

SPILT MILK

THE IMPROV TOOL FOR HANDLING BIG FEELINGS!



Lesson Six: Consent



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What is consent?

Consent is the agreement to do something.

And by “agreement,” we mean that everyone involved - anyone who would participate - has to say “yes!” If someone does not want to do something, they should never be made to do it (unless it’s those few unavoidable things, like going to the doctor or dentist, doing your work, or talking to the police if they have questions). That’s why consent is so important - it keeps us and others safe from being made to do something!

We should never, ever do something we haven’t consented to! We have the right to say “no” to anything we don’t want to do (although there are some things we do have to do, even if we don’t want to, like going to the doctor or dentist, or attending school or work). For everything else, we are allowed to honor our values and boundaries (and avoid consequences!) by not consenting.

And others are allowed the same thing! We should never try to make someone do something they don’t want to do. It is not nice, it is not fair, and it could get us into trouble if we try!

We want to make sure that we have gone through our decision-making process before we consent to doing anything that feels big or scary or we’re not sure we want to do. We ask ourselves:

Does this align with my **values**?

Does this violate my **boundaries**?

What are possible **consequences**?

This VBC process will help you decide if you want to consent to an activity!

(You can back and review Lesson 5 for a refresher!)

So, let’s learn all about consent with Spilt Milk.

In this lesson, we’ll learn about how to improv a proper “yes” or “no!”

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So, does someone have to say the word “yes” for it to be consent?

Well, we know that not all communication requires words (remember “non-verbal communication?”), but there are some rules to what makes your “yes” consent.

Consent is:

Expressed - there is a clear “yes,” even if it’s not communicated with that word (or any words!). It can be a “sure!” or a “great!” or an “okey-dokey!” It can be a big smile with a thumbs-up or an excited nod or simply jumping up to run and do whatever it is you are consenting to do! But it always has to be clear.

Freely Given - no one coerced - or convinced - us to agree! That includes using threats (“If you don’t do it, I’ll find someone else to be my best friend!”), guilt (“If you loved me, you’d jump off a cliff with me!”), pleading (“Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeease?”), or persistence (asking five times, like, “Come on,” “Think about it,” “Just do it,” “Reconsider?”). There is a saying: “No’ is a complete sentence,” meaning one “no” is all you need to say.

Specific - we agreed to do one particular thing, not something general. For instance, it’s not consent if someone asks us to hang out when hanging out would consist of eating bugs, robbing a bank, and piercing our tongues! We have to have agreed to each individual activity for it to be consent.

Informed - is it consent if someone asks us to “smoodlehuff” when we don’t know what that means? Nope! It’s only consent if we understand what we’re saying “yes” to! That way, we can’t trick others into doing something they might not want to do, and they can’t trick us.



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Enthusiastic - someone has to actually want to do an activity if they are to consent to it. Shrugging, sighing, rolling the eyes, and yelling, “ok, ok, I guess I’ll do it... if I have to!” is not consent. We want to be really into whatever it is we are saying “yes” to - and we want others to be just as into it! If everyone isn’t psyched, it’s not consent.

Ongoing - this one is important, because it means that we can take back our “yes” any time we want! If we begin an activity and change our mind, it’s no longer consent. If we are halfway through the activity and decide we want to turn back, it’s no longer consent. If we are almost done (“we iced the cake, we just have to pipe flowers on it!”) and change our minds, then we do not have to finish. We’ve taken away our consent. And the cake will have to go flowerless.

So, how do we ask for consent?

Well, now that we know that consent has to be freely-given, specific, and informed (among other things), we should ask specifically, informatively, and without pressure. If you want someone to go swimming in a lake with you, you can ask:

“Hey, want to go swimming in the lake with me?” or

“Want to put on a bathing suit and float in the lake for a couple of hours?” or

“Feel like swimming this afternoon? There’s a lake down the street...”

But don’t ask:

“Are you gonna come swimming with me or do I stop talking to you?” (pressure)

“Interested in dipping yer tootsies in the briny billabong?” (unclear)

“Wanna go down the street?” (vague, not specific)

While it is everyone’s responsibility to control their own consent, it is our responsibility not to pressure or mislead the person when we ask them to do something!



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After we go through our VBC, you may decide you want to consent.

In that case, make sure you express the “yes” with words or body language (and have fun!).

However, sometimes you may decide that you do not want to consent.

What’s the best way to *reject* someone?

Rejection is saying “no” to someone’s offer or idea.

Rejecting an offer can be difficult; we may feel bad for them, we may feel guilty, or we may be afraid that they will get angry with us.

There are some important tips to delivering a rejection so the person doesn’t feel... rejected.

When you say “no,” don’t forget to:

- Be kind. Let them know it’s not because of them.
- Keep it simple. No need for a long explanation! A simple “No, but thank you” is perfect!
- Be clear and direct. You want your “no” to be as clearly expressed as your “yes” should be when you do consent!
- Say something nice. It’s ok to include a “that sounds great, but...” before your “no.”
- Treat them the way you would want to be treated. You would hope someone would be gentle with their rejection of your offer - do the same!
- Understand that they may feel bad. Just because you were kind and gentle doesn’t mean someone won’t get their feelings hurt. But that’s not your fault, and it will probably pass. Allow them their time away from you if they need it, but let them know that you’ll be there when they are ready!



