say the word:

conversations
about consent
Consent Is Sexy—
Hello! Thanks for picking up this zine. This proves you and I have something in common, interest in understanding and talking about sexual consent. What I have found from writing/organizing and putting this zine together is that consent is a sticky topic of discussion. It seems to be something that people are pretty into avoiding. This, no doubt, worries me. Is it because people have done things in the past, which might be questionable that they were under mutually consensual circumstances? Is it because it’s just not cool? Are people afraid because they don’t understand it? Perhaps not everyone is sure of her/his own rights. So in putting this together my goal is to give people a voice to talk about personal experiences, beliefs, and understandings of sexual consent. My overall goal is to eventually collectively develop a language to make sexual consent an easier conversation to have with present and future friends and lovers. To prove that consent is sexy! I would also like to say that due to the subject matter some readers may find this zine to be triggering. So read with caution and have a plan of how to take care of yourself if you start to feel triggered. Love!
Natural, Fun, and Pleasurable: Consensual Sex in a Coercive Culture

By Matt Dineen

There is so much going on every time I do something. There is this constant tension between the society we were all born into and the hopes and dreams that live inside all of us. From eating breakfast in the morning to falling asleep with a book in my hands there are thousands of daily decisions that I make. I, like you, try as hard as I can to live in a way that does not make a mockery of my values, but the air I breathe is polluted. I'm not simply speaking in environmental terms. I was socialized as a child by a coercive culture of racism, classism, and patriarchy. Eventually I came to recognize that this air is polluted but I can't just hold my breath until it gets cleaned. I have to be constantly aware of how my conditioning and privileges affect the way I perceive the world and interact with others. I always try to do the right thing but that tension is always there—from the most mundane daily acts to falling in love. The challenge is to be conscious of this and do what I can to make the healthiest decisions.

When I was in fifth grade my teacher separated us all by gender one day: the boys stayed in the classroom while the girls retreated to the room across the hall. We proceeded to learn about nocturnal emissions, menstruation, and the other joys of impending puberty. When we were reunited by our female counterparts the awkwardness of this era in our lives was inaugurated and we never looked at each other the same way again.
Throughout middle and high school there was an attempt by health teachers to educate us about sex. We learned how babies were made through the "Miracle of Life" video and about AIDS by watching a Nickelodeon special with Magic Johnson. Just like Bush's mythological abstinence-only version of sex ed, this sent a message that sex could either ruin your life or kill you. Not that any of us believed that, it just wasn't that helpful.

When I was five years old I used to sing along to "I Want Your Sex" by George Michael: "Sex is natural, sex is fun, sex is best when it's one on one!" This is a truly radical statement in the context of sex mis-education in US public schools and our culture in general. My health teachers tried to be sex positive but they did not succeed. It's just awkward having some middle-aged dude talking to teenagers about getting it on. Despite the devastating, adolescent humor that it inspires the truth is that nobody wants to think about him having sex so it's just not an effective way to learn how to practice a healthy, positive sex life.

That's the first step. Embracing our sexualities as (in the words of George Michael) natural and fun. Growing up in a repressive Christian environment projected the opposite sentiment: hate yourself and be ashamed of your sexuality. This was not always articulated but I internalized it. It's hard to have a good orgasm when you are worried that God is watching you masturbate from Heaven. It's bullshit. We need to love our bodies if we want others to love our bodies and us back.

Sex is only natural and fun when it is a mutually consensual and cooperative act. Otherwise it is not sex. But beyond being natural and fun sex should be pleasurable beyond words. It should be libidary, mind-blowing, amazing and beautiful. There is a difference between getting off and making love. The difference lies in communication through words (along with other verbal sounds) and clear gestures. Communication is essential to good sex. You have to
listen to your partner to truly understand what s/he likes and doesn't like, what makes them tingly and what makes them cold. If you're comfortable enough with someone to be sleeping together you should feel comfortable telling her/him that it hurts when s/he bites your tongue too hard.

In a coercive culture honest communication is a radical act. We are taught, however subtly, to dominate and control. It's important to be aware of how our socialization affects our sexuality and to work towards new ways of engaging with our partners. When we communicate and cooperate with each other the possibilities are endless. From good sex to revolution...

CONSENT

i was 7 years old. at the time i was still living in New York City. My Mom would take me every so often to New Jersey on the weekends to visit her boss's family. you know, because it would look good for her to have the kids "get along." However, the boss had a 3 year old and a 13 year old. so somehow this was entertaining for everyone. As i so quickly cut to the chase... one weekend, we all decided to play "house" and i was assigned mommy and 13 year old was daddy and he told me... "lets go in the closet and pretend we are going to sleep" and then tells me "now we have to do what Mom and dad do in the bed..." and this is how i became another one in every 3 or 4 girls or whatever the statistic is... i was molested, but i had some sense of right and wrong before being raped. now, of course, their are so many factors to this particular scenario, the boy being a child himself, and all sorts of other justifications that have run into my head for years... such as... well, that day... it was right after we went swimming and im wearing my cute little red bathing suit frolicking around the house, i was probably flirting or something...

