

# Communication and Consent

# 3

# LESSONS

## PURPOSE

Young people are more likely to communicate effectively with a sexual partner when they have identified and practiced how to express their own boundaries and respect the boundaries of others. Exploring effective ways to communicate and understanding affirmative consent helps young people navigate and maintain relationships, identify and avoid risky situations and ensure that they are meeting their needs and respecting others. Practicing effective communication skills can help young people increase their confidence and ability to apply these skills in real life situations.

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Identify a range of sexual boundaries, including their own.
2. Compare different styles of communication.
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills to stay within their sexual boundaries.
4. Define and identify affirmative consent.

## LESSON SUMMARY

Activities	Minutes	Materials and Preparation Checklist
<b>A Setting Boundaries</b>	<b>5</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Easel paper or white board and markers.
<b>B Understanding Effective Communication</b>	<b>15</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Easel paper or white board and markers. <input type="checkbox"/> Copy the <b>Assertive Statements Scenarios</b> worksheet, one for each small group.
<b>C Communicating Boundaries</b>	<b>15</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy the six <b>Communicating Boundaries Scenarios worksheet</b> and divide them up, one for each small group.
<b>D Affirmative Consent</b>	<b>20</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Easel paper or white board and markers. <input type="checkbox"/> Print <b>Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light Cards</b> . <input type="checkbox"/> Print and cut <b>Affirmative Consent Scenarios</b> on cardstock or laminate. <input type="checkbox"/> Tape for posting scenarios.
<b>E Reflection &amp; Closure</b>	<b>5</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Journal or notecards. <input type="checkbox"/> Print <b>Building Self-Awareness to Practice Affirmative Consent</b> handout for each student as further reflection in class or as homework.



## INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Say,

Today, we will talk about how to communicate and respect boundaries in relationships. We will identify different communication styles and practice how someone can communicate their limits and desires in a relationship and identify affirmative consent with a partner.



## ACTIVITY 3A: SETTING BOUNDARIES



- Review by asking students: **What do you remember from the last lesson?**

*Answers should include:*

- *Knowing our future goals.*
- *Messages that can influence someone's sexual decisionmaking.*
- *How to make abstinence work.*

Say,

Most of us have had some experience setting and communicating personal boundaries. For example, your boundary may be not wanting to lend something important to a friend because you don't want it to be lost or broken.

## BRAINSTORM

- Ask, **What are some examples of personal boundaries people may set within a friendship? Have students give suggestions. Then ask, What about boundaries someone might have in an intimate/romantic relationship? Record answers on the white board or on easel paper.**

*Use the following prompts if needed:*

- *How often or where to hang out.*
- *Choosing to not be in a relationship.*
- *Not having sex.*
- *Deciding how physically intimate to be with a partner.*
- *Hanging out in groups of friends, rather than being alone with a partner.*
- *Only having safer sex (using a condom, oral dam and/or birth control methods).*

- Say,

Every person can decide what their personal boundaries are, in friendships and in relationships. These boundaries may change over time or with different people. Communicating these boundaries can be awkward sometimes, so we're going to practice ways to communicate our boundaries with others. As far as sexual activity is concerned, everyone has the right to say no to any kind of sexual activity, even if they have said yes in the past.



## ACTIVITY 3B: UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



Say,

Setting boundaries involves communicating directly and responding to a partner with respect. We are going to look at three different communication styles that you can use to communicate your personal boundaries.

### BRAINSTORM

- Write **Assertive, Passive and Aggressive** on easel paper or on the board.
- Say, **Let's brainstorm what each of these communication styles might look like, sound like and/or feel like.** Below are some prompts.

ASSERTIVE	PASSIVE	AGGRESSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confident tone of voice</li> <li>• maintaining eye contact</li> <li>• saying what you mean and meaning what you say</li> <li>• being clear about your feelings and desires</li> <li>• making decisions together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using a soft, unsure voice</li> <li>• no eye contact</li> <li>• saying "I don't care", when you actually do care</li> <li>• always letting others choose what you're going to do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using a loud and demanding voice</li> <li>• glaring eye contact</li> <li>• demanding your own way, ignoring what others want</li> <li>• hurting or ignoring other people to get what you want</li> </ul>

- Divide students into small groups of 2-3. Pass out the **Assertive Statements Scenarios** worksheet to each group. Give the groups 5 minutes to read the scenarios and fill in the blanks with assertive responses. After giving the students 5 minutes to read and write their responses, ask them to share some of their responses.
- Debrief the activity as a whole group.

### DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Ask the following questions to debrief:

1. Was it easy to come up with assertive statements for the scenarios?
2. What are the advantages of using assertive communication?

