

EFFECTIVE CONSENT EDUCATION FOR BOYS & YOUNG MEN: AN EDUCATOR GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Consent education is an essential component of comprehensive sexual health education (CSHE) and needed for boys to develop the skills to communicate their boundaries and respect the bodily autonomy of others. As a topic within CSHE, the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) outlines how consent can be taught using a foundational building-block approach where concepts are taught at an early age and built upon at later ages according to youth's information needs and developmental level (SIECCAN, 2024). For consent education, it is important that educators assess the age-related needs and developmental appropriateness of educational materials that they use with their students.

Boys have an important role in reducing and preventing gender-based violence (GBV).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence committed against a person based on their gender, gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender.

(Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2025)

To meaningfully engage boys in this work, service providers should use educational approaches that are:

- collaborative (i.e., position boys and young men as an essential part of the solution);
- strengths-based (i.e., focused on hope, intentions, and shared responsibility); and
- gender-transformative (i.e., address the root cause of violence; Casey, 2010; SIECCAN, 2023a).

It is important to create learning spaces where boys can be vulnerable and share their experiences. In a review of interviews with expert stakeholders who work in GBV-prevention with men, researchers found approaches that only position men as a “problem” do not often generate positive social change (Waling et al., 2022). Using collaborative approaches that focus on creating a culture of respect, consent, and kindness can be an effective way to communicate the importance of consent to youth (Casey, 2010).

The purpose of this Educator Guide is to provide health service providers¹ with information and activities to deliver consent education that is inclusive and reflective of the needs of boys and young men (hereafter referred to as boys).

The Educator Guide was developed based on findings from a consultation process with health service providers, focus groups with boys (see www.sieccan.org/consent-boys), discussions with an expert working group, and research on best practices.

THE EDUCATOR GUIDE INCLUDES SIX CORE CONCEPTS ON HOW TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE CONSENT EDUCATION TO BOYS. THE SIX CORE CONCEPTS ARE:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Understanding and respecting each person's agency and autonomy |
| 2 | Addressing gender norms and highlighting the diversity of masculinities |
| 3 | Asking for consent |
| 4 | Accepting "no" as an answer |
| 5 | Responding to violated consent |
| 6 | Integrating parents and guardians as partners |

¹ In the context of this project, health service providers refer to anyone in a formal position to provide sexual health information and education to youth. This can include educators, social workers, public health professionals, community organization staff, psychologists/counsellors, nurses, caregivers/personal support workers, behavioural therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, physicians, group home staff, and others.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

CONSENT REQUIRES:

- 1 asking a person if they agree to something being done to them, for them, or together with them,
- 2 the person choosing to give permission or not; and
- 3 accepting the person's decision to say yes or no.

CONSENT IS AN ONGOING AND FUNDAMENTAL PART OF RESPECTFUL INTERACTIONS IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE INVOLVING OTHERS. CONSENT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT DURING SEXUAL INTERACTIONS.

Consent is fundamentally about individuals in different kinds of relationships (e.g., romantic relationships, sexual relationships, friendships, employer-employee relationships, parent-child relationships, teacher-student relationships) caring about each other and wanting everyone involved to feel safe and comfortable.

Consent is often talked about as a solely verbal interaction but non-verbal cues, like body language, are also important factors in determining if sexual interactions are consensual. Non-verbal communication is part of consent. Consent can be communicated in a variety of ways like nodding one's head or speaking verbally. Additionally, if someone has provided a verbal "yes" but their body language suggests discomfort or fear, it is best to stop and check in.

A HELPFUL ACRONYM FOR THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF CONSENT IS **FRIES:**

Freely and Willingly

Consent cannot be given if someone is being pressured or manipulated.

Reversible

Consent can be withdrawn at any time during the activity someone had previously consented to. Just because you consented at first, does not mean you have to continue.

See Core Concept 4 on accepting “no” as an answer for more details on withdrawn consent.

Informed

All individuals involved must have the full context of what they are consenting to.

Enthusiastic

All individuals involved must want to do what they are consenting to. Enthusiasm can look different for everybody, but the desire to consent must be present.

Specific

Consenting to one activity does not provide consent for anything else. Checking in and having consistent communication is necessary for all interactions to be consensual.

(Planned Parenthood, n.d.)

BEING ABLE TO COMMUNICATE CONSENT (I.E., ASK FOR, GIVE, AND RESPECT CONSENT) REQUIRES:

Understanding one's rights and the rights of others
Knowing one's needs, including level of comfort and boundaries, and the ability to communicate them to others
Knowing how to make decisions for oneself
Understanding existing laws and legislation around consent
Understanding and respecting the different ways people communicate their needs
Openness to the diverse ways people live their lives
Knowing how to receive and accept "no" for an answer
Knowing how to apologize when mistakes are made

(Mark & Vowels, 2020; SIECCAN, 2019; 2023b)

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A CULTURE OF CONSENT

Creating a culture of consent requires acknowledging and addressing rape culture. Rape culture is a complex set of attitudes and beliefs that normalize sexual assault and violence against women (Buchwald et al., 2005). For example, rape myths include beliefs such as: "rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at guys" or "if a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand" (Beckett et al., 2025).

Such beliefs shift the blame from perpetrators of GBV toward the victims/survivors; this results in victim-blaming (i.e., being made to feel responsible for one's own victimization), a disbelief in reports of GBV, harassment, and the expectation that people should avoid being assaulted instead of asserting that nobody should assault another person (Baker, 2014; Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, 2016; Prochuk, 2018). Among women who had experienced sexual assault in Canada, 20% reported experiences of victim blaming (Statistics Canada, 2020).



In a culture of consent, victims/survivors are believed and taken seriously, and accountability and transformative measures are taken when someone is harmed. For a response to GBV to be **transformative** (i.e., change the harmful conditions wherein violence and consent violations take place), it needs to contribute tangibly to preventing harm from taking place in the future. For a response to GBV to be **victim/survivor-centred**, the needs of the person harmed must be considered as the guide for moving forward.

Legal definitions play an important role in consent education. Learning about the legal contexts of consent can support in providing youth with accurate information about law and consent. See:

- Meaning of consent from the *Criminal Code* [**https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-273.1.html**](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-273.1.html)
- The Law of Consent and Sexual Assault in Canada: Frequently Asked Questions from West Coast Leaf [**https://westcoastleaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/FAQs-on-Consent-2019.pdf**](https://westcoastleaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/FAQs-on-Consent-2019.pdf)
- Sexual violence and consent from the Government of Canada [**https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/campaigns/gender-based-violence-its-not-just/sexual-violence-and-consent.html**](https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/campaigns/gender-based-violence-its-not-just/sexual-violence-and-consent.html)

TEACHING ABOUT CONSENT: CORE CONCEPTS

Based on SIECCAN's focus groups with boys, consultation survey with service providers, and research on sexual health education, the following sections describe each of the core concepts. For each concept, examples are provided for the types of questions that boys ask their health service providers about consent and practical information/activities that health service providers can use to deliver effective consent education to boys (SIECCAN, 2025).

CORE CONCEPT 1:

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECTING EACH PERSON'S AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Agency refers to a person's ability to make effective and informed choices for themselves (SIECCAN, 2024). Bodily autonomy means that a person has agency over their own body; they have the right to make decisions about their own body without interference from others. This includes having the power to decide what happens to one's body with respect to sexuality and reproductive health, which is fundamental to sexual health, gender equality, and the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) (SIECCAN, 2024).

Understanding the concepts of agency and autonomy is necessary for boys to develop the skills to give, withhold, and withdraw consent, and to respect decisions that others make (SIECCAN, 2019). Positioning consent as a matter of autonomy allows boys to critically reflect on their own personal choices, which can enable them to more easily understand and respect the personal choices of others.