Of course I blamed it all on myself. And it didn't help that later in the evening I told my Mom, and she didn't believe me or, I should say, didn't think I
knew what I was talking about and also didn't want to cause a scene and cause any problems with her boss. Of course. But sure enough, I started crying and she finally told the dad, and I vaguely remember him getting the belt out.

For years. Yea, I was "fucked up." I had pushed it so far down, I couldn't remember if it was even real or not. Boys freaked me out, touching made me nervous, in middle school I did not have boyfriends and sex was a major issue.

And when I decided to talk to my Mom about it as a teenager, finally resurfacing this memory and confronting it to her, she replies..."honey, that happens... I was molested when I was young too by my uncle" as if it's some natural process of child development.

So this might not have much to do about consent, the story is rather different and is more being victimized at a very young age... but, yes, being sexually violated is something very hard to cope with. And I have had situations while being intoxicated that I could tell you that I had sex without consenting to the deed. However, you have to be a responsible drinker in that case, because under the influence I have also done a lot of ridiculous things and have realized that I would have never consented to those actions in a sober mindset.

- Stella

At some very young age I decided that I was going to have sex/ be sexual when I was around 14. For some reason that was the magic number and it was all going to happen then. I remember having sleepovers with my girlfriends in middle school and I was the only one who was dead intent on getting rid of the virgin stigma as soon as possible. I think a lot of this came from being strongly influenced by my older cousin who would tell me stories of when she first had sex, and she was older, beautiful and seemed to lead an incredibly exciting life. So in my still
developing mind it all made sense, have sex as soon as possible.

At some point later I ditched my peers and started hanging out with older kids, they were cooler for many reasons, and more interested in going out smoking cigarettes, drinking and other things which excited my young mind. And I met my first boyfriend who right from the start, in a movie to be exact, made his first move with asking for consent. Not to say that I wouldn’t have consented, this boy was gorgeous and I wanted to make out with him, but he bulldozed through a boundary that I had yet to understand, and left me with low self-respect of my body and what I wanted.

This young boy continued on this path he created for himself. I was completely enamored by him. We would hang out and smoke cigarettes listen to rock’n roll, and drink, and snort pills, all of this at my innocent age of 13, how could I know any better? My mind was still developing. A trend began to set in, he would manipulate me like I was nothing, he broke up with me for no reason, then started dating a friend, then told me he still loved me, after I had started dating his best-friend (a subconscious stab in the back.) And later after I had pushed him to a level of pure friendship, he broke every single boundary I had. He got me really fucked up and then forced me to have sex with him. All I remember is him asking when the last time I had my period was because he didn’t even have a condom. And then later, once I had regained a bit of control over my high, I tried to run and lock myself in the bathroom, but he took control, he chased me, he took me in his arms, made me sit on his lap, and again, tried to have sex with me.

But this is what I wanted right? I mean I lost my virginity, I no longer had to worry, I could have boyfriends and follow the path of my most admired cousin. What this really meant was that sex was not going to be special for me for a long time, that men were scary, not to be trusted and the only way to keep the ones I wanted around was to sleep with them. I lost all respect for my own body, was barraged
constantly by flashbacks, until I suppressed it all, pushed it down and sat on it for years and years.

Now that I am in a place where I can understand what happened to me and start to heal, I am also working on rebuilding my definition of consent, and re-building my love and respect for my own body and self. I eagerly await the day when I find a partner who respects the concept of consent and me, as much as I do. But until then I am going to open communication with my partners, and be as forward as I can to verbalize what is good and what isn’t. To let them know when I am comfortable, and what signs to look for that show I am not having a good time. To put into action all that I have learned since I was 13, and to hope never to be in that same position again.

-Emma

---

Frozen Inside  (Printed in Slug & Lettuce)

By Cindy

These are questions about consent that me and a friend of mine put together for a workshop we helped put together. They helped spark a lot of really good and important discussions in our community, and hopefully will be helpful for you all too. We ask that you read and think honestly about these questions one at a time.
(You certainly don’t have to read the whole list in one sitting! In fact, we encourage you not to.) We wrote them hoping to provoke thought, and so we ask that you not be defensive, and that you think about them deeply, because that’s the only way that this can really help you and your community.

