcomes above. You may choose to do some or all of the activities, based on the needs of your students and the time available. Some of the activities build on the ones that come before them, but all can be used alone.

For a quick lesson, combine activities A, B, and E.

If you choose not to do all the activities, use your professional judgement to assess which outcomes you have covered and which may need additional activities.

Content & Timing

- A. Ground Rules (5-10 minutes)
- B. Consent: What Does It Look Like? (20-30 minutes)
- C. Consent: Which Path Would You Take? (20-25 minutes)
- D. Supporting a Friend and Where to Find Help (10-15 minutes)
- E. Question Box (5-10 minutes)

Required Materials

Pictures of people hugging, about 5 per group – only needed if students do not have access to smartphones/tablets/computers in class

[Consent: Which Path Would You Take? Story](#)

Background Information for Teachers

Sexual activity includes kissing, sexual touching, and sex (oral, anal, vaginal). Consent means people agree to participate in an activity and understand what they are agreeing to. Consent is the foundation of sexual relationships and is needed for every sexual activity, every time. The purpose of this lesson is to build on student's knowledge of consent to provide opportunities for further knowledge and skill building. This lesson:

- encourages students to consider how consent can be applied to all aspects of life
- helps students to learn and practice scripts that can be used for asking, rejecting and negotiating consent
- provides resources in the event someone needs support after sexual assault.

Language and messages about consent and sexual assault have changed as we have developed a greater understanding of the rights and the laws around these issues. Here are some key points about consent:

- Consent is **voluntary, affirmative, freely given** and part of an **ongoing** conversation about **mutual agreement** to do something.
- Consent cannot be assumed or implied by silence, previous sexual history or clothing.

More information about consent and sexual assault can be found on the [Understanding Consent](#) page.

- Permission to do any type of sexual activity needs to be asked for and clearly given before proceeding.
- Any sexual activity without consent is sexual assault.
- A person can only consent to activities if they are aware of the risks. If the risks are hidden, a person cannot consent as they don't have all the information.
- Sexual assault can happen to anyone of any gender or age and be committed by anyone of any gender or age.
- Using gendered language when talking about consent and sexual assault reinforces unhealthy stereotypes, discourages men and boys who have been sexually assaulted from accessing services, and inaccurately suggests that women do not commit sexual assault.
- Sole responsibility for sexual assault lies with the person who did not obtain consent (the perpetrator).
- Prevention messages should focus on obtaining consent with the aim of preventing people from assaulting others.
- It is important to not use messaging about how to avoid being sexually assaulted. Such messages do not reduce instances of sexual assault. Instead they increase shame in the person who was assaulted, reduce the likelihood of the survivor accessing services, and provide excuses to perpetrators who commit this crime.

Learning about healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships, developing healthy relationship skills, encouraging bystander interventions, promoting healthy sexuality and empowering girls, women and LGBTQ2S+ people are other ways to reduce the incidence of sexual assault.

[According to Canadian law](#), the age of consent is 16. This is the age when a person can legally agree to sexual activity. Age of consent laws apply to all forms of sexual activity, ranging from kissing and fondling to sexual intercourse. There are "close in age" exceptions to this law.

- 14- and 15-year-olds can consent to sexual activity if the partner is less than 5 years older.
- 12- and 13-year-olds can consent to sexual activity if the partner is less than 2 years older.

Consent cannot be given by anyone under 18 if the:

- other person is in a position of authority (e.g., teacher, coach, or employer).
- sexual activity is exploitative (e.g., pornography, prostitution, or trading sex for safety).

Children younger than 12 cannot consent to any type of sexual activity. Having sex or sexual activities with a child younger than 12 is against the law and is sexual abuse.

Being Prepared for Disclosures and Distress

This topic can be distressing to students, including those who have been involved in or witnessed an assault or abusive situation. Dealing with sensitive issues encourages students to examine their own beliefs and experiences. Teachers need to act with sensitivity and discretion when handling individual student information that is sensitive or could cause embarrassment or distress to the student or family.