In focus groups with boys, participants noted the importance of ensuring that consent education includes information on a broad range of interpersonal relationships and interactions (SIECCAN, 2025). That is, boys want consent education to

go beyond learning about consent during partnered sexual activity and help them recognize the many ways they are already giving and asking for consent in their everyday lives (e.g., with friends, peers, family, etc.).

A breakdown of topics related to autonomy and consent by age and grade can be found in the *Benchmarks for Comprehensive Sexual Health Education in Canada* on p. 29 - 30 (see <https://www.sieccan.org/shebenchmarks>) (SIECCAN, 2024).

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK



QUESTION: How do I create boundaries with friends without making it awkward?

ANSWER: Sometimes we think that saying “no” is rude or will hurt someone’s feelings, but it’s important to remember that when you communicate what makes you feel comfortable, you are doing something for yourself and not something against the other person. Respectfully communicating your boundaries and having your boundaries be respected are essential parts of any healthy relationship, including friendships. If someone responds negatively to your boundaries, this does not mean you have to change your mind about setting them. You can let them know that every person has different needs and that when they communicate their boundaries to you, you will also respect their needs even if it’s different from your own.

QUESTION: What if someone changes their mind after giving consent?

ANSWER: Consent is an ongoing process. This means that someone can say “yes” and then change their mind. If someone gives consent to start something but then changes their mind, you must respect their decision and stop what you are doing. At any point, you can change your mind even if you agreed to do something earlier. Consent goes both ways. You can and should give and receive consent, and you can also have your consent violated if your partner does not respect your boundaries or communication. Sometimes people will consent to something because they want to try it and are curious and realize after trying it that they do not want to do it anymore. The more we focus on consent being a dynamic and ongoing process, the easier it can be to say “no” to things we don’t want to do.

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT EACH PERSON'S AGENCY AND AUTONOMY



Regularly reflect upon, question, and challenge your own assumptions and beliefs about boys' understanding of agency and autonomy. Such assumptions may include the assumption that boys do not care about learning about consent, they don't already know anything about consent or the assumption that they are going to automatically violate consent. Boys know that many topics covered in consent education are more nuanced than they are presented with and want to have more in-depth conversations (SIECCAN, 2025).

Support boys in understanding their own needs and boundaries and in developing the skills to communicate their needs and boundaries with others. Prompt boys to reflect on what they are comfortable with/not comfortable with in different relationships and situations (e.g., dating relationships, friendships, etc.)

Boundaries and Consent on p. 14 - 20 of *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>

Consent and Boundaries. <https://kidshealthhub.ca/2022/05/03/boundaries-and-consent-4/>

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT EACH PERSON'S AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Provide boys with information about what consent is and what it might look like in the various contexts where consent is communicated. See:

- The acronym F.R.I.E.S <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/relationships/sexual-consent>
- Discussion questions regarding consent and boundaries on p. 20 of *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>
- Game to practice consent <https://teentalk.ca/consentgame/>
- Video that defines consent and discusses the nuances of consent <https://teentalk.ca/consentgame/>
- Grade 9: Consent 1 (lesson plan) <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/app/uploads/sites/4/Gr9LP3a-Consent1-ENGLISH-FINAL.pdf>
- Grade 9: Consent 2 (lesson plan) <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/app/uploads/sites/4/Gr9LP3b-Consent2-ENGLISH-FINAL.pdf>

Provide boys with opportunities to actively participate in their education and develop decision-making skills. Encourage boys to be active participants in their education. For instance, ask boys about their learning needs or what topic they would like to cover first. Build choice-making and agency to allow boys to practice decision-making.

Provide boys with exercises to practice and develop their skills in listening to others and respecting the decisions of others. Activities that encourage boys to communicate one on one with their peers can be integrated across all subjects and topic areas.

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT EACH PERSON'S AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Emphasize that agency and autonomy also apply to online contexts.

Provide boys with evidence-based materials to identify and respond to coercive behaviour online

- *Online Relationships: Respect and Consent* (lesson plan) https://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/lesson-plans/lesson_online_relationships_respect_consent.pdf
- *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools* <https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/use-understand-engage-digital-media-literacy-framework-canadian-schools>

Identify and expand on the ways boys are already making complex and autonomous decisions in their lives. Use examples from their real lives (e.g. seeking consent, acting collaboratively, and respecting the agency and autonomy of others when playing games with friends). Boys should be encouraged to contribute to consent culture in their lives by practicing active listening, deliberately asking for consent and maintaining communication with others (see Instructional Strategies for Consent on p. 8 - 14 of *Supporting Student Health Guide: Elementary* https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/subject/phe/Supporting_Student_Health_Elementary.pdf).

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT EACH PERSON'S AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Discuss how consuming alcohol or drugs can impact a person's agency and ability to make decisions (i.e., leading to choices they might not make if they were sober).

West Coast Leaf provides clear context on alcohol or drug use and consent:

"Doing anything sexual with someone whose judgment is affected by drugs or alcohol can cause serious harm. If you want to do something sexual with someone who's been drinking alcohol or using drugs, you must be very careful that their thinking is clear. They must be able to decide freely if they want to be sexual with you and be able to communicate their consent clearly. If you are not sure whether they are thinking and communicating normally, wait until they are sober to check for consent." (West Coast Leaf, n.d.)

Unfortunately, some people use alcohol/drugs to abuse another person. Using drugs or alcohol to pressure a person into sex they do not want is not consent; it is a violation of their agency and autonomy. Emphasize that when someone is abused, it is never their fault. However, due to the risk of individuals perpetrating sexual assault against people who consume alcohol/drugs, it is important to know how to reduce the risk of harm when using these substances. For example, it is helpful to explicitly set boundaries for when alcohol/drugs will be consumed.

If consent is being asked for after alcohol/drugs have been used, it is important to make sure that the person who is giving consent is able to do so. Under Canadian law, **if a person is unconscious or incapable (e.g., due to alcohol or drug intoxication), they cannot give informed consent** (see subsections 273.1 (1) and 273.1 (2) of the criminal code <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/page-39.html#docCont>). Some clues that a person **cannot** give informed consent is that they are not able to walk straight, they are slurring their words, they seem confused, they are sick, or they are passed out. If there is any doubt about a person's ability to give consent, then it should be assumed that that person **does not** give consent. **Any sexual activity with someone who cannot give consent is sexual assault, regardless of age** (Government of Canada, 2021a). In a situation where someone is drunk or high, the focus should be on caring for that person and ensuring that they are safe (e.g., make sure they are not alone, call someone who can help them get home safely).

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT EACH PERSON'S AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

An important part of establishing consensual sexual relationships is demonstrating care and respect for one's sexual partners. When drugs and alcohol are consumed, before having sexual interactions with someone, stop to consider how they will feel the next morning. Do you both feel able and aware enough to practice informed and enthusiastic consent? See:

- PHE Canada's resource lists on youth and substance use for teachers <https://phecanada.ca/professional-learning/blueprint-for-action/additional-resources/teacher-list-supplemental-resources>
- What if both the people are drunk when you have sex, is it still sexual assault? in *Consent and Sexual Assault* <https://teentalk.ca/learn-about/consent-2/>

Discuss the laws around age of consent to sexual activity so that boys feel knowledgeable about how sexual consent and the law are connected. It is also important for youth to know the laws around age of consent. For instance, the Canadian law around age of consent includes close in age exceptions as noted below:

"Generally, the age of consent for sexual activity is 16 years. However, the age of consent is 18 years where the sexual activity involves prostitution, pornography or occurs in a relationship of authority, trust or dependency (e.g., with a teacher, coach or babysitter).