*Possible answers:*

- Assertive communication is clear, direct and respectful.
- It allows the other person to know how you are feeling and allows you to maintain relationships while not hurting others.

---

### 3. When might it be hard to use assertive communication?

*Possible answers:*

- *When you don't want to hurt others' feelings or stand out from the rest of the group.*
- *You worry that your comments might risk the friendship/relationship.*
- *When you are afraid or not confident, it can be hard to be assertive and you may communicate more passively.*
- *When you are angry or feel unheard sometimes, you may communicate in a more aggressive way.*

## SUMMARIZE

In summarizing the activity, include the following:

The more you practice assertive communication, the easier it will get. Practicing assertive communication with friends and family can be a great way to gain confidence in your ability to set boundaries and state your feelings and needs. When you notice feelings like fear or frustration, taking time to pause and reflect before you respond may help in communicating assertively rather than in a passive or aggressive way.

When trying to communicate your boundaries, ask yourself these questions:

- Am I stating how I feel and being direct in what I want?
- Am I being honest and firm about my own boundaries?
- Am I being respectful and not defensive when someone sets a boundary with me?



## ASSERTIVE STATEMENTS SCENARIOS

**Instructions:** Read through the following scenarios, discuss in your small group and fill in the blanks using assertive communication. With the characters below, you will notice that the pronoun they is used to be inclusive of all genders.

### SCENARIO 1

At the lake a bunch of friends decide it would be fun to go skinny dipping. Most of the group quickly agrees. Mickey feels self-conscious and doesn't want to get naked, but is afraid of being teased if they don't join in. **Help Mickey respond with assertive communication.**

Mickey: "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_. I am going to swim in my shirt and shorts."

---

### SCENARIO 2

Pat and Chris go to the movies. Chris wants to sit in the back so no one can see them. Without asking if it's ok, Chris begins to kiss Pat. Pat thought they were just friends, but doesn't want to hurt Chris's feelings. Pat says "Let's just watch the movie." Chris is disappointed. **Help Chris respond to Pat after the movie with assertive communication.**

Chris: "I didn't mean to \_\_\_\_\_. I just thought

\_\_\_\_\_. I promise to check-in first next time."

---

### SCENARIO 3

Taylor goes to the basketball game with some friends. A couple of friends make crude comments to one of the cheerleaders. Taylor is uncomfortable and wants them to stop. **Help Taylor respond to their friends with assertive communication.**

Taylor: "Hey, I really feel like \_\_\_\_\_ when you

\_\_\_\_\_. I wish you would \_\_\_\_\_."

---

### SCENARIO 4

Dakota is dating Charlie. Recently Charlie has been telling Dakota not to spend so much time with other friends and is monitoring phone calls and texts. Dakota is uncomfortable with this but doesn't want to say anything because it might make Charlie mad. Dakota's friends suggest that Dakota talk to Charlie at school, so if Charlie is mad other people will be there for support. **Help Dakota respond to Charlie with assertive communication.**

Dakota: I feel really \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_. I need you to respect my privacy and time with friends."

---



## ACTIVITY 3C: COMMUNICATING BOUNDARIES



Say,

Now we're going to look at some scenarios of people communicating boundaries in relationship situations. We're going to practice ways to use assertive communication to express boundaries, and ways to communicate respect for someone else's boundaries.

- Have students form small groups of 2-4.
- There are six different **Communicating Boundaries** scenarios. Cut the scenarios into slips and hand out one to each group. Use all six, or select the scenarios that fit best with your class.
- Ask students to work together in their small groups to create a dialog that communicates and respects boundaries.
- Have the small groups work for 5 minutes to complete the lines in their scenario.
- As a large group, ask two volunteers from each group to read their scenarios.
- Reflect with the group whether the communication is assertive. Point out any examples of passive or aggressive communication.

### DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Debrief by asking the students these questions:

1. Were the scenarios and pressure lines realistic? If no, why not?
2. Was it easy or difficult to come up with assertive responses that both set and respected the characters' boundaries?
3. What can make it difficult to communicate your boundaries with a partner or a friend?

*Possible answers:*

- *You may have set boundaries for yourself, but feel pressure to participate in activities because you want to be liked or fit in.*
- *You don't want to hurt someone's feelings or make them mad or upset.*
- *When you set a boundary the other person is defensive or mopey.*

---

4. What can make it difficult to hear and respect someone else's boundaries if it's not what you wanted, or were hoping for?