1. How do you define consent?
2. Have you ever talked about consent with your partner(s) or friends?
3. Do you know people, or have been with people who define consent differently than you do?
4. Have you ever been unsure about whether or not the person you were being sexual with wanted to be doing what you were doing? Did you talk about it? Did you ignore it in hopes that it would change? Did you continue what you were doing because it was pleasurable to you and you didn’t want to deal with what the other person was experiencing? Did you continue because you thought it was your duty? How do you feel about the choices you made?
5. Do you think it is the other person’s responsibility to say something if they aren’t into what you’re doing?
6. How might someone express that what is happening is not ok?
7. Do you look only for verbal signs or are there other signs?
8. Do you think it is possible to misinterpret silence for consent?
9. Have you ever asked someone what kinds of signs you should look for if they have a hard time verbalizing when something feels wrong?
10. Do you only ask about these kinds of things if you are in a serious relationship or do you feel comfortable talking in casual situations too?
11. Do you think talking ruins the mood?
12. Do you think consent can be erotic?
13. Do you think about people’s abuse histories?
14. Do you check in as things progress or do you assume the original consent means everything is ok?
15. If you achieve consent once, do you assume it’s always ok after that?
16. If someone consents to one thing, do you assume everything else is ok or do you ask before touching in different ways of taking things to more intense levels?
17. Are you resentful of people who want to or need to talk about being abused? Why?
18. Are you usually attracted to people who fit the traditional standard of beauty as seen in the United States?
19. Do you pursue friendship with people because you want to be with them, and then give up on the friendship if that person isn’t interested in you sexually?
20. Do you pursue someone sexually even after they have said they just want to be friends?
21. Do you assume that if someone is affectionate they are probably sexually interested in you?
22. Do you think about affection, sexuality and boundaries? Do you talk about these issues with people? If so, do you talk about them only when you want to be sexual with someone or do you talk about them because you think it is important and you genuinely want to know?
23. Are you clear about your own intentions?
24. Have you ever tried to talk someone into doing something they showed hesitancy about?
25. Do you think hesitancy is usually a form of flirting?
26. Are you aware that in some instances it’s not?
27. Have you ever thought someone’s actions were flirtatious when that wasn’t actually the message they wanted to get across?
28. Do you think that if someone is promiscuous that makes it ok to objectify them or talk about them in ways you normally wouldn’t?
29. If someone is promiscuous, do you think it’s less important to get consent?
30. Do you think that if someone dresses in a certain way it makes it ok to objectify them?
31. If someone dresses a certain way, do you think it means that they want your sexual attention or approval?
32. Do you understand that there are many other reasons, that have nothing to do with you, that a person might want to dress or act in a way that you might find sexy?
33. Do you think it’s your responsibility or role to overcome another person’s hesitance by pressuring them or making light of it?
34. Have you ever tried asking someone what they’re feeling?
35. Do you think sex is a game?
36. Do you ever try to get yourself into situations that give you an excuse for touching someone you think
would say no if you asked? i.e. Dancing, getting really drunk around them, falling asleep next to them.
37. Do you make people feel “unfun” or “unliberated” if they don’t want to try certain sexual things?
38. Do you think there are ways you act that might make someone feel that way even if it’s not what you’re trying to do?
39. Do you ever try and make bargains? i.e. “if you let me _____, I’ll do _____ for you?”
40. Have you ever used jealousy as a means of control?
41. Have you made your partner(s) stop hanging out with certain friends, or limit their social interactions in general because of jealousy or insecurity? Why? Do you use jealousy to make your partner feel obligated to have sex with you?
42. Do you feel like being in a relationship with someone means that they have an obligation to have sex with you?
43. What if they want to abstain from sex for a week? A month? A year?
44. Do you whine or threaten if you’re not having the amount of sex or kind of sex that you want?
45. Do you think it’s ok to initiate something sexual with someone who’s sleeping?
46. What if the person is your partner?
47. Do you think it’s important to talk with them about it when they’re awake first?
48. Do you ever look at how you interact with people or how you treat people, positive or negative, and where that comes from/where you learned it?
49. Do you behave differently when you’ve been drinking?
50. What are positive aspects of drinking for you? What are negative aspects?
51. Have you been sexual with people when you were drunk or when they were drunk? Have you ever felt uncomfortable or embarrassed about it the next day?
52. Has the person you were with ever acted weird to you afterward?
53. Do you seek consent the same way when you are drunk as when you’re sober?
54. Do you think it is important to talk the next day with the person you’ve been sexual with if there has been drinking involved?
55. Do you think people need to take things more lightly?
56. Do you think these questions are repressive and people who look critically at their sexual histories and their current behavior are upright and should be more “liberated”?
57. Do you think liberation might be different for different people?
58. How do you react if someone becomes uncomfortable with what you’re doing, or if they don’t want to do something? Do you get defensive? Do you feel guilty? Does the other person end up having to take care of you and reassure you or are you able to step back and listen and hear them and support them and take responsibility for your actions?
59. Do you tell your side of the story and try and change the way they experienced the situation?
60. Do you do things to show your partner that you’re listening and that you’re interested in their ideas about consent or their ideas about what you did?
61. Do you ever talk about sex and consent when you’re not in bed?
62. Have you ever raped or sexually abused someone? Are you able to think about your behavior? Have you made changes? What kinds of changes?
63. Has your own discomfort or your own abuse history
caused you to act in abusive ways? If so, have you ever been able to talk to someone about it? Do you think talking about it could be helpful?
64. Do you avoid talking about consent or abuse because you aren’t ready or don’t want to talk about your own sexual abuse?
65. Do you ever feel obligated to have sex?
66. Do you ever feel obligated to initiate sex?
67. What if months or days or years later, someone tells you they were uncomfortable with what you did, do you grill them?
68. Do you initiate conversations about safe sex and birth control applicably?
69. Do you think saying something as vague as “I’ve been tested recently” is enough?
70. Do you take your partners concerns about safe sex and birth control seriously?
71. Do you think that if one person wants to have safe sex and the other person doesn’t really care, it the responsibility of the person who has concerns to provide safe sex supplies?
72. Do you think if a person has a body that can get pregnant, it’s up to them to provide birth control?
73. Do you complain or refuse safe sex or the type of birth control your partner wants to use because it reduces your pleasure?
74. Do you try and manipulate your partner about these issues?
75. Are you attracted to people with a certain kind of gender presentation?
76. Have you ever objectified someone’s gender presentation?
77. Do you assume that each person who fits a certain perceived gender presentation will interact with you in the same way?
78. Do you find yourself repeating binary gender behaviors, even within queer relationships and friendships? How might you doing that make others feel?
79. Do you view sexuality and gender presentation as part of a whole person, or do you consider those to be exclusively sexual aspects of people?
80. If someone is dressed in drag, do you take it as an invitation to make sexual comments?
81. Do you fetishize people because of their gender presentation?
82. Do you think only men abuse?
83. Do you think that in a relationship between people of the same gender, only the one who is more “manly” abuses?
84. Do you think there is ongoing work that we can do to end sexual violence in our communities?