There are exceptions for sexual relationships for people who are close in age. This means that a person as young as 14 can legally consent to sexual activity with someone who is less than five years older than them as long as there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency or any other exploitation. Similarly, a 12 or 13 year-old can consent to sexual activity with another young person who is less than two years older and with whom there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency or other exploitation." (West Coast Leaf, 2014)

See:

- *Consent 101: The (Sexual) Basics* <https://ssaic.ca/learning-resources/consent/>
- *The Law of Consent in Sexual Assault* <https://www.leaf.ca/news/the-law-of-consent-in-sexual-assault/>

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT EACH PERSON'S AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Discuss how power dynamics can impact a person's ability to communicate consent. Power imbalances occur when one person in a relationship has a greater ability to influence their partner's actions than their partner does (e.g., a young woman who is dating a young man may not feel comfortable saying "no" for fear of angering him and experiencing other harm). It is important for the partner who holds more power in a relationship to consider how their power can impact their partners' ability to consent and to foster a safe space where their partner feels like they can openly express their needs and boundaries. See:

- I Ask How Power Impacts Consent https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/Power%20Dynamics%20Handout_508.pdf
- Age of consent table (French) on p. 7 of Sexuality and Consent https://institutditsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/20240816_Fascicule-3_Consentement_rev.pdf

ACTIVITIES



DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Facilitate a classroom discussion on the connection between coercion and not respecting consent. Consider the following prompt:

Sometimes when we are excited to do something with someone, we can get carried away with our own preferences and put unintentional pressure on the other person to agree to what we want. If we are pressuring someone to agree to what we want, we are preventing them from consenting.

Reflection prompts:

- *What are some ways that we can communicate our wants or needs without putting pressure on someone?*
- *Can you think of a time you felt that someone pressured you to do something you didn't want to do, but you said "yes" anyways? What made you say "yes"? How did it make you feel to say "yes" to something you didn't want to do?*

ACTIVITIES

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Have boys write a one-page reflection on areas in their lives where they feel they have/do not have control.

Writing prompts:

- Consider how you can decide things like what to wear, what topics to learn, what games to play, what friends you can spend time with, and what decisions you can make about your body.
- Consider barriers you might experience to making decisions that you want to make (e.g., feeling awkward when you say no to someone).
- Consider how aspects of your identity (e.g., gender, ethnicity, ability, age) might give you more or less choices than others due to systems in our society.
- How does it feel to be able to make your own decisions? How does it feel when you are not able to make your own decisions?

CORE CONCEPT 2:

ADDRESSING GENDER NORMS AND HIGHLIGHTING DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF MASCULINITY

An important component of understanding consent is learning about and challenging the harmful gender norms, roles, and stereotypes that contribute to gender-based violence (GBV) (SIECCAN, 2023a; SIECCAN, 2023b). Gender norms are expectations of how people should behave according to their gender. Current gender norms are influenced by the gender binary (i.e., a belief system that categorizes gender into two mutually exclusive and fixed options: male and female) and one's social, cultural, and religious background (SIECCAN, 2023b). The gender binary imposes strict stereotypical gender norms for how boys/men and girls/women should behave. This is harmful

to all boys, but it is especially harmful for transgender boys, racialized boys, gay, bisexual, intersex, asexual, and Two-Spirit boys (de Heer et al., 2021; Ramsawakh, 2025). The endorsement of restrictive masculinity norms (e.g., self-sufficiency, acting tough, hypersexuality) are linked to poorer mental health among boys and have significant implications for consent; when boys are pressured to be “dominant,” the sole responsibility of navigating consent falls to them requesting permission, rather than consent being considered a collaborative process (The Men’s Project & Flood, 2020).

By highlighting that boys’ expressions of masculinity are their own to create, boys have the opportunity to reconsider and resist gender norms that position domination, independence, and physical strength as the required default gender expressions for boys (Setty, 2022). When boys are supported in defining their own diverse experience of masculinity, they are better able to express themselves in healthy ways to promote kindness, compassion, vulnerability, and diversity (Hayes et al., 2022).

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK

???

QUESTION: Why is the pressure always on me to initiate things in dating?

ANSWER: Sometimes our society makes assumptions about how boys and men and girls and women are supposed to act and these assumptions can impact how we experience dating. As a result of these assumptions, people may expect that boys and men are going to take initiative and control of a situation. Healthy relationships require balance and reciprocity; if you notice that the person you are dating has expectations that seem unfair, you should communicate to them in a patient and respectful way. For example, you can say “I feel like you are assuming that I want to be intimate more often than I’d like because of how TV shows make boys seem. I’d like to talk about what pace I want to go so that we are both comfortable”.

For more information on stereotypes and social scripts, see p. 51 – 60 of Guidelines for integrating gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK

QUESTION: Why do people always expect that you want sex and that's it?

ANSWER: Society (e.g., culture, media) has created inaccurate and unfair expectations for boys and dating. It can feel frustrating when people make assumptions about you based on gender stereotypes. If someone makes an assumption about what you are uncomfortable with or want, you have the right to speak up and clarify your boundaries or step away from the situation if you don't feel safe or respected. Assuming boys only want sex is a harmful stereotype; respectful friendships/relationships with emotional intimacy are important for all people, regardless of gender.

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO EXPERIENCE AND RESPECT DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF MASCULINITY



Debunk gender stereotypes and myths. Boys often receive narrow messages about masculinity, including that it means being dominant, tough, and hypersexual (Learning Network & White Ribbon, 2024; The Men's Project & Flood, 2020). These beliefs can distort how they understand relationships, power, and consent (Learning Network & White Ribbon., 2024). Addressing and challenging restrictive norms can encourage boys to choose healthier, more respectful ways to relate to others and themselves. See:

- *Why Men Should Care about the Gender Binary* <https://www.nextgenmen.ca/blog/why-you-should-care-about-the-gender-binary>
- *Engaging Youth to Promote Healthy Masculinities and End Gender-Based Violence* <https://www.gbvllearningnetwork.ca/our-work/backgrounders/healthy-masculinities/Healthy-Masculinities-Backgrounder.pdf>
- *Unpacking Positive Masculinity* <https://www.nextgenmen.ca/blog/unpacking-positive-masculinity?rq=positive>
- *Exposing Gender Stereotypes* (lesson plan) https://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Exposing_Gender_Stereotypes.pdf

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO EXPERIENCE AND RESPECT DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF MASCULINITY

Engage boys in conversations about masculinity and privilege. Moving through conversations about masculinity and privilege can be uncomfortable. Support your students by co-creating a space to discuss what social privilege and “being a man” means to them. For example, establish an agreed-upon set of community guidelines that centre respect for others. Ensure that boys who do not yet feel comfortable speaking up are still included in the broader lesson or consider breaking them into smaller groups to encourage conversation. If boys are sharing inaccurate information about gender identity or expression, introduce them to accurate, credible information in a supportive way. If possible, consider inviting a trusted male role model to lead these discussions. See:

- Examples of approaches for teaching GBV prevention on p. 68 - 70 of *Guidelines for integrating gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>
- *Allies for Gender Equality Toolkit: Enhancing Intersectionality in Engaging Men and Boys* at <https://www.whiteribbon.ca/publications?lng=en>
- *Systems of Oppression and Privilege* <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Systems-of-Oppression-and-Privilege-Definitions.pdf>

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO EXPERIENCE AND RESPECT DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF MASCULINITY

Present masculinity as a plural concept by offering boys the opportunity to create their own masculinity. This can provide an alternative to dominant portrayals of masculinity commonly expressed online or in popular media. Masculinity can be expressed in an infinite number of ways. Link the concept of diverse expressions of masculinities to Core Concept 1 by asking boys what traits they have that they admire about themselves. Prompt them to evaluate how different descriptions (e.g., kindness, bravery, compassion, independence, creativity etc.) are important parts of their identity. See:

- *Boys Don't Cry PSA - Video* (Content warning: depictions of physical violence and gender-based violence) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjo-hwAKcas>
- *Disrupting Gender Roles, Norms and Stereotypes* on p. 30 - 37 of *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>
- *Next Gen Manual: A Program Guide for Engaging Boys in Positive Masculinity* <https://www.nextgenmen.ca/manual>
- *Gender Self-Portrait - Lesson Plan* <https://www.bctf.ca/classroom-resources/details/gender-self-portrait>
- *Advertising and Male Violence - Lesson Plan* <https://mediasmarts.ca/lessonplan/advertising-and-male-violence-lesson>
- *Exposing Gender Stereotypes - Lesson Plan* <https://mediasmarts.ca/lessonplan/exposing-gender-stereotypes-lesson>

