

Development Framework

Talkin' HDSH



Contents

3	Abstract
4	Background
5	Iterations
6	Prototype Version One
15	Testing
19	Results
20	References
21	Appendix
22	Prototype Version Two
33	Questionnaire



Abstract

The Talkin' Sexual Health prototype consists of a "General Conversation Guide" and a "Consent Conversation Guide" that is related to a piece of media, in this case a movie. The information and guidance in this prototype intend to help parents have more comfortable, meaningful, and effective conversations about human development and sexual health (HDSH) with their children. This prototype takes the form of a simple PDF document as it is the content being explored and not the format or delivery. Twelve participants who reviewed the prototype and provided feedback through an online questionnaire confirmed the prototype to be useful, usable and desirable. Future work will focus on fine-tuning the content and developing an app that also delivers a delightful user experience.

Background

Purpose

The purpose of the Talkin' Sexual Health prototype was to obtain user feedback on both the general conversation guide and media specific conversation guide. Feedback was sought to determine the helpfulness of these guides, if they were easy to follow, and if they would contribute to more meaningful conversations. Feedback was also sought to understand what the right amount of information and guidance is versus what is too little or too much. This feedback is crucial for developing future iterations, especially in regard to the personal reflection section and media related conversation guide which both require further research, understanding and iteration.

User/Communication Objectives

The user objective of the Talkin' Sexual Health prototype is to be well prepared and equipped to have an effective, meaningful, and comfortable conversation about consent with one's child. Over time this should contribute to increasing the parent's approachability and ultimately contribute to fostering healthy attitudes and behaviour around sex and relationships in the child.

Models

The Talkin' Sexual Health prototype allowed for evaluative research to be conducted. The prototype was presented to participants to determine if it is useful, usable and desirable. After reading through the prototype, participants completed a questionnaire which gathered quantitative and

qualitative data. Future testing will involve parents using the prototype to conduct a sexual health conversation with their child followed by a questionnaire to report back on the experience. This will help to understand the true effectiveness of the prototype rather than its desirability and perceived effectiveness. Future research will involve parallel prototyping individual sections of the Talkin' Sexual Health prototype, such as the personal reflection and media related conversation guide.

Current Perceptions

Parents tend to overestimate their knowledge and abilities when it comes to educating their children about human development and sexual health, although they remain well aware of their discomfort in doing so. This prototype tackles both those issues by first providing parents with an easier way into these conversations and then the guidance and information to ensure the conversations are effective and meaningful.

Desired Reaction

The Talkin' Sexual Health prototype intends to prepare users for a meaningful conversation about consent with their child. Parents should feel adequately informed and confident that they can have a conversation with their child that contributes to building the child's understanding of consent and how it relates to their personal life and wellbeing.

Iterations

Talkin' Sexual Health is one large prototype, made up of seven unique and important components, and the goal was to evaluate the usefulness of each of them. The "General Conversation Guidance" was informed heavily by primary research, but is supported by secondary research as well. This guide contains three main sections:

- Starting the Conversation,
- During the Conversation, and
- Conversation Goals.

The information presented in these sections can apply to any conversation about HDSH for children of any age. The decision to keep this information separate from the media was to avoid redundancy and lengthy content. Tips from this guide are sprinkled throughout the media specific guide to draw connection and serve as a reminder.

The second half of the prototype is the media specific conversation guide for a child age 12-15 and contains four main sections:

- About the Media Piece
- What You Should Know
- Planning Ahead, and
- The Conversation.