I remember one time when I was a freshman in college, I was at the end of a first date and was saying goodnight, and the guy, standing at my door asked me if it was OK for him to kiss me, after 6 years of kissing people, no one had ever asked my consent to kiss me. It was a
bizarre experience, but it showed a level of respect that no one had ever shown me, and I will forever be grateful! 3 years later I was at a party, and pretty drunk. I had spent the evening making sure to pay attention to this super cute boy who I had had a crush on for months. He seemed to like this attention in his own timid way. At the end of the night I thought I would be brave and when saying goodbye, I kissed him on the cheek. Now, due to my slight intoxication my aim was not right on, and my lips caught the corner of his mouth. I blushed and ran away. When we went to the movies the next day he was acting strange. Later he told me that me kissing him made him really uncomfortable, and he didn’t know how to deal with it etc... Looking back on this situation I only wish I had not shown him the same respect as that boy freshman year had shown me, but I was intoxicated and thought it would be totally "hot" for me to make a move!

-Sally

i was 15. on a school trip to Greece. we were all staying in a hotel, I was sharing a room with a friend of mine and some boys in my class were in the room next door. one of the boys, pim was his name, was a really good friend of mine. we had known each other since we were two. i can't remember how he ended up sleeping in our bed, but i honestly thought that nothing would happen. we were almost like brother and sister, well maybe that's taking it to far but i never really sensed any sexual
tension between the two of us. plus he had a
girlfriend.

In the middle of the night i woke up to feeling
some one squeezing my tits. (i was definitely
one of the more busty girls in my class and
tried hard to hide it, always wearing baggy
sweaters and so on.) The first thing that came
to mind was, no! and then the fear started to
build. What if someone saw us, my friend was
sleeping right next to me. My only thought was
that if i pretended to sleep than he would stop.
but he didn’t. This went in for some time and
then all of a sudden i felt his dick rubbing up
against me. Trying to push its way in between
my legs. I was a virgin. Thankfully at some
point it ended, and i can’t remember when
or if he came.

The next morning i woke up and was scared
that i might be pregnant. Even though i know
that was not possible i could only think of the
worst. What if semen could travel? Did he
cum? Did he cum? I was panicked. And then i
ran into another friend, who in an evil smile
asked me what happened with pim last night. i
was horrified and said nothing. She laughed
and said that she had walked in to my room
last night and seen pim holding my tits.

i was scared she would tell other people and i
would be called a slut.