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO EXPERIENCE AND RESPECT DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF MASCULINITY

Incorporate discussion of societal expectations of gender into classroom

discussions of consent. Boys do not inherently have to perform gender in one way, rather they are socialized to conform to gendered expectations (Learning Network & White Ribbon, 2024). Societal expectations of behaviour are impacted by race, class, ability, gender, sexual orientation, culture, language, and religion. Provide boys with examples of diverse expressions of masculinity, including Indigenous masculinities, queer and transgender masculinities, and disabled masculinities. See:

- *Rethinking Masculinities: Understanding diverse and intersecting masculinities to end Gender-Based Violence (GBV)* <https://www.gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/briefs/briefpdfs/LN-Brief-46.pdf>
- Video on Indigenous Masculinity presented by Sage Lacerte <https://www.gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/facebook-lives/moose-hide-campaign-indigenous-masculinity/index.html>
- *Intersectionality is for Everyone* <https://www.sogieducation.org/resource/intersectionality-is-for-everyone/>

Challenging homophobia and transphobia that may arise is integral to creating a safer learning environment for all youth. Supporting boys to understand gender and sexual diversity is essential; so too is maintaining the safety of any 2SLGBTQINA+ (Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, nonbinary, asexual, and other emerging gender and sexual identities) youth that are present. See:

- *Navigating Difficult Conversations: Tip Sheet for Teachers* https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Navigating-Difficult-Conversations-Tips-Sheet_V-01-2.pdf
- *Responding to Sexism, Homophobia and Transphobia: Tips for Parents and Educators of Younger Children* https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/k12_safeandcaring_pdf_responding_sexism_homophobia_transphobia.pdf

HOW TO SUPPORT BOYS TO EXPERIENCE AND RESPECT DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF MASCULINITY

Use a strength-based approach to teaching 2SLGBTQINA+ youth about/ discuss gender diversity and sexuality. 2SLGBTQINA+ youth report significantly higher levels of self-efficacy to ask for consent compared to heterosexual peers (Javidi et al., 2024). Additionally, schools with policies that protect 2SLGBTQINA+ youth create supportive environments for all youth (Russell et al., 2021). See:

- *Relearn and React: 2SLGBTQI Curriculum Resources* <https://egale.ca/awareness/relearn-and-react/>
- *Tips on how to practice 2SLGBTQI Allyship* <https://egale.ca/awareness/tips-on-how-to-practice-lgbtqi2s-allyship/>

Provide support to community leaders and organizations in rural and remote areas so that they can develop and deliver effective consent education to their local communities. This can include sharing resources, providing mentorship, providing funding, collaborating to develop relevant content and local activities/events.

Promote diversity, community, and culture in consent education. Foster safe and inclusive learning spaces by adopting the following approach to consent education: trauma-informed education, non-judgemental approaches, cross-subject and co-curricular approach, and participatory approaches. See:

- *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>
- Facilitate discussions with youth about ways to make all individuals feel included and accepted (see p. 13 of *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>)
- Use gender, body, and relationship-inclusive language (see p. 8 of *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>)

ACTIVITIES



IDENTITY MAPPING ACTIVITY

Encourage boys to reflect on what they feel is most important to their identity (what do they like to do, learn about, experience, how do they like to be referred to). Identity mapping can be a helpful and engaging tool to introduce youth to creating their own forms of self-expression and respecting the self-expression of others.

In pairs or as a group, have youth discuss:

- What are the things that make me unique? What do I have in common with others?
- Do I share these different parts of my identity with others? Why or why not?
- What parts of my identity can I control/change or not?
- Do the different parts of my identity impact the decisions I make? my relationships? my ability to do the things I want to do? How so?

(Alliance for a Healthier Generation, 2021)

See: Boys Will Be ____ deck from Next Gen Men <https://www.nextgenmen.ca/boys-will-be>

PEER-TO-PEER TEACHING ACTIVITY

Consider inviting a trusted community member/leader to speak to boys about consent so that they can learn from people with shared lived experiences (e.g., storytelling panel, Q & A session). Facilitators who model emotional vulnerability and diverse expressions of masculinity can provide diverse alternatives to the types of masculinity that boys are more likely to be exposed to in popular media

(Claussen, 2019).

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT MASCULINITY AND CONSENT



MYTH	WHY IT'S HARMFUL	HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE
"Boys always want sex"	Pressures boys to ignore their own comfort and boundaries; reinforces idea that they can't say no.	Everyone, including boys, has the right to say no and should only engage when they truly want to.
"Real men don't ask they just know"	Discourages communication and assumes consent is automatic or implied.	Consent must be asked for and clearly given every time. It shows respect, not weakness.
"Saying no makes you weak or unmanly"	Stigmatizes boundaries and emotional honesty.	Strength is shown through self-respect and respecting others' limits.
"If she doesn't say no, it's a yes"	Ignores the importance of enthusiastic, affirmative consent.	Only a clear, willing yes is consent. Silence or uncertainty is not consent. Consent is not limited to a verbal "yes" but must be willful and informed.
"You have to 'make the first move' to be a man"	Encourages pressure and disregard for the other person's comfort.	Consent is mutual. Both people should feel free and comfortable to express interest or say no.
"If someone has an erection, they want sex."	Equates a bodily response to consent. Involuntary physical responses do not equate arousal or consent.	Only a clear, willing yes is consent. Someone's bodily response does not equal consent.

(Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, n.d.; SIECCAN, 2023b; SIECCAN, 2023a; SIECCAN, 2024)

CORE CONCEPT 3:

ASKING FOR CONSENT

One of the most important aspects of consent education with boys is to directly assist them in developing the skills to clearly ask for consent to sexual activity. In Canada, social and legal standards for ensuring that consent to sexual activity is present and ongoing have changed fundamentally throughout the years (Earnscliffe Strategy Group, 2019; Friedman & Valenti, 2019; Wright, 2022). For example, previous consent education strategies have evolved (e.g., no means no, yes means yes, and silence does not equal consent) to encompass more comprehensive contexts of consent (Wright, 2022).

Boys who have never specifically learned how to ask for and talk about consent to sexual activity with partners are unlikely to have the communication skills to do so. There are few role models in the community or media for boys to learn from, underlining the importance of incorporating consent communication skills in sexual health education.

As noted in Core Concept 2, many boys are socialized to adopt traditional masculinity norms which include the assumption that boys and men should be assertive in initiating and pursuing sexual interactions. These same traditional norms (or scripts) also assume that consent to sex is expressed non-verbally. For example, according to traditional scripts for sexual interactions, a man initiates sex by physically touching his partner and the partner signals their consent by not physically resisting or some other non-verbal response. In research with young people, many indicated that they rely on ambiguous behavioural cues rather than direct verbal communication to establish consent (Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). When consent discussions do take place, they are often indirect and vague. People often believe that they intuitively know when sex is consensual – clear verbal consent is believed to be unnecessary because it’s “obvious” and they “know” when someone is consenting to sex.

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK

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QUESTION: I hear consent is supposed to be ongoing. What does that mean?

ANSWER: Ongoing consent means that continuously checking in with someone when you are engaging in a shared activity together. This is most often referred to during sexual activities. For instance, some people assume that if you consent to going on a date, it means that you are consenting to kiss the person you go on a date with, or that if you consent to kissing, it means you also are consenting to having sex. This is not true. **All activities throughout dating and sexual relationships require consent.** Continuously asking consent during a sexual activity can look like saying: "is this okay?" or "can I touch you here?"

Similarly, ongoing consent means that you will still ask someone's consent even if they have already consented to that activity before. **Just because someone has consented once, does not mean they are consenting for the future.**

Remember, consent requires participation from all people involved. Your consent matters and should always be asked for when engaging in sexual activities.

