Understanding Consent

Time Required: 1 hour

Learning Objectives:

- Understanding the concept of consent
- Identifying consensual and non-consensual behaviour
- Encouraging safe online dating skills and awareness about sexually exploitative behaviour
- 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 sexual and romantic 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.

Please remember when discussing consent and potentially intimate relationships with your students that as unmarried Catholics we are encouraging them to practice abstinence.

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Materials:

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

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 relationships?

Activity One

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 sexual 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 intimate or physical interaction.*

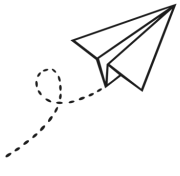
It's important to keep in mind that consent goes beyond any sexual act and can be applied to the many ways we relate with others from posting pictures of someone else to physical gestures of affection such as hugs.

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

SEXY

ASSUMED



HOT

A TURN-OFF

DISCUSSING BELIEFS/VALUES

PHONE SEX

MUTUAL

AWKWARD

BEING SHAMED OR PRESSURED TO DO SOMETHING

NECESSARY EVEN IN 2SLGBTQ+ RELATIONSHIPS*

SHARING INTIMATE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR PARTNER WITH YOUR FRIENDS

TALKING ABOUT WHAT FEELS GOOD

ABSTINENCE

SAYING YES WITH HESITATION

AGREEING TO HOOK UP IN THE DAYS LEADING UP TO THE EVENT

GOING ON A DATE

SEXTING

AGREEING TO A DRINK

SHARING PICTURES WITH ONE ANOTHER

NEEDED

ARRANGING A DATE FROM A DATING APP

SENDING AN UNREQUESTED PERSONAL PICTURE

COOL

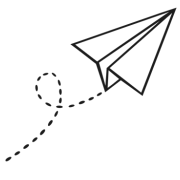
SLIDING INTO SOMEONE'S DM'S

AGREEING TO SEEK PRIVACY TOGETHER

INVITING SOMEONE TO COME OVER

INVITING SOMEONE TO YOUR BEDROOM

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'*
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:

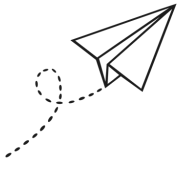
- Which words were difficult to place?
- Which words were obvious?
- Does anyone want to share why they might not agree with where any words are?

Activity Two

Ask students about the different apps that are used to meet others.

Get students to share some safety precautions they might take when dating online.

Divide the class into different groups and hand out one of the following scenarios to each group:



- *Paula met Don in a Dating App. It's been three weeks since their first conversation and he is already promising her a "better future" and "eternal love".*

- *Carla and Jim get along very well over a dating app. Jim, however, continuously makes their conversations very sexual and requests intimate pictures from Carla.*

- *Within their first conversations in a dating App, Alex promises Aiden various gifts and nights out at luxurious places.*

- *Jo and Sam started talking on a dating app. After a while, Jo reveals that they are actually 2 years older than the age listed on their profile*

- *Jordan sent private pictures to Marion over a dating app. Marion tells Jordan that they could sell those pictures for some extra cash*

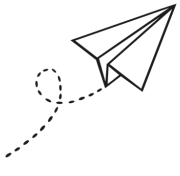
- *You meet someone online and share with them that your parents are religious. They tell you "your parents will never change" and invite you to escape with them.*

Ask each group to discuss:

- Are there any red flags in your scenario?
- Why are they red flags?
- What would be the best decision for the people involved in the scenarios?

Ask each group to read their scenario out loud and answer those three questions. Tie the conversation to child sexual exploitation and how digital spaces are increasingly used by Human Traffickers to gain trust and compliance from vulnerable youth in order to exploit them.

Close the activity by asking students about green flags in online dating. These can include:



- Respecting boundaries
- Taking things slowly
- Not using any kind of pressure or threats
- Showing interest in your friendships and family
- Non-controlling behaviour

Wrap-Up

Discuss how often unhealthy gender expectations on masculinity pressure male-identifying individuals to be sexually aggressive/dominant and disregard the importance of asking for consent.

Finish by mentioning that there is nothing wrong with online dating, yet safety precautions are very important as dating applications are widely used by Human Traffickers to groom young people.

