

SCRIPT #4 - Communication and Consent FOR PARENTS OF TEENS

CULTURE REFRAMED

In this script, you are ensuring that your teen understands consent from both a legal and an ethical perspective. You are emphasizing the importance of thinking ahead about how sexual you want to be with someone and then communicating before becoming physical. And you are reinforcing that if someone is not comfortable talking about consent with their partner, they are too immature to be having a sexual relationship. Before beginning, you should research the legal age of consent where you live, and you should be familiar with the definitions of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment.



parent

[There may be opportunities to begin this conversation based on news stories or television shows, or you can proactively start this conversation.]

I know that there has been a lot of stuff on the news lately about sexual assault.

Yeah. So?

teen



parent

I would like to give you some facts so that you are really clear about this topic.

I'm pretty sure I know what assault is.

teen



parent

It can seem pretty straightforward. [Mention statistics on sexual assault in your country. For example, the CDC reports that 26% of women and 15% of men experience intimate partner violence before the age of 18.]

That's crazy!

teen



parent

I think that every person—when they begin to make sexual choices—needs to realize how essential it is to control their sexual energy. Just like any other desire, you have to be able to manage and direct your sexual energy in a positive, ethical way.

I got that. Really, you don't need to talk to me about that.

teen



parent

Okay, that's good that you understand that, but there is more to this conversation.

What?

teen

parent

Consent. Have you talked about consent in school?

[Responses may vary.]

teen

parent

How would you describe consent?

[Responses may vary.]

teen

parent

[Acknowledge response.] Consent means that both people have actively and enthusiastically communicated to the other person that they want to engage in any sexual touching or activity.

That's pretty clear.

teen

parent

It seems so, but there is a lot of room for mistakes. For instance, if one person really wants to have sex and they manipulate or put any kind of pressure on the other person, is that consent?

No. That would be pressure.

teen

parent

Right, you would think that that would be clear, but when you watch TV shows or movies, you see a lot of people pressuring each other in different ways, and it seems like that's just what you should expect. [Give an example here if you have one.]

Sometimes, it seems like it's just a way of letting the person know you really are serious—or sometimes it's said like a joke.

teen

parent

Right. But it should never be a game of convincing someone; the consequences are too severe.

I get it.

teen

parent

So, how would you know if the other person gives consent?

I guess you would have to ask.

teen



Yes, because assuming that you know by how they are acting is not enthusiastic consent. You also need to know that in our state, the legal age that two people can have consensual sex is [mention the legal age in your state]. It's actually different in different states.

So you can get arrested if you have sex before that age?



teen



[Speak to the laws in your state.] Also, do you think that a person can give consent if they have been drinking or doing drugs?

No.



teen



You're right. They can't. You have to be fully sober and aware conscious to give consent. But unfortunately, many people forget this. When you drink and do drugs, you are literally shutting down the frontal lobe of your brain, and that is the only part of your mind that can pause and think before acting. Have you ever heard of someone that was in that position?

[They may recount a story from the media or something they heard from friends. Do not judge what they say. Attentively listen.]



teen



There's other stuff to think about, like if there is a significant age difference or a big difference in how much power a person has. In this situation, you have to ask yourself if the less powerful person is in a position to really give consent.

Lots of people have sex with people that are older than them.



teen



It's one thing when they are both over 21, but it's really different while the brain is still developing. A 16-year-old and a 20-year-old are not really using the same brainpower. Can you think of another difference in power where it may not be possible to give consent freely?

I don't know, like if the person was your teacher or your boss or something.



teen



Exactly. The power is too different in those situations.

I get it. Are we done?



teen



Just two more things. Porn often depicts women as always saying yes to everything, or when they do say no, requests to stop are totally ignored. This is massively problematic and not the way that consent works.

Well that's obvious.

teen

parent

It might seem obvious, but unfortunately, when people consume a lot of porn, young men can absorb these messages. And young women can believe that they have to perform and say yes to everything. It makes it all the more important to be sure of your sexual boundaries and to set clear expectations of what you are and aren't okay with.

Hmmm. Okay.

teen

parent

And just because someone has been sexual with you one time, does not give anyone permission to assume that you will want to be sexual again. Consent has to be given every single time—from hugging to kissing to more intimate moments—consent is a logical consequence of the care and respect that someone has for you.

That makes sense.

teen

parent

I appreciate you listening. Every time we have these conversations about sex, I always say how it is important to be comfortable talking about this. When it comes to consent, this is super-important. Just remember two things. First, if you are too embarrassed to ask—to really talk about what each person is comfortable with—you are too immature to be doing whatever it is you are thinking about. And second, when you know that you want to be sexual with someone, think it through first. Decide in advance how far you want to go and think through how you are going to communicate this. That way, you know what you are doing and are prepared to say whatever is necessary at the time.

I got it.

teen

parent

Thanks. I appreciate that.

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Script #1 - What is Sex?

Script #2 - The Harms of Porn

Script #3 - Counteracting Media's Messages about Relationships

Script #5 - Sexual Decision Making

Script #6 - Understanding Sexual Pleasure

Script #7 - Biological Differences for Sexual Arousal

Script #8 - Protection and Contraception

Script #9: Sexting and Managing your Digital Footprint

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE TO HYPERSEXUALIZED MEDIA AND PORN