The media of choice was a Netflix teen romance called *Sierra Burgess is a Loser*. This movie certainly brings up some questions around consent and is directed at the pre-teen and teen audience. The guide begins with a description of the movie with a focus on its relevancy to the topic of consent. The next section titled "What You Should Know" provides an overview of consent and sexual consent

which has been adapted from Alberta Health Services. Next, the "Planning Ahead" section asks parents to reflect on their own experiences and values around consent. By understanding their own stance and reflecting on how they might demonstrate their values, they themselves can come to the conversation with more to offer. This section also provides ideas for finding the ideal moment for starting the conversation. The final section titled "The Conversation" provides parents with direct talking points to help guide the conversation. These talking points are organized into three categories: understanding consent, making healthy choices, and connection to own life. These categories are based loosely on the structure of the 2015 Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum. This is intended to support conversations that educate the child in a way that is applicable to them, which translates into real growth and learning. This section provides an excellent jumping off point for future in-depth exploration and prototyping.

The Talkin' Sexual Health prototype can be found on the following pages in its entirety. A second version of the prototype was created with only an adjustment to the "What You Should Know Section". This section of version two offers a much more detailed explanation of consent, which provides examples as well as legal information. This version was created to help gauge what the right amount of information is for this context. Prototype version two can be found in the appendix.

Talkin' Sexual Health



Please take a look through this app concept intended to help parents talk to their children about sexual health and provide your feedback at: <https://goo.gl/forms/EsRRrNPCw9JEle7Rz>

General Conversation Guidance



PREPARE FOR IT

Be adequately and accurately informed on the topic. Reflect on your values, beliefs and experiences before engaging in the conversation.

Don't worry, this app makes it easy!

STARTING THE CONVERSATION



1-1 NOT 2-1

Look for one-to-one opportunities for a private conversation. The two parents to one child dynamic is often uncomfortable and intimidating for the child.



MOOD MATTERS

Look for moments when your child is relaxed and undistracted. No one wants to engage when they're tired or grumpy.



NORMALIZE IT

Don't preface it as a special conversation, bring it up just as you would the weather.



MAKE IT RELEVANT

Use the material provided in this app to make it a little easier on both of you.

DURING THE CONVERSATION



BE EQUAL

You are equals learning from one another and sharing your opinions and experiences. You're helping your child build their understanding and their own values, but you're not providing a lecture and your child is not a student.



BE VULNERABLE

Asking your child what they know can be a helpful starting point, but it won't get you very far. Be first to say the difficult things to encourage your child to follow suit. Sharing your knowledge and feelings gives them space to share theirs too.



BE DIRECT

Use simple and correct terminology and work through the discomfort together. Being vague and indirect can be confusing and does not foster openness. It's okay if it feels funny, just don't let it stop you from communicating clearly.



BE AWARE

Take note of your child's emotional state. It's okay if your child is a little embarrassed by the conversation, children are still engaged at that point. If you notice your child is very uncomfortable or disgusted, it's a good idea to take a breath, address it and navigate back to neutral territory.



Amused



Neutral



Embarrassed



Uncomfortable



Disgusted

CONVERSATION GOALS

1

Increase your child's understanding of the sexual health concepts.

2

Increase your child's understanding of their ability to make healthy choices.

3

Increase your child's understanding of the connection these choices have to their own life.

4

Increase your approachability so your child always knows that they can come to you.



The following is an example of a conversation guide designed in response to a specific piece of media that is related to consent.

A movie to prompt a conversation about consent

This discussion guide is intended for a conversation with a child age 12-15



ABOUT THE MOVIE

Sierra Burgess is a Loser is a Netflix teen romance that crosses some boundaries when it comes to consent. The movie is centered around Sierra catfishing the well-meaning cute guy Jamey, by pretending to be the hot cheerleader Ronnie, via iPhone. While Jamey thinks his romantic advances are being received by Ronnie, it is secretly Sierra on the other end. This eventually amounts to the well-orchestrated moment in which Jamey thinks he's kissing Ronnie, but it's Sierra once again. Despite all the deceit, this movie has a happy ending and offers a great platform for a discussion around consent.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

CONSENT

Simply put, consent is permission for something to happen or an agreement to do something. Consent needs respect and communication. Consent is an important concept for children to learn about from an early age. It can lead to better relationships with family, friends, peers and, eventually romantic partners. Consent includes knowing and respecting a person's own boundaries as well as the boundaries of others. Understanding consent means that a person has the skills to leave a situation that doesn't feel comfortable, and respects when other people want to do the same.

