

# ERC 3: Boundaries, Consent, and Communication

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Lesson plan connections: ERC 2

Time spent on each component of this lesson depends on allotted time for varying classrooms.

All activities can be shortened or extended based on student response and teacher facilitation.

## Aim/Rationale

Students will gain a greater understanding of the importance of verbal consent and communication during intimate activities. Students will discuss the concept of asking for consent and will understand that asking for consent is the responsibility of both participants when initiating a new sexual activity. Students will discuss sexual boundaries and will understand that comfort levels vary between people.

## Trigger Warning

Sexual and gendered violence.

### Competencies:

- 1) *Reflects on ethical questions*
  - *Students will consider attitudes and behaviours that lead to the respect of one's own limitations and those of others in the expression of sexuality.*
- 2) *Engages in dialogue*
  - *Students will develop and substantiate their understanding through individual reflection and group discussion.*

# Lesson

## Materials

- Board to write on, at least five sets of cards with steps of physical intimacy written on them, projector, computer, short video on “Chu and Alex”

## Hook [10-15 min]

### Opening questions

1. What do we mean when we talk about consent in the context of sexual activity?
  - Come up with class definitions for students to record:
  - Possible definition: Consent = Permission from your partner to engage in a sexual activity with them. Write this definition on the board.
  - When sexual contact is consensual, both partners are freely agreeing to all the activities that are occurring.
2. What do we mean when we say an activity is ‘intimate’?
  - Possible definition: An intimate activity could be seen as more personal or requiring more trust/closeness.

If students have questions about laws governing consent and age, they can be accessed here: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/faq.html>  
<https://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/consent-sexual-activities>

## Development/Teaching Methods

### 1. Steps of physical intimacy [20 min]

- Divide class into groups of about five students. Provide each group a set of cards with the following activities written on them:
- Review words on the cards to ensure that students have no misconceptions.
  - Penetrative sex
  - Making out
  - Cuddling
  - Showering together
  - Holding hands in public
  - Meeting your partner’s parents
  - Oral sex
  - Peeing in front of each other
  - Talking about STIs
  - Talking about condoms
- Students will discuss the cards and rank them in order from least to most intimate. Discourage students from talking about their own level of sexual experience or that of other students, because levels of experience may vary widely between students.
- Acknowledge that there may be disagreements within groups however students should try to

come to a decision together.

- Optional: Place another set of cards in order from a perspective that is likely to be overlooked by the group, such as that of a same-sex couple who has not told anyone that they are seeing each other and is worried that people will react negatively to their relationship.
- (Possible order for a hypothetical same-sex couple: Making out, cuddling, talking about STIs, talking about condoms, oral sex, penetrative sex, showering together, peeing in front of each other, holding hands in public, meeting your partner's parents).
- Have each group read out their order and then discuss any disagreements within the group. Then share the alternate-perspective order, if you have chosen to make one.

## 2. Discussion [15 min]

Question suggestions:

- What were your orders?
- Were there any disagreements within the group?
- Why are different things more or less intimate for different people?
- Why might people place the cards in different orders?

If necessary, mention examples to stimulate discussion: A same sex or mixed-race couple, someone with an STI, someone who is a virgin, someone who enjoys sexual activities that are seen as “kinky”, someone with sweaty palms, etc.

\* Be mindful of demonising people with STIs as they are very common and people can still have great sex lives with STIs.

- What was the point of this activity?
- Ensure to drive home the point that different people have different comfort levels for different intimate activities, so it is important to talk with our sexual partners about what is intimate for them and what they feel comfortable doing.

## 3. Consent and Communication Scenario [5 min]

Read the following scenario to the class:

“Chu and Alex have had crushes on each other for ages. One day, Chu invites Alex over to hang out. They end up making out. Chu starts to unbutton Alex’s pants. Alex really likes Chu, but isn’t ready to move that fast. Not wanting to hurt Chu’s feelings, Alex tries to push Chu’s hands away, but keeps kissing, hoping to send the message that “making out is cool, but not anything more right now.” Chu thinks Alex is playing “hard-to-get” and is really turned on. Plus, Chu expects Alex to just say “no” or “stop” if something isn’t ok. So, Chu continues. The next day, Alex feels really uncomfortable with what happened.”

*Students may ask who is the boy, or may express confusion because the names in the scenario are gender-neutral names. Instructors can respond by saying that it doesn’t matter who is the boy and who is the girl, since both boys and girls can be on either side of this interaction. Furthermore, the situation could happen between two guys or girls, or in a couple where one or both members are transgender. Instructors may also choose to change the names.*

## 4. Discussion [15 min]

The purpose of the discussion is to determine what went wrong in the scenario and to brainstorm how things could have gone better. The point is not to place blame on either of the characters in the scenario.

Question suggestions:

- Do you think there was consent in this scenario? Why or why not?
- What are some reasons why a person might not feel comfortable saying “no”? (Nervous,

scared, social pressure (doesn't want to seem like a prude), wants to be liked).

- There are a lot of reasons why someone who feels uncomfortable might not be able to say no. Is there any way to get around this?
- Was there consent in this scenario? Why or why not?
- Is body language always an adequate form of communication?(It is best not to rely on a form of communication that is only sufficient some of the time)
- Whose responsibility is it to ask for consent? (It is the responsibility of both participants, especially when initiating a new sexual activity. For example, one could say, "Is this OK?" or, "Do you want me to keep going?" If the question is not posed, someone may not have the opportunity to answer "yes" or "no")
- There is never any harm in asking if what you are doing is ok with the other person, but there could be serious harm done if you assume that they are ok when they might actually be feeling uncomfortable.

## Culmination

The teacher will tie off the discussion explaining:

- Silliness and awkwardness are normal and healthy parts of sexual activity (there are faces, noises, fluids and people interacting, it can only be expected). Talking during intimate activity is important - it is a way to make sure that our partner is having a good time.
- Consent should be mutual (both partners) and continual (every time partners switch to a new activity— even if they have engaged in this activity in the past...wanting ice cream one day does not mean that you want it every day). You can also refer to the Tea Consent video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLS4-kU>
- It is the responsibility of both partners to check in ("Is this ok with you?") along the way.
- Since it can be hard for a person to speak up when they feel uncomfortable or when they're in a bad situation, it's important for a person initiating a new sexual activity to ask for consent.

## Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson:

- Students will exercise group work skills.
- Students will be able to define concepts of consent and intimacy.
- Students will understand the importance of communication, especially in establishing consent.
- Students will have been exposed to various perspectives of physical intimacy.

## Assessment ideas

- 1) For homework, students can draw a table with two columns with the headings:

Column 1: “What is risked by asking for consent?”

Column 2: “What is risked by not asking for consent?”

- 2) Students will brainstorm risks for both columns to hand in for the next class. Columns should document that the risks of not asking for consent are much more serious than the risks of asking for consent.
- 3) The teacher will informally assess student participation in group work and discussions.
- 4) Students can be asked to mark each other on their participation in their group.

*Adapted from SACOMSS Outreach, [www.sacomss.org](http://www.sacomss.org)*

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