All i would have needed in that situation was
to talk to somebody that knew that it was no
my fault. that it was him that acted wrong. that
it is not ok to start molesting someone just cuz
they are there. YOU ALWAYS HAVE THE
RIGHT TO SAY NO!

This was almost 10 years ago now and this is
the third time that i have talked about it. i have
found myself in similar situations many times
after that but if i would have been able to share
my thoughts i think the times that it
happened again could have been minimized.
thanks for listening.

Always speak up!

h.

So I had this boyfriend and we were
together for quite a while, and I was his
first lover, and we were each other’s first
serious relationship. So from the get-go
our sexual patterns were set and made in stone, as what he learned from me was all he knew. When we slept together we cuddled, and it was nice. But at some point I began to notice that when I was sleeping, my boyfriend would start to feel up my breasts. I am someone who needs a lot of sleep and I sleep lightly. And really this is not the way to initiate something sexy with me. So for years I had no idea how to deal with this, how can I bring up to someone I am in love with that he makes me incredibly uncomfortable. That when he touches me all I can do is pretend to sleep or roll over. I had no idea how to change this- what to say. We were together on and off for a while, as I had moved away to go to college. We kept trying to make it work. And it took until our final hoorah to get up the courage to say that it made me sooooo uncomfortable when he touched me that way. And of course, with a little joke, he respected me decision. It was that easy!

Hey freya and friends. I'm going to describe a few different models of sexual consent. There are a bunch of different ways to think about consent and I've traveled through some different spaces. I think these things may be interesting. Plus, I'm going to write in a free write stream of consciousness which may come across as silly, strange, or geeky. If it does, that's o.k. 'cause I like those things.

THE I'M MALE AND I'M NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING MODEL
Growing up as a feminist man-child, I understood the power I had. I was afraid that I would cross women's boundaries. I didn't want to be a sexual assaulter. Being labeled as a bad person was scary and so was hurting my female friends. I had physical abilities (even for a little munchkin that I was) and also the social conditions that create situations where men do things, and women remain silent or grudgingly agree or feel uncomfortable. I decided that I would not be
the one to make 'moves.' It would be my partner who would push things forward. A couple of years later I told my mom this decision and she agreed that it was a good strategy.

The + 's and my first girlfriend, Arborio: As a young, feminist man-child, I was pretty excited to having sex and all that jazz. I didn't rush things with Arborio. I believe I could have pushed things and gotten to sex faster in our relationship. Yet waiting for 6 months until Arborio recommended it seemed like the right thing. It made it easy, no pressure, and consensual. Victory!

The - 's and my first girlfriend, Arborio: I didn't verbalize my desires. I was afraid. Afraid to be sexual, to impose. To be a "sexualized man." And generally just afraid to express what I was about. My version of the "I'm not going to do anything model" played into this. As I plugged out of trying to get what I wanted. I didn't act, I didn't verbalize. So Arborio was in the dark about what I was about and I didn't get to express myself. Ultimately alienating myself and Arborio.

Doomed to feel detached from myself.

Not unrelated, there was a time that we had nonconsensual sex. One time when we were making whoopie, I mistakenly penetrated her ass.
And it wasn't until afterwards that I realized what happened (based on our conversation). And then came to realize that she didn't like it. She didn't want it to happen and didn't say anything when things went wrong. I have the analysis that if we expressed ourselves more during sex, that this miscommunication wouldn't have happened. If yes's and 'do it like this' were standard, the quietness would have been more noticeable.

THE ANTIOCH MODEL
I've never read the Antioch policy, but I heard this model described many times and the Antioch College Sex Policy is often referred to as the template for this method. It mandates: verbal consent for every move "forward" in sexual interactions. Imagine:

Can I touch you on your breast?
Yes
Can I take off your pants?
Yes
Can I put X in your Y?...
Without a definitive "yes", action cannot proceed. And if it does proceed without a 'yes', it is assault.

The +'s
This certainly gets you talking. When I've been with people I didn't know and had a hard time reading their body language or their more subtle forms of communication, it's been great to use. I would have a clearer sense of how my partner is feeling and if things are o.k. At first, saying what I want was a big challenge and as an exercise was great practice.

The -'s
This might be too big of a barrier for some people. Some people argue that especially with queer sexual interactions among young people, acknowledging what is going on may too embarrassing. I read a James Baldwin's book that supported this notion.

Sometimes, yes means no. I've definitely been in situations where I was asked if I wanted to have sex or have sex in a particular way and I said "yes," even though I didn't want to. I didn't want to be a prude, afraid my partner would be upset, or that I would be stigmatized for a lack of masculinity. For more on this, check out: bell hooks We Real Cool. This is actually fairly common for men!
For years, I did this without really realizing it. It became clear to me across two particularly scary incidents with two different people within a few months of each other.