To maintain both student safety and engagement, it is helpful to be familiar with [trauma informed practice](#), to use inclusive language and to acknowledge feelings and stories. It is also important to strongly emphasize a respect for confidentiality among all class members.

For more information on reporting and responding to disclosure see the video and related materials at [Recognizing, Reporting and Responding to Abuse in Schools](#).

- Respect and reinforce confidentiality and sensitivity in the classroom.
- Anticipate where discussions will lead in order to protect students from revealing inappropriate personal information.
- Before starting these lessons, talk to the school counsellors so they are aware there may be disclosures of abuse.
- Ensure your students understand that disclosures of abuse cannot be kept confidential. Disclosures are the first step to get help for a student who is experiencing abuse.
- Share with students what they can expect if they disclose abuse, e.g., acknowledgement, honouring their disclosure, redirection to discuss further outside of class and assurance of connecting them with support.
- The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act requires you to report the abuse of a young person to Child and Family Services or Delegated First Nation Agencies. You can locate your local office by visiting <https://www.alberta.ca/childrens-services-offices.aspx>

For more information review [Responding to Child Abuse: A Handbook](#), published by the Government of Alberta or visit [How to Help and Report Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexual Exploitation](#)

Refer to your school division's guidelines about disclosures and reporting.

Inclusive Language

Language is complex, evolving, and powerful. In these lessons, [inclusive language](#) is used to include all students, including those with diverse gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations. This includes the use of 'they' as a singular gender-neutral pronoun.

A person's sex can be assigned at birth as male or female. Some people are intersex (the reproductive, sexual, or genetic biology of a person is unclear, not exclusively male or female or otherwise does not fit within

traditional definitions of male or female). Assigned sex is independent of gender.

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of identity as girl/woman, boy/man, fluid among genders or no gender (regardless of what sex they were assigned at birth).

For many people, their gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). For some, their gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. They may use terms like transgender, trans, non-binary, gender fluid, gender queer, agender or others, to describe their gender identity. The umbrella term 'trans' is primarily used here, to describe people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth differ. While this umbrella term does not fit everyone, the intention is to be inclusive as possible.

A. Ground Rules

Ensure [ground rules](#) are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can help ensure a successful lesson.

B. Consent: What Does It Look Like?

1. Ask students to use their devices to each find 3 pictures of people hugging:
 - a) one where the body language of both people suggests they have consented
 - b) one where one person is clearly uncomfortable and has not consented
 - c) one in which it is not entirely clear if both people have consented or not

(If your students do not have access to devices with internet access, bring in pictures for them to use that you have printed ahead of time.)

2. Split the class into small groups. Each student will share the pictures they have found, without revealing which one is which. The group must discuss the pictures together and see if they can decide on the presence or absence of consent in each picture.
3. Come together as a class to answer these questions:
 - What clues did you use to decide if each person had given their consent to the hug?

- Could more information change your answer about any of the pictures? For example, what if the people are dating? Are drunk? Are best friends but not dating?
- Do you think all the people asked for consent to touch the other person in the photos? What might have happened if they did ask?

Remind students of the unreliability of using body language only, and the importance of affirmative, voluntary, ongoing, mutual and clear consent before proceeding with any sexual contact.

C. Consent: Which Path Would You Take?

This activity provides an opportunity for students to choose the outcome of a story about consent involving Jordan and Lupe.

1. Load the [“Consent: Which Path Would You Take?” Story](#) slideshow
2. As a class, go through the consent story of Jordan and Lupe and allow students to choose where the storyline goes.
3. If time permits, choose various storylines.
4. Debrief the activity with the following questions:

What are some ways someone can ask for consent? (Encourage students to say their responses out loud.)

- “Is it ok if...”
- “Would you like it if...”
- “I would really like to...”
- “Can we talk about...”
- “Is this ok?”
- “I want to check with you before we go any further, do you want to do this?”
- “Are you comfortable?”
- “Do you want to stop?”