SEXUAL CONSENT

Sexual activity includes kissing, sexual touching and sexual intercourse (oral, anal, and vaginal). Sexual consent means both partners agree to the sexual activity and understand what they're agreeing to. Consent is the basis or foundation of sexual relationships. Consent must be given for every sexual activity, every time. Sexual consent is about a person's right to make their own choice about sexual activity.

Consent is freely given.

Agreeing to do something is consent only if it's voluntary. If a person feels forced or bullied, or there's something to lose by saying "no" (e.g., safety or a relationship), it's not consent.

Consent can be taken away at any time.

At any point, someone can change their mind and withdraw consent. Consent given before doesn't apply to any activities that happen later.

Communication that's not clear or is confusing isn't consent.

If there's any uncertainty that someone is agreeing to do something, the person starting the activity must ask permission, then wait until permission is clearly given before starting anything.

PLANNING AHEAD

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take some time to reflect on your personal experiences and values around consent. Consider how you demonstrate these values in your daily life. This awareness will help you to lead the conversation to greater depth and engagement. Remember, vulnerability fosters vulnerability.

Reflect on your values around touch and personal space.

- What language do you use?
- How do you communicate your boundaries?
- How do you ask for permission?

Reflect on your values around sexuality and consent.

- What language do you use?
- How do you communicate your boundaries?
- How do you ask for permission?

Reflect on your understanding/experiences of sexual consent, coercion, pressure, harassment, manipulation and sexual assault.

- Do you have experiences you are willing to share?
- Do you have emotions you experienced that you are willing to tell your child about?

IDEAL MOMENTS FOR THE CONVERSATION

Remember, it should always be private, one-on-one, and when your child is in a good mood. If those requirements align with any of the following situations, that is the perfect opportunity for starting the conversation.

- While looking for a movie to watch together
- When your child has Netflix open or mentions Netflix
- When your child is talking about another movie
- While driving to the movie theatre

THE CONVERSATION

The goal of this conversation is to help your child to understand consent, understand that they have the ability to make choices and how those choices connect to their life. The following prompts will help you to achieve that while also increasing your approachability. Remember to be equal, vulnerable, direct, and aware!

UNDERSTANDING CONSENT

- Use the movie to spur conversation about consent.
- Talk about how you would feel if you were that boy in the movie kissing someone other than who you thought you were kissing and ask your child for their opinion.
- Talk about how reality differs from the movie.
- Talk about your values around sexuality and consent.
- Talk about personal boundaries.
- Use scenarios to provide examples of consent and non-consent (Barbie dolls can be helpful for this).
- Show the Ted Talk by Al Vernacchio who offers a new metaphor for sex (pizza):
https://www.ted.com/talks/al_vernacchio_sex_needs_a_new_metaphor_here_s_one

MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES

- Tell your child that they have a voice and you'll listen to them.
- Have your child think about situations where they might have to be clear about personal boundaries.
- Talk about how your child's gender might shape their experiences.
- Talk about sexual consent, coercion, pressure, harassment, manipulation and sexual assault.

CONNECTION TO OWN LIFE

- Talk about the legal, social and emotional consequences of sexual assault.
- Talk about how having personal boundaries and respecting other's boundaries can lead to better relationships.

Testing

The Talkin' Sexual Health prototype was electronically sent to individuals ranging in gender, age, race and socioeconomic status and both parents (75%) and non-parents (25%) participated. The individuals who reviewed the prototype were prompted to complete a questionnaire asking a series of questions about helpfulness, usability, whether or not they would use the app and more. Since there were two versions of the prototype, each participant only reviewed and provided feedback on one of the versions. In total, seven participants reviewed version one which has less factual information about consent and five participants reviewed version two which has a more detailed explanation of consent. According to survey results, this small variation had insignificant impact on participant feedback and in general does not alter the intent of the guide. Because of this, the results have been analyzed as a complete dataset with version one and version two results combined and only as two separate datasets where indicated.