I'll describe one (they are both basically the same): After I had made it clear that I didn't want to make out, sort-of-partner and person who I was sharing a bed with began aggressively making out with me. I froze. Still. To show them I was not consenting. After several minutes and escalation to touching, she backed away. I said nothing. And afterwards, even though I was seething with anger and fright, I said, "it's o.k." Too scared to put the lack of consent to words. While in this example (and the one identical) and I didn't actually say, "yes" it enabled me
to realize that sometimes I am in sexual situations even when I don't want to be. Even though I am a man with power, I can be sexually assaulted. And often times, I verbally consent to it – saying "yes" and doing my best to feign consent to my partner – even while I don't want to do it.

**MEDICAL ETHICS**

In the medical world, when a patient consents to a procedure they must have informed consent. Which means to say yes, they must:
- Understand the procedure
- Understand the risks and alternatives
- Have the ability to make a rational decision.

We can apply this model to sex: A drunk person or a very young person may not have the ability to give consent. Likewise, if any known risks are hidden – such as another partner or Sexually Transmitted Infections – consent cannot be given. In the cases, I outlined above, I didn't have the ability to make a rational decision. Operating from a place of fear, I say 'yes' without intelligently thinking about what I wanted. Or likewise, I didn't understand the alternatives: a man saying "no" to sex is an alternative I never gave serious consideration.

No Visible Resistance Isn't Rape Model

My friend told me about reading an article where a feminist theorist argues that women who say yes or stay quiet during unconsensual sex shouldn't complain. Instead, they should learn to express themselves and say no. Privileged women are trained to make things easy and be conciliatory. Rather than blame the men involved in the sex acts, women should learn to say what they are feeling.

**THE CATHERINE MACKINNON**

**HETEROSEXUAL SEX IS RAPE**

For Mackinnon, rape is about power. Rapist dominating rapee. Given the gender situation we find ourselves in, almost all man/women sex falls into that dynamic and thus almost all man/women sex is rape.

She contrasts her model with the legal model that uses "the reasonable person" standard. If a reasonable person could ascertain that one
of the parties involved was not consenting, than it's rape. Given the makeup of the courts, this reasonable person often resides in the reason of the male judges, male lawmakers, male prosecutors, and law enforcement. So they are likely to fall into the No Visible Resistance Isn't Rape Model and perhaps an even more stringent standard. Would a reasonable person ever observe the following as cues for sex: "Look what she was wearing!" "What was she doing in his apartment?" "She was asking for it! (without asking for it.) Many people have argued those signs can replace a 'yes' and even trump a 'no.' With rampant misogyny of our government and dominant culture, the vagueness of 'reasonable' person upsets me.

The legal standard is grappling with a way to ascertain how much a person is burdened with ascertaining consent. This standard puts the burden of proof on the survivor of abuse. That person must show that they gave signs a "reasonable" person would observe. Even if they did nothing to show they wanted sex to happen, the legal standard is likely to rule it consensual. The Antioch Model attempts to intervene in, requiring a verbal "yes". Yet, I have found that even the Antioch standard is not enough. Which is why Mackinnon's model is intriguing.
However, I would not base it in such essentialized notions of gender.
I'd say domination is about trying to get what you want from another person without recognizing their humanity – without understanding where they are coming from and viewing that place with empathy.

I think a lot of sex is double rape. With people trying to get what they want without loving understanding of the other. Thus, I'm at the same place as Mackinnon: There is a lot of rape out there – way too much to prosecute.
THE EROTICATION OF NO-CONSENT IS HOT
I woke up in the middle of the night and Sally was going down on me. It was really hot. I liked that her desire to have sex with me had nothing to do with my experience of sex. I liked that she was so turned on that she didn't bother to wake me up and check in with me. I liked that I didn't have to do anything.

Cassandra asked me to hit her. At first, I was really terrified. I didn't want to be that guy and was afraid to eroticize such a strange scene. Actual punches were too much for me. She loved that I had the ability to hurt her - that I could have my way with her and my strength (and the masculine socialization of fighting) could overpower her regardless of how much she struggled. We wrestled - playing out a rape scene. She ran away, I held on to her, hit her, and undressed her. Commanded her to do things. Her coos when I slapped her were hot. I loved that she loved it. And I was shocked to find that I was turned-on by my power and her powerlessness.

These are examples of consensualized 'non-consent'. In the first example with Sally, there wasn't any consent process. By chance, I enjoyed what Sally did. And part of the enjoyment was that I wasn't consenting! Yet, in other similar instances, I was horrified. With Cassandra, we talked about it ahead of time and additionally gave and read consent through indirect cues such as body language, noises, and facial expressions.

These experiences led me to understand the complicatedness of consent and also the urge to act outside of it.