What are some ways a person can enthusiastically and clearly communicate their consent?

- “Yes!”
- “I definitely want to do that.”
- “Let’s do this.”
- “I am good with ... but not with ...”

Hearing and practicing scripts can help students feel prepared to communicate about consent.

What are some things someone could do or say to refuse consent or show the answer is “no”?

- “No.”
- “Not now.”
- “Stop.”
- “I don’t want to”
- “I have to go home now.”
- “I need to use the bathroom.”
- “I need to study.”
- “I’m not feeling well.”
- “I’m not ready.”
- They could push someone away.
- “Can we _____ instead?” (This may be important for some students. It may not be an all or nothing scenario. Maybe kissing on the lips is not acceptable, but kissing on the cheek is ok.)
- “I don’t want to go any further than _____.”
- “I really like you but I am not comfortable with that. I am okay with _____. Is that something you would like to do?”

Remind students that the absence of a “no” does not mean yes.

What are some ways to respond that respects a ‘no’ answer?

- “I wish you wanted to, but I get it.”
- “Thanks for telling me. I don’t want to push you.”
- “Ok. Can we talk about this again sometime?”
- “I am kinda glad you said no. I wasn’t sure I wanted to either but I thought you did.”

D. Supporting A Friend And Where To Get Help

1. Share with your students the following information:

Most survivors of assault go to a person they know for help and support. How that person responds is extremely important. This response is called a ‘social response’ and is a combination of words, behaviours and attitudes towards the survivor. This response may be hurtful or helpful. People who get supportive responses are more likely to recover more quickly and fully, work with the authorities, report assault in future, and access supports and services.

2. Ask students to brainstorm helpful responses for a person that discloses sexual assault.
3. Discuss the following responses if they were not already mentioned:

Listen

- Remain calm and give the person your complete attention.
- Let them know you hear what they told you.
- Be a good listener. Don't ask for specific details or tell them what they should have done.
- Say "Thank you for telling me."

Believe

- Believe what they told you
- Recognize that discussing this takes courage and strength
- Say "I believe you."

Be compassionate

- Remember that empathy is not pity
- Say "You do not deserve this."
- Say "I am sorry this happened to you."
- Say "You are not alone."

Stress that it's not the survivor's fault

- Survivors typically blame themselves. Remind them that the perpetrator is responsible for what happened.
- Say "It's not your fault."
- Say "The perpetrator chose to do this."
- Say "You did what you could to keep safe."

Support their right to have control

- Talk about the choices they have instead of giving advice. We may think we know what is best for a friend but they must make their own decisions.

Offer information

- If they need additional support, it would be helpful to know where to go. For example, the local distress phone number or sexual assault support agency. Teachers, counsellors and administrators can help access this additional support.
- Say "I know where to get help."

Protect their privacy

- Respect their privacy; they have the right to choose who they will talk to.
 - Don't tell friends or classmates about the assault without the survivor's permission. If the survivor is a child (under the age of 18 in Canada), talking to a teacher, counsellor or administrator about how to report childhood sexual assault may be helpful.
4. Share the following resources with your class:
- If you are in immediate danger, call 911
 - Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services www.aasas.ca
 - Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or kidshelpphone.ca
 - Alberta One Line for Sexual Violence 1-866-403-8000
 - Call Health Link at 811
 - Sexual and Reproductive Health Services www.ahs.ca/srh

E. Question Box

Answer any questions from [question box](#) in the previous lesson. Have students submit any new questions and address them next class.

Addressing the questions at the next class allows you time to review the questions and prepare responses.

Self-Reflection

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?

Student Assessment

During the lesson, did students:

Knowledge:

- Define consent and sexual assault?

- Learn phrases that can be used for asking, answering and negotiating consent?
- Consider how to respond if a friend discloses sexual assault?
- Identify where to get help after a sexual assault?

Skills:

- Identify the role of body language in consent?
- Identify and practice scripts for asking, answering and negotiating consent?

Attitudes:

- Accept the need to ask for and get consent in sexual relationships?