

## Teaching Consent at All Ages

For the youngest children, we teach them about each other's personal space, and how to ask permission for a hug, and their right to say "No, Thank you." For the Elementary ages, this progresses to ensuring that everyone is comfortable with an activity or discussion, and addressing potential appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the larger context of "consent".

In Middle School, the topic of "Consent" is also discussed very intentionally as part of the health curriculum. Becky attended a discussion on "Consent" that was held at the library last week. She shared these notes with the staff at our staff meeting this week:

Becky: In attempts to further my development as a health educator, I recently participated in a discussion group at Brooks Memorial Library. Anna Mullany, Youth Educator for the Women's Freedom Center (who has also participated in our Middle School's health classes for the last several years) is leading a 4-part discussion series on Wednesdays nights, once monthly for the next four months. October's topic was consent. How do we teach the youth of our community about consent? Although the discussion group would have benefitted greatly from more voices, Anna offered a valuable glimpse into the questions she uses as a guide when teaching children all over Vermont.

1. How do we define consent?
2. What are signs of incapacitation that may impair ones ability to give consent?
3. What would make it unsafe for someone to say no, even though they may want to?
4. What are some things other than sex that we need to give/ask consent for?
5. How do power dynamics (popularity, age, gender, etc..) affect ones ability to give/ask for consent?
6. Does consent always have to be verbal?
7. What are some phrases that we can use to ask for consent?
8. What are some phrases we can use to affirm or deny consent?

Anna's model of asking children for the answers instead of just giving them rang true to the spirit of our seminar style classes. See below for a list of future discussions led by Anna.

Wednesday, **November 16th** at 6:30pm: Social Media, Sexism, and Sexting

Wednesday, **December 14th** at 6:30pm: Healthy Relationships, Warning Signs, and Teen Dating Violence

Wednesday, **January 18th** at 6:30pm: What to Wear?! A discussion on school dress codes

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