KF
Anyone's Story

I went traveling, leaving my first girlfriend behind, after finally accepting that I wanted to date women. She and I weren't serious and I traveled lightly, knowing that if I met someone I didn't have to feel guilty if anything happened. There ended up being less desirable encounters than I'd expected and I was left being aggressively pursued by a short, cocky bartender. He gave me free drinks the entire month, flirted uncontrollably, even to my non-responses and ask friends to give me gifts from him. The one girl who I enjoyed speaking with the entire trip was asked by him to give me a necklace she'd made. It was not only disappointing, but also infuriating. He couldn't catch on that I wasn't interested and when a friend and I told him of our "tendencies" towards being queer, he only reacted in the most stereotypical and revolting way. He wanted us to kiss. A few nights before I was to leave I got drunk with a bunch of my friends at the bar. I don't know why we continued to go to his place or why I didn't just outright turn him down, but that night I found myself wasted and begging for attention. He invited some of us to his apartment to smoke. We all went along. My friends asked if I wanted to leave with them. I didn't. He'd kissed me outside and it had been hot. I should have left because the next time I was conscious enough to make a real decision it was four in the morning and I was waiting for a cab down the street, not wanting him to touch me. I'd woken up ten minutes earlier feeling like I had to pee. There was a used condom near me on the bed that I brushed away as I glanced around the dingy apartment. In the bathroom I found my vagina swollen beyond recognition. I remembered saying "no" after the sex wasn't enjoyable anymore. I remembered saying "oww" and being in pain as he kept going. I was falling in and out of sleep but I remember him taking off the condom and continuing to go on, me being pushed like a lifeless doll around the bed.

I had to go to school hours after I got home that night and flew back to New York a few days later. I never dealt with what he had done. We had had bad sex. What he had done was not seen as abuse because I had wanted to have sex initially. Six months later I was forced to recognize what had really happened when a girlfriend had the feeling that I had been sexually mistreated before. I am lucky to have had her pull me out of my denial that we had just fucked. When you fuck you are not bruised and swollen twenty minutes later. Sex doesn't hurt and make you bleed months after. You don't cry out of nowhere when asked if something had happened. You don't have flashback to him touching you when you are actually with someone else.

Sex, as hard and rough as it can be, is always consensual. I may ask to be thrown down on the bed, hands held down and hair pulled. My girlfriend may even ask me to slap her face. But I never asked for what he did. I never asked to be put in so much pain that I
couldn’t sit down, or to be ignored when expressing my desire to no longer be penetrated. What I wanted was never taken into consideration and in sex that is all that matters. A sense of self and of the power one has over their own self should never be taken away. If I was conscious enough to voice my desires, even with both of us in inebriated states, he should have been receptive enough to listen. -Margarite

I REALLY LIKE IT DURING SEX when I hear “yes I would like you to do that” spoken next to “pull my hair”, “bite me harder”, “choke me”, and “I love you” because I respond with “good”, “is that okay”, “does this hurt”, “would you like it like this”, and “I love you too”. CONSENSUAL SEX IS BETTER SEX.

-Eva

Assumption/Junction
By Noel T. Birch

It took me a long time to learn to be direct enough to actually ask my partners, “do you want to have sex?” This was possible after a lot of fumbling, bad analogies and metaphors, and generally avoiding having to face the problem of getting permission. It would be easy to say that my avoidance was actually an indication of my insecurity and oversensitivity. However, rather than hide behind an exalted sense of morality, I must admit that the problem was actually my lack of sensitivity to the feelings of the other person. Though unintentionally, I was hiding behind my feelings of good intentions and not actually caring how the other person felt on some level.
I have had wake up calls that made me realize why consent is important, and how I am culpable even if I haven't realized it. I once hooked up with someone, in the context of both of us drinking past our limits. It was a person I'd had a crush for a while, and it was exciting that it had finally happened, since she'd known all along how I felt but never reciprocated. The next morning, I assumed that everything was fine, while in fact, she was not okay with what had happened. I had not asked for consent to have sex, and legally consent couldn't have been truly given since she was drunk. My drunkenness did not excuse the situation easily. The only defense I had was that I "thought" it was okay because there was no rejection or resistance at the time. While she had not been passed out, she still hadn't been in an equal position to assert her feelings.

Then again, I have actually asked for consent and nearly been laughed out of the room because it was so "obvious" that my partner wanted to have sex. That put a damper on things, even though consent was granted. What is important to remember is that in exchange for a briefly confusing and embarrassing moment, there was complete clarity and consent. It was an anecdote, an isolated experience with a specific person, that can't be taken for the general rule though.