Participants found both the “General Conversation Guidance” and the “Consent Conversation Guide” to be quite helpful overall, although the general guide is found to be slightly more helpful as shown in figure 1.

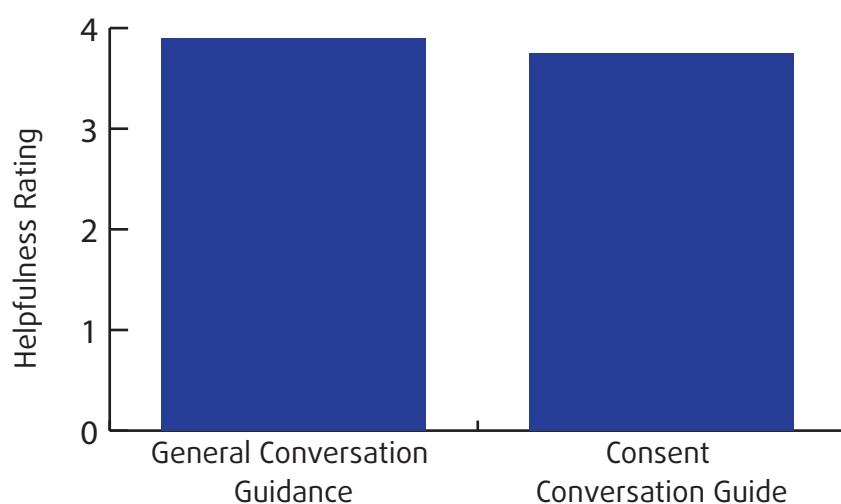


Figure 1. Average of participants' reports of perceived helpfulness of the two conversation guides overall, where 1 is “not helpful” and 4 is “very helpful.”

This is interesting because the guidance in the general guide is more abstract and less actionable than the consent guide, but also because when analyzing the helpfulness ratings of the sections that make up these two guides, the opposite is true. Participants actually rated the consent guide slightly higher for helpfulness when averaging their responses by sections. The helpfulness ratings by section is shown in figure 2.

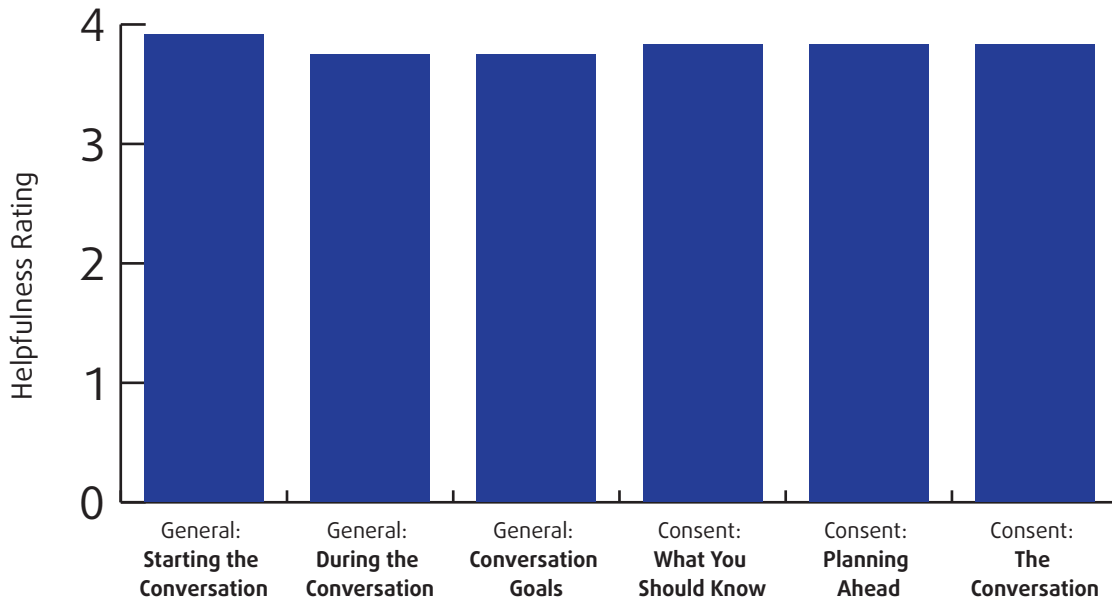
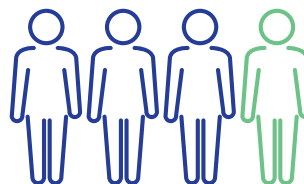