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When you say “no,” make sure you don't:

- Laugh or be mean. The person who asked you was probably excited about the idea!
- Tell others about the rejection. No one else needs to know that someone asked you to do something and you turned them down. And no one else should hear how the person who asked you accepted the rejection!
- Mention someone you would rather do something with. This will only hurt the asker's feelings.
- Make them believe you might change your answer to a “yes.” You may want to make them feel better, but leading them to believe that there is still a chance will only make it harder for them, after all.
- Feel guilty. You did nothing wrong by deciding not to consent - you have the right to do what is best for you! As long as you are kind, there is no reason to feel bad.
- Take too long discussing it. Remember, “no’ is a complete sentence,” so there is no reason to talk about it for too long. You have told them you don't consent, and they need to accept that.

You may also decide to ask someone to do something and they will reject your offer! (Yes, it happens to all of us!) If someone tells you “no,” make sure you:

- Accept their answer. Don't try to convince them! (Remember the complete sentence...)
- Stay calm. If you find yourself getting upset, either excuse yourself to be alone in a private place (say, the bathroom?) or use one of our calming techniques! (We'll learn a new one at the end of this lesson!)
- Be proud that you tried! And with that, you can try again with someone else!



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Discussion questions and exercises:

1. Think about the things in your world that require consent from you or someone else.
 - a. Do you always ask for consent? Do you ever forget or not realize you should ask?
 - b. Do people always ask for your consent? Do your teachers? Do your caregivers?
 - c. Discuss what it would be like if no one ever asked for consent.

get up
ON YOUR FEET

Invite two volunteers to stand and take turns asking the other person to do something (like go dancing, play checkers, eat a bug...) and having the other person answer (without using "yes" or "no"). Figure out if they gave consent or didn't give consent. Try to make it hard to figure out!

HINT: If you can't tell if consent was given, consider it non-consent... always!

2. Have you ever had to give someone your non-consent? (Not giving consent.)
 - a. How did it make you feel?
 - b. How did the other person behave after you told them?
 - c. Have you ever had an offer of yours get rejected?
 - d. How did you respond? How would you respond if it happened now?

get up
ON YOUR FEET

Invite two volunteers to stand. Have one (Asker) invite the other (Answerer) to do something, but make it unclear, pressured, unspecific, or using guilt. (Facilitator: you can whisper ideas for this to the volunteer.)

Have the other volunteer answer "yes," whether in a consensual way (enthusiastic, clear, assertive) or non-consensual (grudging, unclear, passive). Discuss with the class if this was consent or non-consent! Talk about whether Asker asked in a responsible way, and if Answerer actually consented.

BONUS: Discuss how each could have made it consensual!



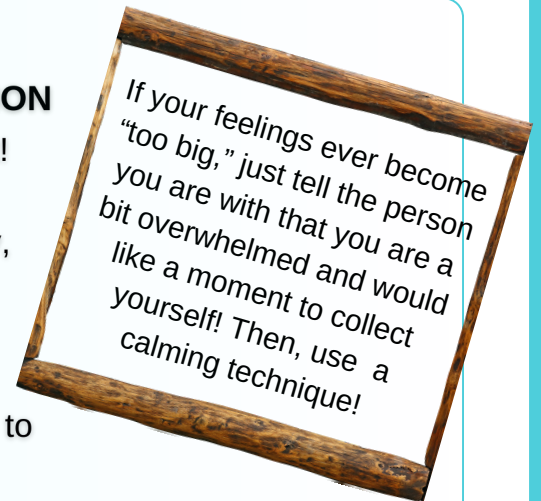
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Calming technique spotlight: PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Man, that is a loooooong name for our technique this week!
So, what is it?

It is the tensing and then relaxing of each part of your body, one after the other. By concentrating on just one part at a time, we can make sure that every one of them gets taken care of.

And when our bodies are relaxed, it is easier for our minds to relax, too!



★ Before you do this: Make sure to let the other person know that you are overwhelmed and need to take a minute before you do it! Otherwise, they may think you are ignoring them, and might not like that!

How do we do progressive muscle relaxation? To practice:

1. Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you are comfortable doing so.
2. Take a deep breath and feel your lungs up with air.
3. Hold your breath for a few seconds and then breathe out slowly.
4. Take in another deep breath and hold it. Slowly breathe out.
5. Now move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot. Hold it and let go. Repeat.
6. Next, begin to focus on your lower legs. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold it and let go. Remember to continue taking slow, deep breaths. Repeat.
7. Next, tense the muscles in your upper legs and pelvis. You can do this by squeezing your thighs together. Hold it and let go. Repeat.



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8. Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in. Hold it and let go. Allow your body to go floppy. Repeat.
9. Breathe in slowly and hold it. Breathe out slowly. Repeat.
10. Tense the muscles in your back by shrugging your shoulders. Hold them as tightly as you can without straining. Hold it and let go. Notice how different your body feels when you let it relax. Repeat.
11. Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm. Hold it and let go. Repeat.
12. Tense your face by screwing it up or making a silly face. Hold it and let go. Repeat.
13. Finally, tense your whole body – your feet, legs, stomach, chest, shoulders, arms, hands and face. Tense as hard as you can without straining and hold it.
14. Now relax and let your whole body go floppy. Focus on the feeling of relaxation and how different it feels to being tense. Enjoy the feeling of relaxation.
15. When you are ready, begin to wake your body up by wiggling your fingers and your toes. Slowly move your arms and legs and have a big stretch.
16. When you are ready, open your eyes and sit or stand up. Give yourself some time to enjoy the feeling of relaxation before you start doing another activity.

If you don't have time to go through your whole body, you can do a quick version, concentrating on just the key areas: neck and shoulders, hands, forehead, jaw. Then, breathe and feel the relaxation!

Now, give yourselves a big round of applause and go do some improv!