At this point in my life and mode of understanding, consent just makes sense as something that is fair and necessary. It's still hard to be conscious of, due to my male privilege, which takes aggressive behavior as a norm. This goes along with generally being more vocal in bed, and being the one asking for consent, rather than being asked for consent. Besides these subtle power dynamics, it's interesting to me that common sexual vocabulary revolves around taking, receiving, and giving. Consent is intrinsically a part of that set, but is often hidden. I think that guys subconsciously feel that asking consent means that you're not confident, and that if you're not confident, you won't get laid. (And that the guy getting off is the goal, not balanced sexual pleasure.) So if my characterization is truly the pervasive unspoken male opinion, unfortunately it's easy to see why consent is not practiced or encouraged.

Maybe why this has been a relatively new process for me is because no one ever taught me about consent growing up: not my parents, not sex ed in school, not girlfriends. No one really stepped up and said, "now, when you have sex, you need to make sure it's okay with the other person, and get consent." Maybe it was always assumed that I would, because I was considered a nice boy. Or perhaps it's because there's been a focus on the actual biology of sex, with condom use and AIDS prevention, more than the interpersonal dynamics of sex, with communication and consent. Either way, the problem is that it is automatically assumed consent is granted, unless it is explicitly vocally denied. No means no, but silence doesn't necessarily mean yes. Consent can be taken as a very straightforward exchange, a call and response, a confirmation, an affirmation, or a yes/no question. To me, it also implicitly asks questions such as do you like me, do you desire me, do you want to connect, do you
want to be pleased? And with that; there’s a subset of ideas floating around such as, do you want this, do I want this, and do we want this?

Ultimately, I believe that thinking about consent, and evaluating yourself and how you’ve done is a good step towards treating sex with more respect. It’s too easy to get immersed in pop culture’s notions of gender roles and sexual perversion and purity, while losing sight of an amazing intimate connection with another human being. I’m still trying to figure out the balance between thinking too much and not thinking enough about consent and the gravity of sexual encounters, but I’m trying.

In my favorite sexual fantasies and realities my partner is aggressive, but only acts when I demonstrate I want him to. The question of whether to have sex isn’t left to “should I get a condom?” but is proven by “what I want right now is to make love to you, what do you want?” or “sex would be really amazing right now, what do you think?” Instead of it just being the next step, my partner proves to me how meaningful our experience can and will be by showing respect for me and my body. And in those instances consent is very sexy.

*freya

Consent is Sexy! Taken from http://www.uhs.uga.edu/consent/

- Consent is a voluntary, sober, imaginative, enthusiastic, creative, wanted, informed, mutual, honest, and verbal agreement
- Consent is an active agreement: Consent cannot be coerced
- Consent is a process, which must be asked for every step of the way; if you want to move to the next level of sexual intimacy, just ask
- Consent is never implied and cannot be assumed, even in the context of a relationship. Just because you are in a relationship does not mean that you have permission to have sex with your partner
- A person who is intoxicated cannot legally give consent. If you’re too drunk to make decisions and communicate with your partner, you’re too drunk to consent
- The absence of a “no” doesn’t mean “yes”
- Both people should be involved in the decision
to have sex
- Consent is an important part of healthy sexuality
- It is not sexy to have sex without consent!!

What is sexy?
- Challenging myths about sex and consent, such as the stud vs. slut stereotype
- Communicating with your partner about sex
- To know and be able to communicate the type of sexual relationship you want
- Knowing how to protect yourself and your partner against pregnancy and STIs
- Acknowledging that you and your partner(s) have sexual needs and desires: Yes, it is okay for women and men to both want and enjoy sex
- Knowing your personal beliefs and values and respecting your partner's personal beliefs and values
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Challenging stereotypes that rape is a women's issue
- Challenging sexism

"Never assume. Ask before you proceed. A good lover is a good listener. A bad listener is at best a bad lover and at worst a rapist."

Why is consent sexy?

- Communication, respect, and honesty make sex and relationships better
- Asking for and obtaining consent shows that you have respect for both yourself and your partner
- Positive views on sex and sexuality are empowering
- Questions traditional views about gender and sexuality
- Eliminates the entitlement that one partner feels over the other. Neither your body nor your sexuality belongs to someone else
- It is normal and healthy for women to expect to be included in the consent process
- What do you think makes consent sexy?

How can you make consent sexy?
Show your partner that you respect her/him enough to ask about her/his sexual needs and desires. If you are not accustomed to communicating with your partner about sex and sexual activity the first few times may feel awkward. But, practice makes perfect. Be creative and spontaneous. Don't give up. The more times you have these conversations with your partner, the more comfortable you will become communicating about sex and sexual activity. Your partner may also find the situation
awkward at first, but over time you will both be more secure in yourselves and your relationship.
Feedback >> pomegranate@riseup.net

Downward Mobility Press
FL
improvisedaction@riseup.net