Possible answers:

- *It's easy to just think about what you want.*
- *You can feel rejection if the other person doesn't want the same thing you do.*
- *You might be at a different place or have different goals in the relationship.*
- *Communication might be mixed or unclear.*

5. Why is it important for both people in a relationship to use assertive communication in situations like these?

Possible answers:

- *When your friend/partner knows and understands your boundaries, it can strengthen your relationship, as there are no mixed messages.*
- *You will be more confident and self-assured because you are clear about what you want.*
- *You will have a better understanding of what is important to the other person in the relationship.*
- *Being honest and assertive can build intimacy and trust.*

## SUMMARIZE

In summarizing the activity, include these key points:

- **It may not be easy to communicate boundaries in a relationship.**
- **It may also not be easy to understand or accept someone else's boundaries if they are different than yours.**
- **Practicing assertive communication with a partner helps you understand each other's intentions and boundaries in the relationship and can ensure that affirmative consent is present. Next we're going to talk more about the importance of affirmative consent in relationships.**



## COMMUNICATING BOUNDARIES

### SCENARIO 1: AMY AND TYLER

**Instructions:** Using **assertive** communication, fill in the blanks for Amy and Tyler so that their boundaries are communicated and respected.

Amy has talked and flirted with Tyler; who she really likes. Amy has thought about what she wants in a relationship and has decided that she'll wait to have sex until after high school. After school, Amy is invited to Tyler's house to work on a school project. Once there, she realizes that they are alone in the house. Amy and Tyler start kissing, but she feels things are moving too far and too fast.

---

**Tyler:** This feels good. Let's move this upstairs.

**Amy:** I feel like things are moving too fast.

**Tyler:**

**Amy:**

**Tyler:**

**Amy:**



## COMMUNICATING BOUNDARIES

### SCENARIO 2: ALEX AND CHRIS

**Instructions:** Using **assertive** communication, fill in the blanks for Alex and Chris so that their boundaries are communicated and respected.

Alex invites Chris over after school. They're watching TV and having something to eat. Alex's mother comes in to say she's going out to run an errand. After she leaves, Chris starts coming on to Alex. Alex has decided not to have sex until it feels right and this was not that time.

---

**Chris:** \*Starts to passionately kiss Alex.

**Alex:** I really like kissing you but I want to slow down.

**Chris:**

**Alex:**

**Chris:**

**Alex:**



## COMMUNICATING BOUNDARIES

### SCENARIO 3: DEVIN AND JESSE

**Instructions:** Using **assertive** communication, fill in the blanks for Devin and Jesse so that their boundaries are communicated and respected.

On Saturday night, Devin is at home babysitting his siblings while his boyfriend Jesse is out at a party. Jesse is messaging Devin throughout the night and sending him flirty texts. Jesse sends Devin a sexy picture and asks Devin to send him one back. Devin is uncomfortable with where the sexting is going and doesn't want to send one back.

---

**Jesse:** Wish u were here, can I see your cute 🍑?

**Devin:** Busy taking care of the kids..can't rn.

**Jesse:**

**Devin:**

**Jesse:**

**Devin:**

---



## COMMUNICATING BOUNDARIES

### SCENARIO 4: JAMIE AND JO

**Instructions:** Using **assertive** communication, fill in the blanks for Jamie and Jo so that their boundaries are communicated and respected.

A group of friends are talking after school and the conversation of sex comes up. Everyone is teasing each other about the kinds of sex they're into. Jamie is uncomfortable and quiet while everyone is joking around and sharing stories. Seeing that Jamie hasn't said anything, Jo asks:

---

**Jo:** What about you and that guy you were seeing last summer? C'mon tell us all about it!

**Jamie:** Wouldn't you like to know? Let's talk about something else.

**Jo:**

**Jamie:**

**Jo:**

**Jamie:**

**Other Friend:**



## COMMUNICATING BOUNDARIES

### SCENARIO 5: CAMERON AND DANA

**Instructions:** Using **assertive** communication, fill in the blanks for Cameron and Dana so that their boundaries are communicated and respected.

Cameron and Dana have had sex a few times. Now it seems to Cameron that Dana expects to have sex each time they get together. Cameron really wants to take a break from having sex since it seems that's what their relationship is all about. The next time Dana suggests they get together again alone, Cameron suggests something else.

---

**Dana:** Hey let's just hang out the two of us tonight.

**Cameron:** I'd really like to go to the movies with some friends instead.

**Dana:**

**Cameron:**

**Dana:**

**Cameron:**

---



## COMMUNICATING BOUNDARIES

### SCENARIO 6: CARSON AND HUNTER

**Instructions:** Using **assertive** communication, fill in the blanks for Hunter and Carson so that their boundaries are communicated and respected.