Figure 2. Average of participants' reports of perceived helpfulness of each section of the prototype, where 1 is "not helpful" and 4 is "very helpful."

All participants felt they were provided with the right amount of guidance to have a meaningful conversation about consent and 92% felt they were provided with the right amount of information. One individual felt there was too much information for "simple minded people" like himself and this was in response to prototype version one which has less information than version two. Of the participants, 74% reported that they could see themselves using a tool like this and the remaining participants said they would maybe use a tool like this.

100%
say it's the right
amount of guidance

92%
say it's the right
amount of info



3 out of 4 say they
would use a tool
like this, and 1 out
of 4 say maybe!

In comparing the "Consent Conversation Guide" of prototype version one and version two there is little variance in terms of perceived helpfulness. Version two, which has more information in the "What You Should Know" section only slightly out performed version one as shown in figure 3. This indicates that more information is not necessarily perceived to be better and when presented with information, people are content with what is provided. Although, participants who received more consent information in the "What You Should Know" section, rated the subsequent sections higher for helpfulness.

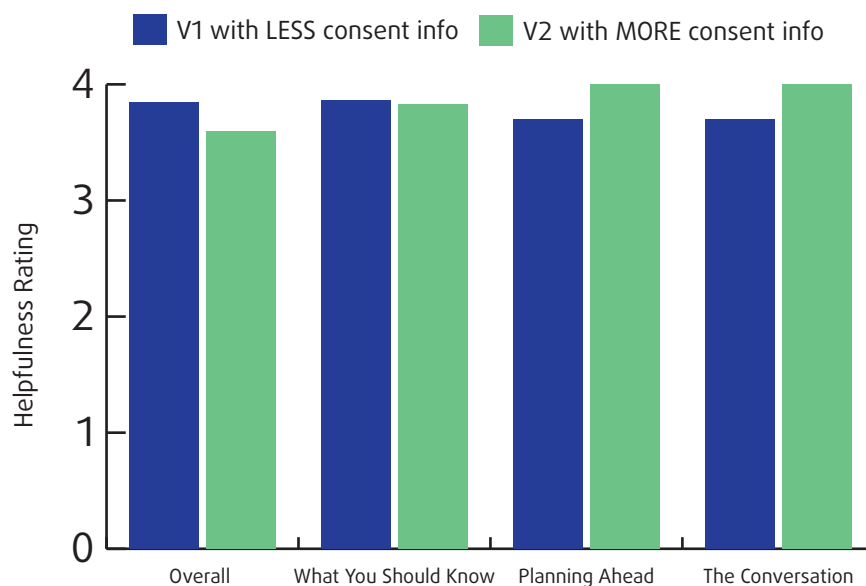


Figure 3. Average of participants' reports of perceived helpfulness of the "Consent Conversation Guide" of version one and two, where 1 is "not helpful" and 4 is "very helpful."

Of the participants who reviewed the prototype, 67% are parents and 33% are not. Out of interest, their questionnaire results were compared. Interestingly, parents found the "Consent Conversation Guide" slightly more helpful than the "General Conversation Guidance," whereas non-parents reported the opposite as shown in figure 4. Overall, parents found the guide slightly easier to use than non-parents as shown in figure 5.