QUESTION: I can tell my partner is consenting to sex with me just by their body language. Why do I need to actually ask for consent?

ANSWER: Paying attention to your partner's body language is important and if it feels like they are physically responding to you in a positive way, that's good too. But just going by body language without verbal consent is not enough. Especially with new partners, just going by body language, it's not always clear how people are actually feeling, and in the heat of the moment, people make mistakes. For sexual activity, a misunderstanding, caused by lack of clear verbal communication, can be harmful.

More and more, a verbal confirmation of consent is what partners expect and if you're not asking for consent, you are out of sync. If a misunderstanding happens, people will question why you didn't ask for consent. If the police ever become involved and you didn't verbally ask for consent then it is much more likely that you will be in trouble.

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK

QUESTION: How do I ask for consent without feeling embarrassed or looking like I'm being too aggressive?

ANSWER: The first thing to know is that once you get into the habit of verbally asking for consent it will start to feel normal and natural to you. You should also know that your partner is probably going to appreciate that you asked – even if the answer is no. Asking for consent shows respect!

An easy way to start the conversation is to genuinely tell your partner that you have feelings for them and that you are attracted to them. For example, "I really like you so I want to make sure we are on the same page". If the person responds back that they like you too, then you are in a good place to start a consent conversation. "Great, I'd really like to kiss you, is that OK?" If they say no, you know it's time to back off.

Pay attention to your partner's tone of voice and body language.

Are they responding with something neutral like "OK, I guess" or are they clearly saying they want to participate, "Yes, I want to".

It is important that you are that you are honest with the person you are communicating with. Show them the same respect that you would want from them. If you both truly value and respect each other, asking for consent will be easier than you might think. If you have effectively communicated that you care about your partner, and you take it slow, it won't look aggressive.

SUPPORTING BOYS TO ASK FOR CONSENT IN THEIR DAILY LIVES



Ensure that boys understand the different components of consent.

While some youth may understand consent well when it comes to certain contexts (e.g., asking for permission from the teacher to go to the bathroom), other contexts may be less obvious to them. Teach about the relevant social context when you want to do something with another person. Using the F.R.I.E.S. approach, emphasize that consent is freely and willingly given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic, and specific (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). Consider how you can include different principles from the F.R.I.E.S. model of consent to the education or services you provide boys. See:

- I Ask for Consent https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/Consent%20Handout_508_0.pdf
- Everyday Consent https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/everydayconsent_onepager_508.pdf
- How do I talk about consent? <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/relationships/sexual-consent/how-do-i-talk-about-consent>
- Sexual Consent <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/relationships/sexual-consent>
- SECS: Sexual Education Capacity and Support Project p. 60 - 74 <https://southshoresexualhealth.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/SECS-Guide.pdf>
- Understanding Consent <https://www.torontomu.ca/sexual-violence/education/laws-of-consent-in-canada/>

SUPPORTING BOYS TO ASK FOR CONSENT IN THEIR DAILY LIVES

Encourage boys to reflect on why they want to do something with someone. While it is natural to want to try something out of curiosity, sexual scripts can encourage youth to follow a specific sequence of sexual behaviours simply because they have seen it online (MediaSmarts, n.d.) or because a certain sexual activity will improve their social status (Widman et al., 2016). Personally reflecting on and actively communicating about sexual desires is important for the development of consent communication skills (Gender.Study, 2024). For further information on gender norms, see **p. 15** of this guide. See:

- Am I Ready for Sex? <https://www.centreforsexuality.ca/learning-centre/am-i-ready-for-sex/>
- Healthy Boundaries <https://www.centreforsexuality.ca/learning-centre/healthy-boundaries/>

Use the Information-Motivation-Behavioural Skills (IMB) model as a basis for consent education program development and lesson planning. The IMB model is a well-tested model that has been used as the basis for a wide variety of effective sexual health education. Decades of research have demonstrated that to effectively promote behaviour change, educational programs need to meaningfully assist people to acquire the relevant information, motivation, and behavioural skills to engage in the desired behaviour. An IMB approach can be effectively applied to sexual health and consent education (Shumlich & Fisher, 2019; SIECCAN, 2019).

Earlier sections of this Guide include **information** about consent (e.g., definition and laws) and discussions around gender norms and myths can serve to **motivate** boys to seek clear and ongoing consent. The final and most important step in an IMB approach to consent education is communication **skills**. Young people often express fears of being awkward when they ask for consent (Brady et al., 2021). Equipping boys with language that they feel comfortable using to ask for consent is an important objective of consent education. For more information on obtaining/discussing consent using the IMB model, see p. 47 - 48 of the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/sexual-health-education>.

ACTIVITY



CONSENT LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

Provide boys with examples of words/phrases they can use to ask a partner for consent to sexual activity. Below are sources which provide examples of how to ask for consent. Review these resources to make sure that they are developmentally appropriate for your specific audience. You may want to draw from these sources to create your own list of examples that are more specifically suited to the particular group that you are working with.

Ask youth which examples of asking for consent they are most comfortable with. Are there other examples they can think of to ask for consent that they think will work better for them?

Resources for exploring example language of consent:

- *21 Ways To Ask For Consent* <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Consensual-Guide.pdf>
- *Consent Conversations* <https://www.sace.ca/learn/consent-conversations/>
- *How do you know if someone wants to have sex with you? (video)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNN3nAevQKY&list=PL3xP1jlf1jgJRkChwVOlwQcV0-UqcWiFV>
- *How to ask for consent* <https://teentalk.ca/learn-about/consent-2/>
- *Learn About Consent* <https://youth.healthyouthnetwork.ca/learn-about-consent/>

Review the list of examples of words/phrases to ask for consent to sexual activities. Ask youth to write on a piece of paper the words/phrases they are planning to use the next time they are asking a partner for consent. Suggest they keep the piece of paper and use it to practice asking a partner for consent so they will be more comfortable when the time comes.

CORE CONCEPT 4:

ACCEPTING “NO” AS AN ANSWER

The process of consent will look different in every situation (Wright et al., 2024). Being able to receive and accept rejection (or being told “no”) is an important part of communicating and respecting consent, especially because it should always be acknowledged that “no” is a possible and understandable response. Experiencing rejection can result in frustration, hurt feelings, confusion, sadness, and anger. Supporting youth to navigate these challenging emotions and to move forward in a healthy way is imperative to enabling youth to respect the decisions that others make. It is important to centre agency and autonomy in conversations of rejection in consent because everyone should always have the ability and power to say “no”.

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK

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QUESTION: I asked for consent and the answer is “No”. How should I react?

ANSWER: You did the right thing in clearly asking for consent. Getting a “No” can be hard to hear, especially if you were expecting a “Yes”. You might be tempted to pressure your partner to change their “No” to a “Yes” but that is not ok. The best way to go about it is to accept and respect their decision. You can say, “Thanks for being clear with me, I asked because I really like you. I respect you, it’s good that we understand each other.” The person is more likely to have a positive attitude towards you if you show that you respect their decision.

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK

QUESTION: How can I work past being rejected without getting angry?

ANSWER: It can be hard to feel rejected and many of us are taught to feel anger as the first emotion to disappointment. It is important to remember that when a person says “No” or asserts their boundary, they are doing something for themselves and not something against you. Nobody is entitled to sex, and nobody is owed an explanation for why someone does not want to do something with you. Listening to people with empathy and respecting their autonomy to say “Yes” or “No” to something is an integral part of healthy communication and relationships. If you feel anger after being rejected, take some time and space for yourself to reflect on why you feel that way, and consider talking with a trusted friend or adult about it.

QUESTION: How do I say no to someone without hurting their feelings?