Carson and Hunter have been best friends since they were kids. Hunter recently started dating Lupe and keeps canceling plans with Carson to spend time with her. Even when they are hanging out Carson feels like Hunter is constantly on his phone distracted. Carson is feeling frustrated and angry. One day when Hunter cancels plans again, Carson decides to talk to Hunter.

---

**Hunter:** Hey, Carson, sorry I have to cancel our plans again. I promised Lupe I'd bring her to the movies and she wants to go this afternoon.

**Carson:** I am really excited for you and Lupe but you keep canceling plans with me. It bothers me that she seems to always come first.

**Hunter:**

**Carson:**

**Hunter:**

**Carson:**

**Hunter:**



## ACTIVITY 3D: AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT



### INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Say,

It's important to understand how to practice consent in a variety of situations and relationships in your life. In sexual situations, it is especially important to practice affirmative (vocal) consent. In this activity, we will practice identifying situations that are consensual, non-consensual and when it is unclear.

### FACILITATOR NOTE

This activity is adapted from the article:

[https://www.scarleteen.com/article/abuse\\_assault/drivers\\_ed\\_for\\_the\\_sexual\\_superhighway\\_navigating\\_consent](https://www.scarleteen.com/article/abuse_assault/drivers_ed_for_the_sexual_superhighway_navigating_consent).

Scarleteen.com and other youth resources can be found on the Maine Family Planning website at: <https://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators/sex-education-resources/>

### DEFINE CONSENT

- Post the following definition of affirmative consent on the board or easel paper.

<b>Affirmative Consent is Verbally Agreeing to an Activity.</b>	
<b>It is Consent that is:</b>	
<b>Freely given</b>	Consent is given without pressure, manipulation, violence or coercion.
<b>Reversible</b>	Consent can be withdrawn at any time.
<b>Informed</b>	Everyone involved is aware of risks and are aware of what they are doing.
<b>Enthusiastic</b>	Everyone involved wants to do the activities agreed upon and feels that it is a positive experience for them.
<b>Specific</b>	Everyone agrees to what is going to happen, where, when and how.

This FRIES acronym for consent is attributed to [Planned Parenthood](#).

- Next, have students brainstorm what **consent** and **non-consent** may sound like. Record their responses under two columns on easel paper or a whiteboard.
- Be sure to mention to students that no response, silence and unclear statements or expressions fit under the **non-consent** column.

Possible answers may include the following:

What can consent sound like?	What can non-consent sound like?
Yes! I'm so sure I'm excited Don't stop! Whoohoo! Yipee! More! I want to. I'm not worried. I want you/it/that Can you please do ..... I still want to That feels good Yes I love you and I love this I want to do this right now, like this I feel good about this I'm ready [insert praise to your deity of choice here]	No I'm not sure I'm scared Stop [silence] No more I want to, but... Wait, I feel worried about... I don't want you/it/that Can you please not do... I thought I wanted to, but... That hurts Maybe I love you/this, but... I want to do this, but not right now/this way I don't know how I feel about this I'm not sure I'm ready [no such praise]

Say,

**Now that we have defined affirmative consent, we are going to apply this information to some scenarios in this Red, Yellow and Green Light Activity.**

- Post the Green Light, Yellow Light and Red Light cards along one wall.
- Divide students into small groups of 2-4.
- Provide instructions: **Each group will receive a few short scenarios. Read the scenarios and decide among your group where the scenarios should be placed along the red light, yellow light, green light spectrum. When you have decided, post your cards and be prepared to explain why you placed them where you did. If you think a scenario is in the yellow light area, think about what needs to happen to move it closer to the green light.**
- Review the red light/yellow light/green light definitions with students.

- 
- Depending on the amount of time available, select the scenarios you want to use and have the students discuss and place their scenarios along the spectrum.
  - Once students post their scenarios, review the scenarios and their placement along the spectrum. Have students explain how they came up with those placements and ask other students if they agree.
  - Use the Facilitator Key for suggested talking points and as a guide for which scenarios best fit under which category. As time allows, ask for or provide examples of what could change in the scenarios under the red light or yellow light so that they would move closer to the green light.

## **DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY**

After reviewing the scenarios, ask the following questions to debrief the activity.