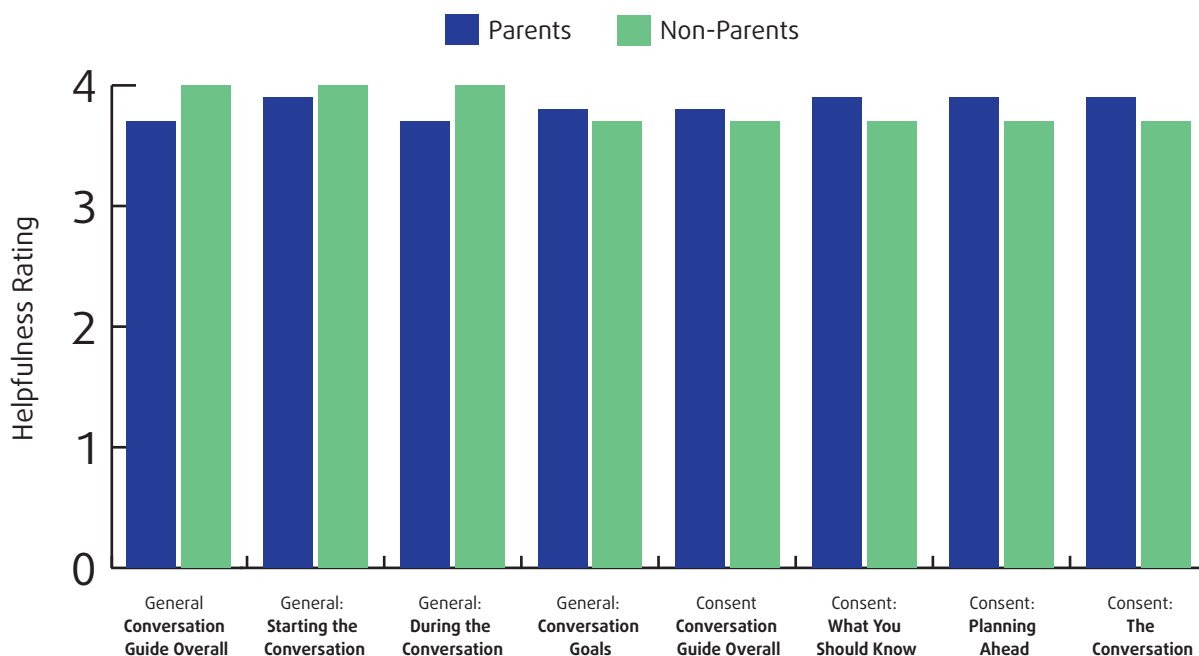


Figure 4. Average of parents' and non-parents' reports of perceived helpfulness of each section of the prototype, where 1 is "not helpful" and 4 is "very helpful."

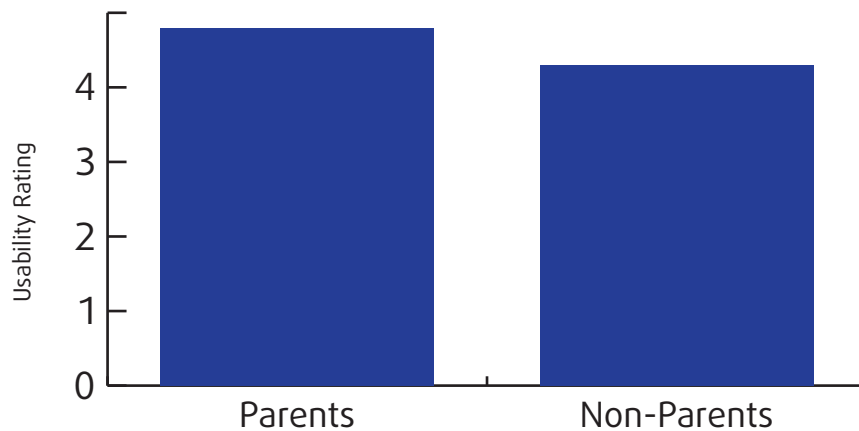


Figure 5. Average of parents' and non-parents' reports of perceived usability of the prototype, where 1 is "very difficult to follow" and 5 is "very easy to follow."