ANSWER: The thought of disappointing someone can be scary, but it is important to communicate your feelings and what makes you feel comfortable with people you care about openly. Sharing your boundaries can create a stronger connection built on trust and respect. It is important to remember that when you say “No” to something, you are doing so for yourself and not doing anything against another person. Sometimes it can be helpful to explain why you are saying “No”, however you should not feel obligated to do so, because your “No” should be respected with or without explanation.

SUPPORTING BOYS TO RESPECT “NO” AS AN ANSWER.



Centre values of care, empathy, co-determination and communication in teaching about consent.

Consent should not be considered something to “check off” or be “achieved” at the start of a given social or sexual interaction (see Jeffrey, 2022; SIECCAN, 2023). In any supportive and respectful relationship, it is important to want the other person to feel good and comfortable with the decisions they make. It is normal to want someone to agree with what you want to do, but healthy relationships require a mutual respect of boundaries, autonomy, and agency. Express to boys that part of caring for others is ensuring they are comfortable in the interactions you have with them.

Emphasize the importance of accepting “no” as an answer. Popular media does not offer many healthy examples of saying “no” to questions of consent and boys may not have examples of role models in their lives to exemplify respecting rejection. It is important for boys to learn that someone saying “no” to them is an example of the other person exercising their agency and autonomy and that saying “no” can be an indicator that the other person is comfortable enough to reject something they do not want to do.

Take a foundational, building-blocks approach to teaching about consent, where developmentally and age-appropriate information about consent is introduced to youth at a young age and built upon at later ages (see *Benchmarks for comprehensive sexual health education in Canada* <https://www.sieccan.org/shebenchmarks>).

SUPPORTING BOYS TO RESPECT “NO” AS AN ANSWER.

Emphasize that consent is an ongoing process and can be withdrawn.

When somebody withdraws consent, it means they want to stop what they are doing. People can change their minds after agreeing to something. Additionally, consenting to one activity does not mean consent to any other activities, and consent in the past does not mean you have consent for the future. Many people have misconceptions about providing and withdrawing consent (Benoit & Ronis, 2022). These misconceptions can enforce harmful myths about victims/survivors and sexual assault (Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2025). Providing youth with correct information about withdrawing consent is essential to countering misinformation (see Digital Media Literacy on p. 38 - 49 of *Educator guide: Gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>). Encourage boys to continuously check in with others to ensure everyone is comfortable, informed, and consenting. As consent is reciprocal, they should also learn to expect this same check-in process from their partners and friends.

Inform boys that a person should not be pressured or coerced to agree to something they do not want to do. Examples of pressuring someone can include asking them the same request over and over when they have already said “no”, demanding an explanation for why they are saying “no”, or threatening consequences of harm if they do not change their mind. Consent must be willful, so if someone agrees after they have been coerced, that is not consent. See:

- *Sexual Boundaries: How to Spot Sexual Coercion* <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/blog/sexual-boundaries-how-to-spot-sexual-coercion>
- Consent Violations on p. 16 - 17 of *Educator guide: Gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>

SUPPORTING BOYS TO RESPECT “NO” AS AN ANSWER.

Take the time to listen to boys’ concerns in an open and respectful way.

Asking for consent includes vulnerability and youth may not feel confident in their skills to have conversations with relational partners. Explain to boys that they may feel complex reactions after rejection. Let them know that they are not alone and that experiences of rejection are common. However, sometimes we feel more anger about rejection because we feel entitled to someone’s time or consent. Have boys reflect on a time they said “no” to someone and whether that person respected their decision or not. How did that make them feel? See:

- *Creating a culture of consent* <https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ask-first/about-ask-first/creating-culture-consent>
- *Engaging Men and Boys* <https://preventdomesticviolence.ca/our-work/engaging-men-and-boys/>

Support boys to enhance their emotional vocabulary so they have the language to identify and communicate their feelings (see The Feeling Wheel on p. 26 – 27 of *Educator guide: Gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv> adapted from Gloria Willcox’s The Feeling Wheel [Willcox, 1982]).

SUPPORTING BOYS TO RESPECT “NO” AS AN ANSWER.

Discuss communicating consent in online spaces, including laws regarding the sharing of intimate images or videos (i.e., sexting), online safety (e.g., interacting with people on social media or dating apps), and digital consent (e.g., communicating consent online, respecting people’s privacy and digital presence). See:

- Infographic about sharing nudes [**https://www.diydigitalsafety.ca/infographic-sharingnudes**](https://www.diydigitalsafety.ca/infographic-sharingnudes)
- Information about consent in the context of social media [**https://peersrh.com/consent-in-a-digital-world-navigating-social-media-with-safety-and-respect/**](https://peersrh.com/consent-in-a-digital-world-navigating-social-media-with-safety-and-respect/)
- Information about digital consent [**https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/digital-consent-boundaries-and-everyday-consent-online**](https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/digital-consent-boundaries-and-everyday-consent-online)
- Educational games that introduce youth to key ideas in media and digital literacy [**https://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/educational-games**](https://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/educational-games)
- Staying Safe Online! A Guide for Indigenous Youth [**https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f3550c11c1f590e92ad30eb/t/67abbb4598624620069efcfb/1739307850920/StayingSafeOnline.pdf**](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f3550c11c1f590e92ad30eb/t/67abbb4598624620069efcfb/1739307850920/StayingSafeOnline.pdf)
- Digital media literacy resources from CTRL-F [**https://ctrl-f.ca/en/**](https://ctrl-f.ca/en/)

ACTIVITY



ROLEPLAY ACTIVITY

1. Ask youth to get into pairs to roleplay responding to rejection.
2. Distribute prompts for each group and instruct the pairs to take turns for who responds to rejection. Consider person A to be the person receiving the rejection and Person B to be the person rejecting.
3. Person A (Rejected)
 - a. Can I come over after school today to play your new videogame?
 - b. Can I use your cellphone?
 - c. Can I have a bite of your sandwich?
4. Person B (Rejecting)
 - a. No, I already have plans after school today.
 - b. No, I don't want you to touch my backpack.
 - c. No, sorry, I don't like to share my food with others.
5. Instruct Person A to practice responding to the roleplay rejections in a respectful manner.
6. After each group has had the chance to practice one or two prompts from each perspective, invite the class or group to discuss how each exercise felt for them.

Discussion questions:

- When you were told no, how did that make you feel?
- If you had asked for something that you really wanted, would it have changed how you felt? Why?
- How can we foster environments where people feel more comfortable to say no?

Note that if there are multiple genders in roleplay pairs, consider how your facilitation and the script of Person B may be shaped by power dynamics informed by gender identity. Frame the activity for youth to practice saying "no" so that both saying and receiving "no" as a response feels more normal.

CORE CONCEPT 5:

RESPONDING TO VIOLATED CONSENT

It is important for service providers to be familiar with topics of consent, trauma, gender-based violence (GBV), and know how to respond to disclosures of violated consent because young people may disclose experiences of abuse (SIECCAN, 2023a). When consent has been violated, a supportive response is trauma-informed and victim/survivor-centered.

Trauma-informed responses require practices that promote safety and healing while understanding that trauma is often caused by violent systems of oppression (Xie, 2023). Violence and violations of consent can be viewed as products of our society and socialization. Models of transformative justice and restorative justice (i.e., emphasizing healing, safety, accountability, and harm prevention) are critical to responding with care and preventing further harm.

In a SIECCAN consultation with boys, participants said they were concerned about false sexual assault accusations or inadvertently committing sexual assault (2025). While consent messaging such as “no means no” campaigns were an important stepping stone to building consent culture, boys want consent conversations to cover the nuances of consent. Consent education should incorporate positive and healthy examples of consent and include what to do when consent has been violated (Cary et al., 2022).

For more details on trauma-informed practices for the classroom, see p. 41 - 45 of *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <http://www.sieccan.org/gbv>.

COMMON QUESTIONS BOYS ASK

QUESTION: I hear that false accusations of sexual assault are made against boys and men all the time – is that true?