1. **Did your group find it easy or challenging to determine if affirmative consent was present in the scenarios?**
2. **Did you disagree on where to put any of the scenarios? If so, how did you decide where to put them?**
3. **If the scenario was yellow or red, what were your suggestions for moving the scenario toward the green light?**
4. **What types of communication were in the scenarios (assertive, passive or aggressive)? Did you find that the type of communication affected whether the scenario was consensual or not?**

## **SUMMARIZE**

Summarize the activity by saying,

- **Sometimes it is clear when you want to do something or don't want to do something. Other times you may feel uncertain about how you feel, what you want, or unsure of what your friend or partner wants.**
- **Talking may feel awkward or uncomfortable at first but through practicing assertive communication it becomes easier and increases the opportunities for each partner to feel heard, respected and excited about the relationship.**

---

# Green Light

## GO, But Keep Communicating

- *Partners reach a mutual decision about what they want to do.*
- *Partners clearly express their comfort with the situation.*
- *Partners feel comfortable and safe to stop at any time.*
- *Partners are excited!*

---

# Yellow Light

## Partners Should Pause and Talk

- *Partners are not sure what the other person wants.*
- *Partners feel like they are getting or giving mixed signals.*
- *Partners assume that they will do the same thing as before.*
- *A partner stops or is not responsive*

---

# Red Light

## Signs to Stop

- *One or both partners are too intoxicated to gauge or give consent.*
- *One partner is asleep or passed out.*
- *One or both partners hope the other will say nothing and go with the flow.*
- *A partner decides to get their way by any means necessary*

---

## AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT SCENARIOS



**Brad and Caroline** are juniors and have been dating for 4 months. They haven't talked about sex yet but they frequently make out and last week they said "I love you" to each other. Today Caroline is over at Brad's house watching a movie on Netflix. They start making out and Caroline puts her hand on Brad's knee and then starts unbuttoning his shirt. Brad doesn't say anything and looks surprised. Caroline pauses and says, "Is this okay?" Brad is confused about what Caroline wants to do and says, "I love you but I am not sure..."

**Jasmine and Isabelle** have been best friends since middle school. Last year they went to the same summer camp and began officially dating. Isabelle has told Jasmine that she is super uncomfortable with PDA but Jasmine keeps trying to hold her hand and kiss her in public. They are waiting for the bus at school and Jasmine leans over to kiss Isabelle on the cheek. When Isabelle pulls away Jasmine says, "I am sorry I forgot. I just love you so much."

**Alex and John** have been flirting in biology class all year. They always sit next to each other and make jokes trying to get the other to smile. Homecoming is coming up and Alex wants to go with John. In class, Alex asks if they can talk after class, John says "Sure." After class, they meet in the hallway. Alex asks, "Hey do you want to come to prom with me?" John smiles and replies, "Yes, I would love that." Alex is excited and leans in, and John leans in too. John smiles and asks, "Can I kiss you?" Alex smiles and whispers, "Yes."

---

## AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT SCENARIOS



**Carrie and Kevin** are seniors, have been friends forever and have been dating since junior year. They talk about everything – school, family, friends and sex. Last month they started having sex. Carrie is on birth control and they also use condoms every time to be safe. They are at a big party and both of them have been drinking a lot, Kevin grabs Carrie’s hand and they stumble into one of the bedrooms. Kevin starts to take off Carrie’s shirt. He sees she is smiling so assumes it is okay but he also notices she is slurring her words.

**Leila and Gary** have just started dating, are super into each other, and text each other constantly. Both have agreed that they are not ready for sex but have started kissing. One night during a text conversation Leila says “I loved watching your game today... you are so fit ;)” Gary responds, “Do you want to see a pic?\*kissyface emoji\*” Leila texts back, “Yes please!” Gary sends her a pic of himself standing in the mirror, lifting his shirt and flexing his abs.

**Kim and Ezra** have been in the same friend group since middle school. Every day they eat lunch together with a bunch of friends. Mostly they talk about their classes. Kim wants to apply to pre-med programs next year. Ezra is into math and thinks he may want to be an engineer. Ezra has had a crush on Kim for a while and loves how smart and driven she is. After school, Ezra asks Kim “Do you want to go out with me sometime, just you and me?” Kim replies, “I want to, but I am not sure if I am ready to date right now.”

---

## AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT SCENARIOS



**Sarah and Jesse** have been going out for several months. Their study dates always end in make out sessions and last week they talked about how they're both interested in trying oral sex. Tonight Jesse is over at Sarah's and no one else is home. Sarah asks Jesse if they brought an oral dam. Jesse says no but smiles and says they have a condom and can make one. Sarah laughs and grabs some scissors and hands them to Jesse with a kiss. Jesse asks, "Are you ready to try this?" Sarah says "Absolutely!"

**Derek** is a senior and **Emily** is a sophomore. He asked her out after they hit it off in art class. Emily is excited that Derek is into her but also feels anxious. She's never dated anyone before and he's more experienced. Emily is on birth control, but isn't sure she is ready to have sex. After school they are kissing in Derek's van, they pause for a moment and Derek whispers, "Can we keep going?" Emily is uncertain and says, "I am not sure...do you have a condom?" Derek replies, "I thought you were on birth control so we don't need it." Emily hesitates and says "I don't know how I feel about this."

