Understanding Consent and Setting Healthy Boundaries

Time Required: 1.5 hours

Learning Objectives:

- Understanding the concept of consent
- Identifying consensual and non-consensual behaviour
- Setting healthy boundaries and advocating for oneself
- Listening actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values

Notes for Educators:

In introducing a definition of consent, it is good to also contextualize by providing the concept of consent in realistic scenarios. This exercise allows the group to discuss various scenarios, including digital interaction, and then explore where we individually and collectively stand on whether specific examples of behaviour are consensual, or possibly exploitative. The exercise allows for honest reflections and dialogue around the gendered barriers and attitudes some young people might be feeling around consent during intimate interactions.

The focus of this lesson is friendships and relationships in general not specifically romantic relationships but it is important for students to understand that this extends to romantic relationships which are another type of friendship. Please remember when discussing consent and potentially intimate relationships with your students that as unmarried Catholics we are encouraging them to practice abstinence.

Materials:

- Dry erase board or chalkboard
- Paper
- Tape
- Markers
- Cut-out words (see list in the activity)

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Reflection:

Write or post the following for students to reflect on prior to the lesson. Give students about 5 minutes to jot down ideas.

The Catechism of the Catholic church tells us "The church holds the exchange of consent between the spouses to be the indispensable element that 'makes the marriage.' If consent is lacking there is no marriage." What does consent look like in your friendships?

Activity One

Watch the video *What is Consent?*.

Discuss a general definition of consent (5-10 minutes). A working definition for you to share can be:

> *Consent is a voluntary, sober, enthusiastic, creative, wanted, mutual, honest and clear agreement to engage in specific activity. Consent is active: it cannot be coerced or exploited. Consent is a process, which must be granted in the moment of each step of an interaction.*

It's important to keep in mind that consent goes beyond any sexual act and can be applied to the many ways we relate with others from posting pictures of someone else to physical gestures of affection such as hugs. Consent also extends to other aspects of friendship.

On the Dry Erase or Chalkboard, write "Asking for consent is" and "Asking for consent is NOT" on opposite sides. Have the following list of words (on pre-cut paper) in the middle, and ask students to work as a group and to SILENTLY rearrange the words until there is consensus about where each term fits.

SOBER

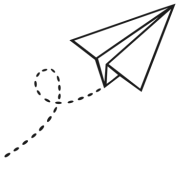
ASSUMED

DISCUSSING BELIEFS/VALUES

MUTUAL

AWKWARD

BEING SHAMED OR PRESSURED TO DO SOMETHING



NECESSARY EVEN IN 2SLGBTQ+ RELATIONSHIPS*

SHARING INTIMATE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR FRIEND WITH OTHER FRIENDS

TALKING ABOUT WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO

SAYING YES WITH HESITATION

AGREEING TO DO SOMETHING IN THE DAYS LEADING UP TO THE EVENT

GOING ON A DATE

SHARING INTIMATE PICTURES WITH ONE ANOTHER**

NEEDED

SENDING AN UNREQUESTED PERSONAL PICTURE

COOL

SLIDING INTO SOMEONE'S DM'S

AGREEING TO SEEK PRIVACY TOGETHER

INVITING SOMEONE TO COME OVER

STALKING SOMEONE AFTER FIGURING OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA WHERE THEY LIVE

DOING WHAT YOU ARE TOLD

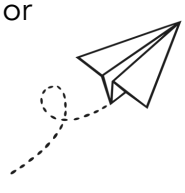
FILMING SOMEONE WITHOUT THEIR KNOWLEDGE

PRESSURING

** Please note that studies show that 2SLGBTQ+ people experience higher rates of intimate partner violence, where the sexual violence 2SLGBTQ+ people is often downplayed as 'just flirtatious' or 'not real violence'*
*** it is important for students at the grade 7-8 level to understand that taking intimate pictures of themselves and sharing them is considered child pornography and can have serious consequences including police involvement*

Afterwards, the group can debrief around the challenges they might have had placing some of the words on a side. This exercise can open up into the conversation for students around the feelings and attitudes some might have about consent and exploitation.

This exercise allows for people to engage in discussion and unpack scenarios where people might be unsure of whether a specific behaviour is harassing or exploitative, or



explore so-called 'gray areas' around language or actions. Areas to explore include both the distinct and similar pressures both men and women face in conversations within short-term, new, or even long-term committed relationships.

Some of the questions you can ask to start or facilitate the discussion following the activity can include:

- Which words were difficult to place?
- Which words were obvious?
- Does anyone want to share why they might not agree with where any words are?

Activity Two

Watch the video *Setting Healthy Boundaries* together.

Have students use a *Think-Pair-Share* strategy to think about healthy boundaries. On their own, have students make a list of situations where it might be difficult to set up boundaries. Have students share their situations with a partner and choose one scenario to share with the class and how they could set up a healthy boundary in this scenario. Pairs will present their scenarios and the rest of the class can add ideas and strategies to help maintain healthy boundaries.

Activity Three

The video *setting healthy boundaries* talks about what your values and your boundaries are. As a class brainstorm a list of values or boundaries that people might have. Examples might include "I don't drink alcohol" or "I always go to church on Sunday" or "I always tell my friends the truth."
Have students choose one personal value statement that is true for them and write about what they would say if someone tried to pressure them to violate this value.

Wrap-Up

For a final discussion, talk about the fact that as Christians, we are often encouraged to think "what would Jesus do?" before acting. What do you think Jesus would have to say about consent and pressuring people to do something they are not comfortable with?

