

THE CONSENT COMMANDMENTS

Faith G. Harper, PhD, LPC-S

www.faithgharper.com



- 1. Consent cannot be given by people who are drunk. Or under the influence of drugs. Or hard core medications. People under the influence are already doing seriously dumb stuff, like craving those 2/\$1.00 tacos from Jack in the Box. So don't add something to their regret list that has larger and longer term consequences.**
- 2. Going through a lot of emotional stuff can be just as bad for your decision making process as being drunk. If someone is stressed out or dealing with a lot, they also may not be making the best decisions. They may be seeking comfort and we often equate connection with others as sex. If you think someone isn't making a good decision, suggest that sex be put on hold and be there for them in other ways. Something that won't embarrass them a week from now.**
- 3. Consent isn't static. So I let you borrow my car last week. Maybe you brought it back with the gas tank empty and full of Jack in the Box wrappers so I don't want you using it again. Maybe you took fantastic care of it, but I don't want you using it again for whatever reason...I'm heading out to Jack in the Box myself, maybe? Either way, it's still my car, not yours. You don't just march in my house, grab the keys off the counter, and take off in my car because I let you do it last week. No consent equals Grand Theft Auto, right? Agreeing to something on one occasion does not mean consent forever.**
- 4. Consent for one thing isn't consent for another. Someone gets naked in front of you? This is an excellent sign, yes. Is it consent for any specific sexual activity? No. Agreeing to any kind of activity isn't agreeing to all of them. Making out doesn't mean oral sex is cool. And oral sex doesn't mean penetrative sex. It's a salad bar. Wanting croutons doesn't mean you also have to have bell peppers, yanno?**
- 5. Consent isn't silence. Someone may not actively say "no" but being passive isn't a "yes." Many times individuals don't speak up because they are freaked out or don't know how to. They could be quietly freaking out, or quietly enjoying themselves. But you don't know if you don't ask.**
- 6. Consent needs to be informed. Are you sleeping with other people? That's ok, it's called dating not getting married for a reason. Have an STD? That happens, too. Moving out of state in a week? That can impact future plans a bit. Potential partners need to know any information that may inform their decision about sexual activity. Be grown enough to have the awkward conversations.**
- 7. Consent is a community obligation, not just a personal one. We need to help support each other with grey areas of consent. Speak up if you see someone in an uncomfortable situation and back up their right to say no. Friends don't let friends listen to Nickelback. And they don't let them get into situations where they are not really giving consent or not really getting consent from their partner or potential hook-up. If you see someone at a party, for instance, getting into a danger zone, then be the protective wingman. And if the DJ plays Nickelback, it's time to leave altogether.**
- 8. Having to convince someone is not consent. You aren't trying to win a court case by wooing a jury member. You're awesome, right? If they aren't into enough to realize that and you have to convince them then they don't deserve your awesomeness. If you get a "wellllllllll, I don't knowwwwww" respond with "that's cool, let me know if you change your mind" and then step away from the sex.**
- 9. Consent doesn't just mean the right to say no, it also means the right to say YES. Shaming people (ie. calling them hos) because they choose to engage in sexual activity makes active, enthusiastic consent way more complicated. Affirmative consent is difficult for many people (usually women) because they think that an enthusiastic yes means they are slutty, and that they are supposed to pretend they DON'T want sex therefore must be "convinced." This sends mixed messages to their partners. When are we supposed to "convince" and when are we supposed to just stop? If everyone is sexually empowered, no one ever has to be "convinced."**
- 10. Consent is more than just sex, it's about boundaries in general. You should get people's permission to touch them for any reason (e.g., "You look like you could use a hug right now, would you like one?"). Consent extends past physical boundaries, as well. You should never force your will on others. Don't share other's information, experiences, images, or things without their permission. Don't make plans on their behalf without their permission. Don't force them to share information with you or anyone else if they are uncomfortable doing so. No matter what you think is in their best interest, unless you are their legal guardian, let them make their own decisions. You do you....and let them be them.**