**Zoe** is at the school dance with her friends. They are all out on the dance floor having fun, except Jordan keeps coming up behind Zoe trying to dance with her. Her friends see that she is uncomfortable and keep grabbing her hand to dance to get her away from him. Jordan doesn't seem to get the message that she's uncomfortable. After the third time of coming up behind her, Zoe turns around and yells "Can you stop?!" Jordan puts his hands in the air and says "Woah, what's your problem?"

---

## AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT SCENARIOS



**Fadyaa** just started high school and has started hanging out with a new group of girls, she feels especially close to Bethany and they often study together during lunch. Today at lunch, Fadyaa is super sad because she didn't do as well on a test as she thought she did. Bethany wants to comfort her but neither of them are very touchy-feely. Bethany leans in and asks, "Can I give you a hug?" Fadyaa wipes away a tear, smiles and leans in saying "Thank you, that would be nice."

**Berta and Greg** have been dating and having sex for a while. Berta is on the pill and they always use condoms. Both of them feel super safe to talk and explore new things together. Recently Berta has wanted to try oral sex, which they haven't done before. Greg is interested but worried that he is going to be bad at it. This weekend while they are out driving around Berta asks, "Do you want to try that thing we talked about tonight?" Greg says, "Yes, but I'm not sure since I've never done it before." Berta smiles and says "Me neither, but I will tell you what feels good."

**Seth and Anna** are dating and at a party together. Both of them are goofing around playing games and making each other laugh. A bunch of people decide to spend the night so they won't have to drive home. While Seth is asleep on the couch Anna's friends dare her to draw a penis on Seth's face. Anna is unsure, but they encourage her saying it will be funny and no big deal. Anna goes over and draws a penis on his cheek. Anna's friend then takes a picture of it and posts it to social media. The next day everyone is laughing at him and as they are driving home, Seth yells "Why did you do that?!"



---

**Brad and Caroline** are juniors and have been dating for 4 months. They haven't talked about sex yet but they frequently make out and last week they said "I love you" to each other. Today Caroline is over at Brad's house watching a movie on Netflix. They start making out and Caroline puts her hand on Brad's knee and then starts unbuttoning his shirt. Brad doesn't say anything and looks surprised. Caroline pauses and says, "Is this okay?" Brad is confused about what Caroline wants to do and says, "I love you but I am not sure..."

**YELLOW:** They have not talked about what they are doing. To be consensual (green light) they need to talk about what they are interested in doing and under what circumstances, then agree to what they want to do now. For example, Brad could say "Can we stop and talk for a bit? I want to make sure we are on the same page about what we want."

---

**Jasmine and Isabelle** have been best friends since middle school. Last year they went to the same summer camp and began officially dating. Isabelle has told Jasmine that she is super uncomfortable with PDA but Jasmine keeps trying to hold her hand and kiss her in public. They are waiting for the bus at school and Jasmine leans over to kiss Isabelle on the cheek. When Isabelle pulls away Jasmine says, "I am sorry I forgot. I just love you so much."

**RED:** Isabelle has stated she is uncomfortable with PDA and Jasmine repeatedly does it anyway. To move it toward consensual (the green light), they could talk about alternative ways to show affection in public that make Isabelle feel safe and Jasmine still feel close. If Jasmine continues to act in ways that make Isabelle feel uncomfortable, Isabelle could talk to a trusted adult or decide to end the romantic relationship.

---

**Alex and John** have been flirting in biology class all year. They always sit next to each other and make jokes trying to get the other to smile. Homecoming is coming up and Alex wants to go with John. In class, Alex asks if they can talk after class, John says "Sure." After class, they meet in the hallway. Alex asks, "Hey do you want to come to prom with me?" John smiles and replies, "Yes, I would love that." Alex is excited and leans in, and John leans in too. John smiles and asks, "Can I kiss you?" Alex smiles and whispers, "Yes."

**GREEN:** They have verbally agreed and are excited about prom and kissing.



**Carrie and Kevin** are seniors, have been friends forever and have been dating since junior year. They talk about everything – school, family, friends and sex. Last month they started having sex. Carrie is on birth control and they also use condoms every time to be safe. They are at a big party and both of them have been drinking a lot, Kevin grabs Carrie’s hand and they stumble into one of the bedrooms. Kevin starts to take off Carrie’s shirt. He sees she is smiling so assumes it is okay but he also notices she is slurring her words.

