

Conversation Guide for Parents



Consent is more than 'yes' or 'no'.



Consent is about making sure both people want to be there and feel safe.



Talking About Consent

As parents and carers, we want young people to make safe, respectful decisions. Research shows parents and carers want more open conversations about sexual consent; yet discussions often focus only on negative consequences.

Men and women often hold different views on what consent looks like and how it's discussed. This lack of shared understanding shapes young people's attitudes.

Many young people struggle to recognise consent and sexual violence. Early, positive education can prevent harm, but adults must first agree on consistent messages. Start by learning about consent and sharing perspectives with trusted adults. These conversations build confidence and ensure young people receive clear, informed guidance.

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Consent should be taught as a skill: giving, withholding, and communicating consent as part of healthy relationships.





What is Consent?

Sexual consent is a free, voluntary, and informed agreement to engage in a sexual act.

Consent exists only when everyone genuinely wants to participate, checks in with each other, and clearly communicates willingness – verbally or through actions.

It is not a transaction, contract, or problem to solve.

Consent must be free from violence, pressure, or control.

Consent is the foundation of healthy encounters, building respect, trust, and open communication.

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**Consent applies to:
Sexual intercourse
Sexual touching
Sharing sexual images
Online sexual activities**



Why Talk About Consent Early?

Before speaking with young people, align with other adults to ensure consistent messages. Age-appropriate conversations empower children and teens to build respectful relationships, delay sexual activity until they're ready, and avoid harmful experiences.



For CHILDREN, early discussions about body autonomy help children:

- Recognise appropriate and inappropriate touch
- Understand emotions and how they connect to safety
- Build self-confidence and relationship skills
- Understand how to use correct terminology when referring to body parts



For TEENS, comprehensive education that focuses on respect, equality, and rights can:

- Improve relationship skills
- Reduce dating and intimate partner violence
- Encourage open conversations and language to discuss awkward topics
- Support mental and social wellbeing

How to have the Conversation

Research shows open, positive, and non-judgemental discussions work best. With the average first exposure to pornography at age 13, these conversations are more important than ever.



PLAN AHEAD:
choose a good
time with privacy.

KEEP CONVERSATIONS ONGOING: short,
frequent talks work better
than one-off sessions.

**CONSIDER THE
SETTING:** side-
by-side talks
(walking,
driving) can
feel less
intimidating.

USE EXAMPLES:
books, movies, or
TV can
help them
discuss issues
indirectly.

ASK QUESTIONS:
find out what
they know and
how they feel.

Enter conversations with curiosity. Start with emotions like excitement, attraction, or disappointment. This helps them recognise what feels safe and what doesn't. Build trust by avoiding judgement and letting honesty develop over time.



Talking to Teenagers About Consent

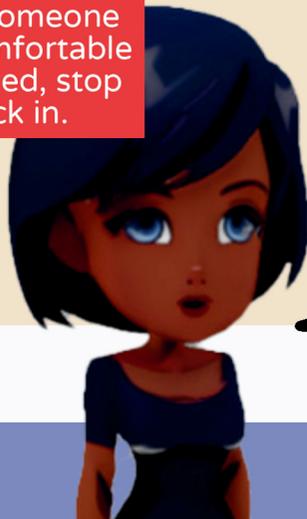
Make it a two-way conversation, not a lecture. Be curious.



Have your friends ever talked about feeling pressured in relationships?

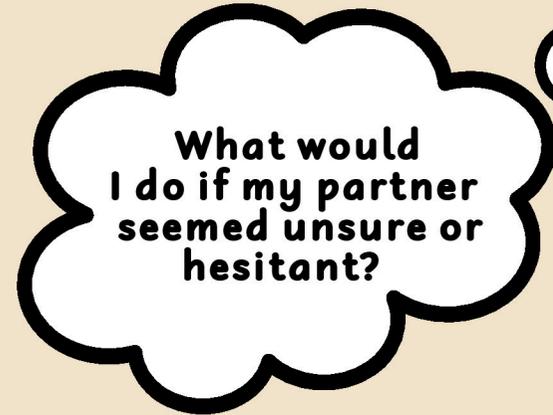
Encouraging your teen to reflect builds empathy, respect and responsibility.

Non-verbal cues matter. If someone looks uncomfortable or disengaged, stop and check in.



Do you think it's easy to say no in real life?

Consent is ongoing. Saying yes once doesn't mean always yes.



What would I do if my partner seemed unsure or hesitant?



Power imbalances (age, intoxication, under the influence - drugs or other & fear) make consent invalid.

Coercion cancels consent. Pressure, guilt, or persistence is not okay.