Overall the prototype received extremely positive feedback, which reinforces the structure and content of the concept. Participants expressed their enthusiasm in comments like, "This app is fantastic. Would have been great to have this tool when my children were growing up!" Another participant said, "It's great for those that don't know where to start. I am a father of 2 girls. Knowing that there is an app to help me is amazing!!" A few participants commented specifically on the information and guidance, "Found content very useful and strategies for timing on engagement helpful" and "Very easy to follow and plenty of information to make it easier for a parent to discuss this topic."

One participant had more constructive feedback about the "Consent Conversation Guide." For the personal reflection section, she suggested incorporating questions about personal biases and beliefs that might impact the conversation. This participant also suggested balancing "talk about" statements with "ask about" statements to emphasize the two-sided nature of the conversation. These suggestions will be taken forward into future prototyping that will explore the actual effectiveness of the concept rather than only the perceived effectiveness.

Results

This prototype has strongly indicated proof of concept in terms of structure and content. Combining pieces of media with relevant HDSH information and conversation guidance is perceived to be useful, usable and desirable to parents and potential future-parents alike. Subsequent prototyping will focus on fine-tuning the content and exploring aesthetics and user experience in order to develop an effective product.



References

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Appendix

Talkin' Sexual Health



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General Conversation Guidance



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BE VULNERABLE

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BE DIRECT

Use simple and correct terminology and work through the discomfort together. Being vague and indirect can be confusing and does not foster openness. It's okay if it feels funny, just don't let it stop you from communicating clearly.



BE AWARE

Take note of your child's emotional state. It's okay if your child is a little embarrassed by the conversation, children are still engaged at that point. If you notice your child is very uncomfortable or disgusted, it's a good idea to take a breath, address it and navigate back to neutral territory.



Amused



Neutral



Embarrassed



Uncomfortable



Disgusted

CONVERSATION GOALS

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2

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3

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

CONSENT

Simply put, consent is permission for something to happen or an agreement to do something. Consent needs respect and communication. Consent is an important concept for children to learn about from an early age. It can lead to better relationships with family, friends, peers and, eventually romantic partners. Consent includes knowing and respecting a person's own boundaries as well as the boundaries of others. Understanding consent means that a person has the skills to leave a situation that doesn't feel comfortable, and respects when other people want to do the same.

SEXUAL CONSENT

Sexual activity includes kissing, sexual touching and sexual intercourse (oral, anal, and vaginal). Sexual consent means both partners agree to the sexual activity and understand what they're agreeing to. Consent is the basis or foundation of sexual relationships. Consent must be given for every sexual activity, every time. Sexual consent is about a person's right to make their own choice about sexual activity.

Consent is freely given. Agreeing to do something is consent only if it's voluntary. If a person feels forced or bullied, or there's something to lose by saying "no" (e.g., safety or a relationship), it's not consent.

- Both partners agree to consent and both have a clear understanding of what they're agreeing to. A consent conversation includes asking, answering and negotiating.
- Consent is positive and enthusiastic. When someone's consenting, they agree wholeheartedly and are confident in their decision to consent. Body language and verbal language should both give the same positive message.
- Both people feel safe and comfortable. Safety and comfort (with themselves, their body, their partner and the situation) creates an environment where each person can freely take part in the consent conversation.
- For consent to happen, a person needs to have the chance to say "no".

- Consent is ongoing. One person asks permission for an activity and another person gives it. This conversation continues as the activity continues or changes. The person who starts the sexual contact or who wants to move to the next level of intimacy is the one who must ask for and clearly get consent before continuing with the sexual contact.

Consent can be taken away at any time. At any point, someone can change their mind and withdraw consent. Consent given before doesn't apply to any activities that happen later.

- You can't assume consent because people are in a relationship. You can't assume consent just because it was given for the same activity before. Permission must be asked for and given each time an activity begins, changes, or continues.
- Consent can't be assumed or implied. Flirting, clothing, sexual texts or social media communication is not consent.