**RED: They are both too intoxicated to gauge or give consent. To be sure the situation is consensual (green light) Kevin could stop and say, “I want to make sure we don’t do anything we will regret. I think we might be too drunk to read each other’s signs. Let’s go back out to the party and see if there is someone sober who can drive us home.”**

**Leila and Gary** have just started dating, are super into each other, and text each other constantly. Both have agreed that they are not ready for sex but have started kissing. One night during a text conversation Leila says “I loved watching your game today... you are so fit. ;)” Gary responds, “Do you want to see a pic?\*kissyface emoji\*” Leila texts back, “Yes please!” Gary sends her a pic of himself standing in the mirror, lifting his shirt and flexing his abs.

**GREEN/YELLOW/RED: They asked and enthusiastically agreed to share a picture. A pic of a male topless would technically be legal so this could be a green light scenario. Depending on their ages and the types of pictures they share, sexting can easily move into the illegal/nonconsensual/red light zone. Legally minors can’t share photos of their breasts, butts or genitals. Even if both of them are legal adults there is still the risk of photos being shared outside of the relationship. To be in green light both partners need to be legal adults, be aware of the risks and both enthusiastically agree to share nude or sexy photos. For more resources on sexting, visit:**

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/videos/teen-voices-sexting-relationships-and-risks>  
<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/2011-sexting.html#catchanging-body>

**Kim and Ezra** have been in the same friend group since middle school. Every day they eat lunch together with a bunch of friends. Mostly they talk about their classes. Kim wants to apply to pre-med programs next year. Ezra is into math and thinks he may want to be an engineer. Ezra has had a crush on Kim for a while and loves how smart and driven she is. After school, Ezra asks Kim “Do you want to go out with me sometime, just you and me?” Kim replies, “I want to, but I am not sure if I am ready to date right now.”

**YELLOW: Kim is unsure of what she wants. They could share their feelings of how a relationship might affect their goals and make a plan to date or not date that makes them both feel respected.**



**Sarah and Jesse** have been going out for several months. Their study dates always end in make out sessions and last week they talked about how they're both interested in trying oral sex. Tonight Jesse is over at Sarah's and no one else is home. Sarah asks Jesse if they brought an oral dam. Jesse says no but smiles and says they have a condom and can make one. Sarah laughs and grabs some scissors and hands them to Jesse with a kiss. Jesse asks, "Are you ready to try this?" Sarah says "Absolutely!"

**GREEN: They have discussed what they want to do and are excited and prepared. We will be talking in a future lesson about barrier methods including oral dams and how to protect yourself against STIs.**

**Derek** is a senior and **Emily** is a sophomore. He asked her out after they hit it off in art class. Emily is excited that Derek is into her but also feels anxious. She's never dated anyone before and he's more experienced. Emily is on birth control, but isn't sure she is ready to have sex yet. After school they are kissing in Derek's van, they pause for a moment and Derek whispers, "Can we keep going?" Emily is uncertain and says, "I am not sure...do you have a condom?" Derek replies, "I thought you were on birth control so we don't need it." Emily hesitates and says, "I don't know how I feel about this."

**YELLOW: They have not talked about their boundaries or what they want to do together, and there is an experience/age difference. To be consensual (green light), Emily could share her uncertainty and desire to wait until she feels ready. Derek could ask Emily how she is feeling and say that he doesn't want to pressure her and will go at her pace.**

**Zoe** is at the school dance with her friends. They are all out on the dance floor having fun, except Jordan keeps coming up behind Zoe trying to dance with her. Her friends see that she is uncomfortable and keep grabbing her hand to dance to get her away from him. Jordan doesn't seem to get the message that she's uncomfortable. After the third time of coming up behind her, Zoe turns around and yells "Can you stop?!" Jordan puts his hands in the air and says "Whoa, what's your problem?"

**RED: There is no consent to dance together. Zoe's friends could also verbally intervene telling him to stop. If Jordan's friends are there they could also tell him that it is not okay to keep trying to dance with Zoe and to stop harassing her. To be green light, Jordan could apologize for assuming she would want to dance with him and for continuing to pressure her to dance, he could then leave her alone.**



**Fadyaa** just started high school and has started hanging out with a new group of girls, she feels especially close to Bethany and they often study together during lunch. Today at lunch, Fadyaa is super sad because she didn't do as well on a test as she thought she did. Bethany wants to comfort her but neither of them are very touchy-feely. Bethany leans in and asks, "Can I give you a hug?" Fadyaa wipes away a tear, smiles and leans in saying "Thank you, that would be nice."

**GREEN:** There is verbal and non-verbal consent given. Remember that it is important to practice consent not only in romantic or sexual relationships but also in friendships, with strangers and with family.