ANSWER: No, that is not true. False accusations of sexual assault are very rare. In Canada, only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to the police. Researchers estimate **only 2-4%** of sexual assault accusations are false. It is much more likely that a case of sexual assault is **not** reported to police than it is that a person makes a false claim that they have been sexually assaulted.

For more information see:

- *Why police dismiss 1 in 5 sexual assault claims as baseless* <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/investigations/unfounded-sexual-assault-canada-main/article33891309/>
- *Sexual misconduct myths and facts.* <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/sexual-misconduct/training-educational-materials/myths-facts.html>
- *Criminal justice outcomes of police-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2015 to 2019.* <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/241106/dq241106a-eng.htm>

QUESTION: What should I do if I tell someone “no” and they don’t listen?

ANSWER: If you clearly say “no” or do not consent to something and someone disregards your boundaries, prioritize your safety and well-being. Calmly but firmly restate your refusal if it’s safe to do so. If the person persists, try to remove yourself from the situation as safely and quickly as possible by leaving the area, seek a public space, or find others who can support you. Tell a trusted person, such as a parent, guardian, friend, teacher, school counsellor, or another authority figure, about what happened. If you feel unsafe or the situation escalates, contact local authorities or a helpline for immediate assistance. Your boundaries deserve respect, and you have the right to feel safe. If you think you have been abused, you can contact The Redwood Shelter, Canada Abuse Helpline:

- **Call their 24-hour helpline:** 416-533-8538
- **TTY:** 416-533-3736
- **Text:** 647-370-8300

RESPOND TO VIOLATIONS OF CONSENT OR CONCERNS OF VIOLATED CONSENT IN A TRAUMA-INFORMED AND VICTIM/SURVIVOR-CENTERED WAY



Familiarize yourself with consent-related resources in your community.

Investigate what programs are available to your community through local organisations oriented towards youth and sexual assault prevention and response, including resources for victims/survivors of sexual assault and perpetrators of sexual assault. Resources for responding to perpetrators of harm are also important to contribute to community safety and prevent further harm from occurring. (see *Perpetrators and Transformative Justice* <https://www.sfcccanada.org/perpetrators-tj>)

Adopt a trauma-informed and victim/survivor-centered approach to support students who disclose an experience of sexual assault or harm. See:

- *You Are Not Alone: A Toolkit for Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people escaping domestic violence* <https://www.nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/2018-Yana-Facilitators-Guide-English-FInal-LJ-1.pdf>
- *Ways to support victims/survivors of abuse when abuse has been disclosed: Gender-Based Violence Teaching Toolkit* <https://www.gbvtaching.com/about-6>; p. 55 of *Educator guide: Gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>
- *Responding to the unexpected in your classroom* on p. 42 - 43 of *Supporting Student Health Guide* https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/subject/phe/Supporting_Student_Health_Elementary.pdf
- *Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning* <https://www.ctf-fce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Trauma-Informed-Teaching-Learning-EN.pdf>

RESPOND TO VIOLATIONS OF CONSENT OR CONCERNS OF VIOLATED CONSENT IN A TRAUMA-INFORMED AND VICTIM/SURVIVOR-CENTERED WAY

Become familiar with strategies and frameworks that help people take responsibility and repair harm when consent violations occur. Young people will make mistakes communicating about consent. When this happens, it is important to act and ensure that the person who caused harm takes responsibility for their actions and the person harmed has the opportunity to voice how they were affected and what they need to feel supported.

Restorative justice is an approach that aims to foster a sense of accountability when harm has occurred, emphasizing repair in ways that are victim/survivor-led (Biffi et al., 2023). Restorative practices (e.g., peer mediation, circle time, family group conferencing etc.) can be useful in school settings to address conflict and promote positive peer relationships and social-emotional skills (Lodi et al., 2022).

Transformative justice is similar but places greater emphasis on systemic change and the social, political, cultural, and/or economic context that contributed to the harmful behaviour (Karp & Armour, 2019). The principles of transformative justice include: 1) healing and safety, 2) accountability, and 3) prevention and commitment. Adopting the principles of transformative justice can provide youth with a model to understand the consequences of harm and the importance of accountability (SIECCAN, 2023a).

In Canada, there are ongoing discussions related to the role of restorative justice in cases of sexual assault (Evans, 2024; McFarlane & Stone, 2025; Schmunk, 2025). Given the challenges victims/survivors experience in the criminal justice system (e.g., hostility, victim blaming, etc.), some have called for restorative justice to be available as an alternative to criminal trials.

RESPOND TO VIOLATIONS OF CONSENT OR CONCERNS OF VIOLATED CONSENT IN A TRAUMA-INFORMED AND VICTIM/SURVIVOR-CENTERED WAY

See:

- *Using Restorative Justice in the Classroom* <https://learningbird.com/using-restorative-justice-in-the-classroom/>
- *Using Restorative Justice to Transform School Culture* <https://www.edutopia.org/article/using-restorative-justice-transform-school-culture/>
- *Tools and Successful Practices for Restorative Schools Supporting Student Achievement and Well Being in sections 2-5* https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/ObqnNj_38e965_ad7507e9e2474f8aaa3b903afcb1ecf7_2.pdf
- *Human Rights Education and Transformative Justice and Information on Reporting Abuse and Disclosures on p. 50 - 54 of Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* https://www.sieccan.org/_files/ugd/1332d5_f704ce988b364f598fc34100a3ed9d19.pdf
- *Ending Child Sexual Abuse: A Transformative Justice Handbook* <https://generativesomatics.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Transformative-Justice-Handbook.pdf>
- *Directory of restorative justice* <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/rj-jr/programs-programmes.aspx>

Address common myths and misconceptions about sexual assault. It is important that young people have the knowledge and skills to critically examine or challenge the social norms and scripts that impact people's ability to consent or seek support for experiences of sexual assault (SIECCAN, 2023a). See:

- *Dispelling the myths about sexual assault:* <https://www.ontario.ca/page/dispelling-myths-about-sexual-assault>
- *Sexual misconduct myths and facts* <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/sexual-misconduct/training-educational-materials/myths-facts.html>

RESPOND TO VIOLATIONS OF CONSENT OR CONCERNS OF VIOLATED CONSENT IN A TRAUMA-INFORMED AND VICTIM/SURVIVOR-CENTERED WAY

Include information on how power dynamics can impact a person's ability to consent. Consent requires the freedom to say “no” and if the person asking for consent has more power over the other person, then the consent cannot be free (see *I Ask How Power Impacts Consent* https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/Power%20Dynamics%20Handout_508.pdf).

Teach boys that people of all gender, including boys, can experience sexual abuse and affirm that all victims/survivors should be supported.

- *Understand and Identify Child Sexual Abuse* <https://www.protectchildren.ca/en/resources-research/understanding-child-sexual-abuse/>
- The Power & Control Wheel on p. 21 – 23 of *Educator guide: Gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>
- *Supporting Youth Experiencing Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence* <https://www.gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased-newsletters/issue-39/Learning-Network-Issue-39.pdf>

ACTIVITY



REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Ask boys to brainstorm ways they have felt pressured or may have pressured others into making a decision that they didn't want to make. Encourage reflection in the form of writing or partnered discussion with the following prompts:

Reflecting on a time when someone might have felt pressured by you, even if that wasn't your intention:

- How do you think it made the other person feel?
- How can you ask for consent in the future to make sure the other person feels safe and comfortable to say "yes" or "no".
- What would you do differently now?

Reflecting on when they have felt pressured by another person into making a decision they did not want to make:

- What actions made you feel pressured into something you didn't want to do?
- How could they have been more respectful of your boundaries?

Please note that activities where youth are asked to reflect on past experiences of being pressured or recalling consent may lead to disclosures of harm or experiences of GBV.

