

## DECODING MEDIA MESSAGES ABOUT CONSENT

### Using Consent Videos to Increase Media Literacy

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Define consent.
2. Identify ways that consent is not accurately portrayed in the media.
3. Identify strategies for talking with others about consent

#### **Audience**

Late high school or college-aged youth (ages 17-22)

#### **Time**

1 hour

#### **Rationale**

Young people consume media in a variety of ways: watching TV shows on a tablet, viewing YouTube videos on a smart phone, watching music videos posted by a friend in their Facebook feed, going to big-screen movies, and more.

Sexual situations are very common in media viewed by young people and consensual sexual activity is rarely negotiated on screen. Media literacy allows young people to think critically about what they see in the media and identify ways that they may want to behave differently. The videos modeling consent in this lesson plan offer new and compelling ways to show teens what healthy and respectful communication look like and compare it to common portrayals of sexual activity in the media. It applies this critical thinking of media representation to a bystander approach – providing skills for participants to call out unhealthy or vague portrayals of sex and communication with friends and family to spark conversations about consent.

#### **Materials**

- Flip chart paper or board, markers, tape
- One flip chart paper with the following pre-written on it:
  - What did your scenes have in common?
  - How many of the scenes' sexual contact was consensual?
  - How did you know there was consent?
- One flip chart paper with the following pre-written on it:

Consent is...

  - ✓ Clear
  - ✓ Freely given
  - ✓ Informed
  - ✓ Changeable at any time during sexual activity
  - ✓ Enthusiastic
  - ✓ Sober

- A computer with Internet access, projector, and speakers to show the videos:
  - Playlist of all 4 videos: <http://p.ppfa.org/Consent101>
- Educator Resource: Intention Setting Sheets
- Extra pens or pencils for participants to fill out handouts.

### **Introduction (2 minutes)**

- Tell the group that today's lesson is about comparing what we see in the media with how healthy, consensual sexual activity takes place. We get a lot of messages about sex and relationships from the media, and the interactions we see in the media don't always show healthy communication or relationships.

### **Describing Sexual Situations in the Media (15 min)**

1. Give each participant an index card or slip of paper. Write on the board or flip chart the following questions and ask each participant to write down their answers:
  - a. What was the last TV show or movie you watched that had a sexual situation?
  - b. What happened?
  - c. Do you think the sexual contact was wanted by both people?
  - d. How could you tell?
2. After 2 minutes, put participants in small groups of 3-4 people each. Tell them to spend the next 5 minutes comparing the scenes they all picked. Refer to your board or flip chart paper pre-written with discussion questions to guide their conversations.
3. Ask for volunteers to share what their groups talked about. Then ask the following discussion questions:
  - a. How realistic are the scenes you talked about in your groups?
  - b. What signals, if any, did you talk about as signaling consent?
  - c. What happened, or didn't happen, in the scenes that made you unsure if there was consent?
  - d. How do people you know learn how to ask for, or consent to, sex?  
(*Note: Probe for things like TV, movies, sex education, pornography, etc.*)
4. End by stating that a lot of models for consent aren't very good. Often we don't have any models for how to respectfully ask if someone wants to have sex, or how to tell someone what we do or don't want to do sexually.

### **Understanding Consent (10 minutes)**

1. Let the group know that now we're going to make sure we all have the same understanding of what consent is. Show "How do you know if someone wants to have sex with you?" video at this link: <http://p.ppfa.org/ConsentIntro>, or via the playlist.

Show flip chart/white board with the following pre-written on it:

Consent is...

- ✓ Clear
- ✓ Freely given
- ✓ Informed
- ✓ Changeable at any time during sexual activity
- ✓ Enthusiastic

2. Ask the group which of these elements were in any of the scenes discussed in small groups. Note that many of them were completely absent from the scenes discussed.

### **Enthusiastic Yes Comparison (7 minutes)**

1. Tell the group that now we're going to watch a video that shows what a clear, enthusiastic, "Yes!" looks like.
2. Show "When you know they're into it" video at this link: <http://p.ppfa.org/ConsentYes> or via the playlist.
3. Discussion questions:
  - a. What are some phrases people used to ask if the other person wanted to do something sexual?  
*Make sure at least two examples are given from the video.*
  - b. What signals were given that made it clear that the other person was also interested?  
*Make sure at least two examples are given from the video.*
  - c. What is different in this video compared to what you normally see in media?

### **Definitive No (7 minutes)**

1. Tell the group that now we're going to watch a video that shows what a clear "No" looks like.
2. Show "When you know they're into it" video at this link: <http://p.ppfa.org/NotConsent> or via the playlist.
3. Discussion questions:
  - a. What are some phrases people used to ask if the other person wanted to do something sexual?  
*Make sure at least one example is given from each video.*
  - b. What signals were given that made it clear to you that the other person was not interested?  
*Make sure at least one example is given from each video.*

- c. What was the “asker’s” reaction when they got a “no”?  
*Make sure at least one example is given from each video.*
- d. What is different in this video compared to what you normally see in media?

### **Unclear Messages (7 minutes)**

1. Tell the group that now we’re going to watch a video that shows what you can do when you’re not sure if you have consent.
2. Show “When they’re kinda into it” video at this link: <http://p.ppfa.org/ConsentMaybe> or via the playlist.
3. Discussion questions:
  - a. What are some phrases people used to ask if the other person wanted to do something sexual?  
*Make sure at least one example is given from each video.*
  - b. What signals were given that made it clear to you that the other person was not completely comfortable?  
*Make sure at least one example is given from each video.*
  - c. What was the “asker’s” reaction to find out for sure what their partner needed?  
*Make sure at least one example is given from each video.*
  - d. What is different in this video compared to what you normally see in media?
  - e. How do you think the media you usually see influences what people do in real life?
  - f. How might you or your peers act differently if media looked more like all of the videos we watched today?

### **Conversation Intention Setting (10 minutes)**

1. Ask the group for suggestions on how they can counteract the absent or harmful messages the media sends us about consent and sex.
2. If not mentioned, let the group know that one way they can counteract harmful messages in the media is to talk about it with their friends and family. Next time they see a scene where consent could have been shown but wasn’t, they could say something to the people they’re with.

3. Tell participants to pair up with the person next to them, and practice what they could say to call out the bad behavior modeled in the media they're watching. Give pairs 3 minutes to do this.
4. Bring the group back and ask for examples of what they came up with.
5. Pass out the **Educator Resource: Intention Setting Sheets** to participants. Tell them to use suggestions they just heard, and/or add some of their own ideas to fill out the sheet on their own. This is for them to take home and keep.

### **Summary and Conclusion (2 minutes)**

Thank the participants for their efforts and emphasize the following key messages:

- The media often doesn't show people getting or giving consent before sexual situations, which makes it hard to have good models for how to ask for and give consent.
- We get a lot of messages about sex and relationships from the media, so if consent is rarely discussed or shown, a lot of people won't know how to talk about consent.
- There are lots of ways to talk about consent and be clear about what you both want.
- You can have a big impact on your friends and family by talking about how consent is (and isn't) portrayed in TV and movies.
- Asking questions or commenting on how unrealistic or unclear scenes are is a great way to get your friends and family thinking and talking about consent too.

## Intention Setting Sheets

Copy and cut this page into cards. Each participant will get a card. You may need to make multiple copies if you are working with a larger group.

<p>Next time I see a TV show or movie with someone that could have shown better communication of consent, <b>I plan to say something.</b></p> <p>I can say something like:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Next time I see a TV show or movie with someone that could have shown better communication of consent, <b>I plan to say something.</b></p> <p>I can say something like:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Educator Resource