**Berta and Greg** have been dating and having sex for a while. Berta is on the pill and they always use condoms. Both of them feel super safe to talk and explore new things together. Recently Berta has wanted to try oral sex, which they haven't done before. Greg is interested but worried that he is going to be bad at it. This weekend while they are out driving around Berta asks, "Do you want to try that thing we talked about tonight?" Greg says, "Yes, but I'm not sure since I've never done it before." Berta smiles and says "Me neither, but I will tell you what feels good."

**YELLOW/GREEN:** Until Greg says yes without reservations it is still not consent, but if he feels comforted by what Berta says and agrees with enthusiasm then it is consensual.

**Seth and Anna** are dating and at a party together. Both of them are goofing around playing games and making each other laugh. A bunch of people decide to spend the night so they won't have to drive home. While Seth is asleep on the couch Anna's friends dare her to draw a penis on Seth's face. Anna is unsure, but they encourage her saying it will be funny and no big deal. Anna goes over and draws a penis on his cheek. Anna's friend then takes a picture of it and posts it to social media. The next day everyone is laughing at him and as they are driving home, Seth yells "What the hell? Why did you do that?!"

**RED:** There is a lot of examples of non-consent here. Anna's friends pressuring her, Anna writing on Seth's face without consent and the friend sharing the photo without his consent. To help repair the harm and allow for future consensual (green light) scenarios, Anna could tell her friends that she is upset with how they pressured her and that she wants them to respect her boundaries when she is uncomfortable. Anna could apologize to Seth and let him know she didn't mean to hurt him. The friends could apologize and take the picture down if possible.



## ACTIVITY 3E: REFLECTION & CLOSURE



### REFLECTION

- Give students a notecard or have them use a journal to reflect on their own sexual boundaries.
- Let students know their responses are private—they should not put their name on the notecard and are not expected to share their responses with anyone.
- You can also give them the handout, **Building Self-Awareness to Practice Affirmative Consent**, for further reflection or journaling.

Say,

Take a moment to privately reflect on what your boundaries are at this point in your life. Please write down your thoughts about the following questions:

1. What are your boundaries? What do you want or don't want in a sexual situation?
2. What is one thing you learned about affirmative consent?
3. What is one way you can communicate your boundaries effectively with friends or a partner?

### CLOSURE

In closing the lesson, be sure to make these key points:

- Today we talked about using assertive communication, setting and respecting boundaries and affirmative consent. These skills are useful not only in romantic or sexual relationships but with strangers, acquaintances, friends and family.
- While we discussed setting boundaries in sexual relationships, keep in mind that the majority of Maine teens have not had sex.
- By using assertive communication, you can set boundaries and respect boundaries to maintain healthy relationships with different people in your life.
- Friends and other people can also use assertive communication to intervene when they see someone crossing a boundary or being disrespectful.
- Remember affirmative consent is not just a one-time yes, but an ongoing dialogue. Affirmative consent means checking in to see what each person wants and needs to feel respected, safe and excited about what they're doing together.



## HANDOUT

## BUILDING SELF-AWARENESS TO PRACTICE AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT

In order for affirmative consent to be effective, it helps to take time to reflect and be mindful of your feelings, desires and past experiences. All relationships will have conflict – people will want different things and sometimes that can lead to conflict and big feelings. When that happens you can continue to reflect and talk so both people feel heard and respected.

It is important for everyone to feel comfortable expressing their desires and saying YES to what they want and safe saying NO to what they don't want. When you feel uncertain, it is helpful to pause and wait to make decisions. When people want different things in a relationship, it may be difficult to communicate or cause discomfort or disagreements. Taking the time to reflect, communicate honestly and listen to each other can build intimacy and trust.

**Instructions:** Read and consider the following questions. Pick a few that stand out to you to reflect and journal on more deeply.

### EXPLORING YOUR YES

- What does it feel like when I know I want to do something?
- How do I usually express my wants and desires?
- Am I ever so excited that I do something without checking in with others first?
- Am I ever afraid to say what I want? Where, when and with who am I most comfortable saying what I want?

### EXPLORING YOUR MAYBE

- What does it feel like when I am not sure if I want to do something?
- If I am unsure, how do I make a decision? Who do I talk to for help in deciding?
- Have I ever gone along with something I was unsure about and then felt bad about it later? Have I ever not done something because I was unsure and then later wished I had?

### EXPLORING YOUR NO

- What does it feel like when I know I don't want to do something?
- Is it easy for me to say no? Have I ever been afraid to say no or said yes to avoid conflict?
- Have I ever been told no and felt defensive, rejected or sad? How did I respond to being told no? Who do I talk to when I feel hurt or rejected?