Communication that's not clear or is confusing isn't consent. If there's any uncertainty that someone is agreeing to do something, the person starting the activity must ask permission, then wait until permission is clearly given before starting anything.

- 'No' always means 'no', whether given verbally or non-verbally: A 'yes' that's not positive or freely given is also a 'no'.
- A 'yes' is not consent if someone feels pressured, forced, threatened, guilty, blackmailed, intimidated, bullied or harassed.
- Silence, not answering, or not resisting physically is not consent.
- People who are drunk, high, sleeping or unconscious can't give consent, either legally or practically. To have clear communication about consent, both people should be sober and alert.

Check out this Ted Talk by Al Vernacchio who offers a new metaphor for sex. This may help you talk about consent, or you may want your child to watch it too. Access it here:

https://www.ted.com/talks/al_vernacchio_sex_needs_a_new_metaphor_here_s_one

CONSENT AND THE LAW

In Canada, the age of consent is the legal age when a person can make a decision to have sexual intercourse. The law states that a 16 year old can consent to sex, except if the:

- other person is in a position of authority (e.g., teacher, coach, or employer).
- sexual activity will take advantage of the person (e.g., pornography, prostitution, or trading sex for safety).

There are 'close in age' exceptions to this law:

- 14 and 15 year olds may consent to sex if the partner is less than 5 years older.
- 12 and 13 year olds may consent to sex if the partner is less than 2 years older.
- Children younger than 12 cannot consent to any type of sexual activity. Having sex with a child younger than 12 is against the law and is sexual abuse.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Sex without consent is sexual assault.
- Sexual assault can happen to anyone of any age and gender. Anyone of any age and gender can commit assault.
- The person who did not get consent (the perpetrator) is fully responsible for sexual assault. Prevention messages are aimed only at possible perpetrators with the goal of preventing them from assaulting people.
- The term 'survivor' usually refers to a person who's been sexually assaulted. If the person identifies as 'victim', one would use that same language. The word 'victim' is often used by police or in a legal sense.
- The term 'perpetrator' is used for someone who commits an assault but may not have been legally punished for that crime.
- Prevention messages about how to prevent being sexually assaulted are no longer acceptable. They didn't reduce sexual assaults. Instead, they made the person who was assaulted feel more shame, made them less likely to use support services, and gave perpetrators excuses.
- Sexual assault is the legal term in Canada. If a survivor uses the term 'rape', a person would use the same language with them.

PLANNING AHEAD

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take some time to reflect on your personal experiences and values around consent. Consider how you demonstrate these values in your daily life. This awareness will help you to lead the conversation to greater depth and engagement. Remember, vulnerability fosters vulnerability.

Reflect on your values around touch and personal space.

- What language do you use?
- How do you communicate your boundaries?
- How do you ask for permission?

Reflect on your values around sexuality and consent.

- What language do you use?
- How do you communicate your boundaries?
- How do you ask for permission?

Reflect on your understanding/experiences of sexual consent, coercion, pressure, harassment, manipulation and sexual assault.

- Do you have experiences you are willing to share?
- Do you have emotions you experienced that you are willing to tell your child about?

IDEAL MOMENTS FOR THE CONVERSATION

Remember, it should always be private, one-on-one, and when your child is in a good mood. If those requirements align with any of the following situations, that is the perfect opportunity for starting the conversation.

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- Use the movie to spur conversation about consent.
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- Talk about how reality differs from the movie.
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- Show the Ted Talk by Al Vernacchio who offers a new metaphor for sex:
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MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES

- Tell your child that they have a voice and you'll listen to them.
- Have your child think about situations where they might have to be clear about personal boundaries.
- Talk about how your child's gender might shape their experiences.
- Talk about sexual consent, coercion, pressure, harassment, manipulation and sexual assault.

CONNECTION TO OWN LIFE

- Talk about the legal, social and emotional consequences of sexual assault.
- Talk about how having personal boundaries and respecting other's boundaries can lead to better relationships.