See:

- *Teaching About Gender-Based Violence Toolkit* <https://www.gbvteaching.com/about-6>
- Information on creating welcoming classroom environments for discussion and responding to disclosures of abuse and GBV on p. 7 - 8 and p. 55 - 59 of *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>

CORE CONCEPT 6:

HOW TO INTEGRATE PARENTS AND GUARDIANS² AS PARTNERS

Parents/guardians have an important role in teaching and modelling consent with their child (Davies et al., 2022; Ministère de l'Éducation, 2021; SIECCAN, 2019). However, parents/guardians often experience discomfort communicating about sexual health with their child and may not feel prepared to effectively address consent (André et al., 2020). Inconsistent or lacking information about consent from parents/guardians is linked to emerging adults not feeling prepared to discuss sexual consent (Cary et al., 2022). Parents/guardians should be encouraged to work with service providers to ensure consistent and complementary information about consent is modelled for boys. Engaging with parents/guardians enables consent education to better meet the unique needs of each family and allows the education to be maintained and strengthened across multiple settings.

COMMON QUESTIONS PARENTS AND GUARDIANS ASK

???

QUESTION: Why does my son need to know about consent if he isn't having sex?

ANSWER: Consent is an important part of all relationships, including friendships, family relationships, interactions with teachers, healthcare providers, support workers, and coaches. It is important that your son can communicate his own boundaries to others and respect the autonomy and agency of those around them. All respectful and healthy relationships require consent. In the future, when your son is trying to decide if he wants to have sex, he will be best able to do so with a firm understanding of consent.

COMMON QUESTIONS PARENTS AND GUARDIANS ASK

QUESTION: How can I help my son understand and practice consent?

ANSWER: Modeling consent at home is a great way to encourage understanding and practicing consent. For example, asking your child for a hug before you touch him and respecting his answer if he responds with “no”, can model for him how to kindly respond to the answer “no”.

Teaching your son what is needed for consent is important. Example prompts to discuss consent include:

- If you want to have sex with someone, it’s really important that both people fully consent to it. Let’s talk about how you would make sure that everything is fully consensual.
- Consent isn’t just about sex; it is important for all relationships. Do you think consent can be an act of care for your friends too?
- If you are getting consent from someone, they must have a clear understanding of what you are asking. Let’s talk about how you would ask someone for consent to sex so they have a clear understanding of what you are asking them for.
- Consent at the start of a sex does not mean you have consent for other things, and someone can stop consenting at any time for any reason. Are you clear on how you would check-in with your partner to make sure you still have consent for sex?

HOW HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN INTEGRATE PARENTS AND GUARDIANS AS PARTNERS IN THE DELIVERY OF CONSENT EDUCATION:



Inform parents and guardians about the importance of consent education

in promoting the well-being and safety of their child, as well as the safety of the individuals their child interacts with. Without access to formal means to learn about consent (e.g., in schools, by trusted professionals and organizations), youth may turn to unmonitored sources (e.g., social media, peers) and may lack adequate support to identify who and/or what information they can trust. See:

- *Teaching Your Young Child About Consent* <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=acm2221&lang=en-ca>
- *Teaching Your Older Child About Consent* <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=acm2222&lang=en-ca#acl1429>
- *A Parent Toolkit About Consent* <https://care.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk2951/files/inline-files/ParentConsentToolkit%20%281%29.pdf>
- *I Ask How to Teach Consent Early* https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/TeachHandout_508.pdf

Encourage parents and guardians to regularly ask for their child's consent

(e.g., We're leaving the house now, do you want me to help you put on your jacket?; Can I take a picture of you to send to your aunt?) and to respect their child's decisions (e.g., It's okay if you do not want to give your uncle a hug) and to model consent in their household so that youth can practice communicating consent in their daily lives.

Inform parents and guardians about what is taught within consent education

and provide parents/guardians with opportunities to contribute to the consent education their child receives. Providing youth with all of the relevant topics within consent education requires the valuable contributions parents and guardians can make within their own families.

HOW HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN INTEGRATE PARENTS AND GUARDIANS AS PARTNERS IN THE DELIVERY OF CONSENT EDUCATION:

Support parents and guardians in preventing radicalisation and extremism from untrusted online sources by being engaged in their children's social media use. For instance, the "manosphere" is a network of communities that promote harmful beliefs and attitudes about women under the guise of struggles experienced by men (U.N. Women, 2025).

- Prevent radicalisation and extremism by acting early <https://actearly.uk/>
- How to navigate social media safely with your kids <https://counterhate.com/parents-guide-how-to-navigate-social-media-safely-with-your-kids/>
- How to counter the manosphere's toxic influence <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-to-counter-the-manospheres-toxic-influence>
- What parents need to know to talk to their children about the manosphere <https://theconversation.com/what-parents-need-to-know-to-talk-to-their-children-about-the-manosphere-252984>
- What is the manosphere and why should we care? <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/what-is-the-manosphere-and-why-should-we-care>

Work with parents and guardians to be a source of support for when their child has questions or experiences uncertainty regarding consent and their sexual health. Consent education requires parental involvement in boys' lives. It is common that most adults have not had formal consent education, so consider parents/guardians coming to you with questions as a learning opportunity that will benefit them as well as their children.

ACTIVITY



DISCUSSION ACTIVITY FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

When spending time with your child, take note of examples of relationships or scenes in movies or online streams; ask your child to reflect on whether they think consent was present. Express that consent is an important part of interacting with others. By using different examples, you can help them understand consent throughout their lifetime. Example reflection prompts can include:

- If someone you know is being pressured to do something they did not want to do, what could you do?
- Can you think of an example where somebody respected your boundary respectfully? How did that make you feel?
- Have you ever felt like someone had more control over a situation than you did? How did that feel? What could have made things feel more equal? See Power & Control Wheel on p. 21 - 23 of *Educator guide: Gender-based violence prevention within school-based comprehensive sexual health education* <https://www.sieccan.org/gbv>

SUMMARY

This Guide provides health service providers with key information and activities/resources for providing consent education to boys that accounts for their educational needs.

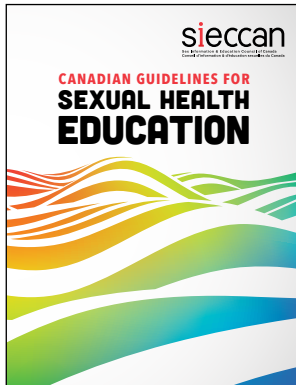
The recommendations outlined in this Educator Guide aim to empower boys to learn and practice agency and autonomy, express diverse and healthy forms of masculinity, ask for consent, accept “no” as an answer, and respond to and be accountable to violated consent.

The recommendations outlined in this Educator Guide aim to empower boys to learn and practice agency and autonomy, express diverse and healthy forms of masculinity, ask for consent, accept “no” as an answer, and respond to and be accountable to violated consent.

Health service providers are encouraged to collaborate with other service providers, families, and boys to strengthen the consent education provided across their life.

LEARN MORE!

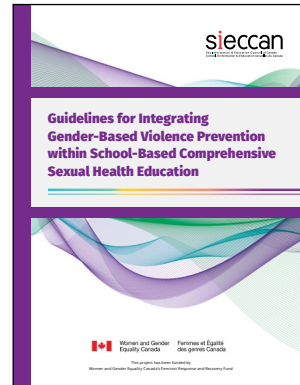
SIECCAN has many resources on the topic of consent. You may be interested in the following:



Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education

For guidelines on developing and evaluating comprehensive evidence-based sexual health education in Canada

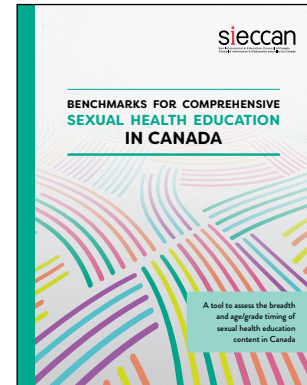
www.sieccan.org/sexual-health-education



Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education

For comprehensive guidelines on consent education within the context of sexual health education and gender-based violence

www.sieccan.org/gbv



Benchmarks for Comprehensive Sexual Health Education in Canada

For a comprehensive tool to understand and assess the breadth and age/grade timing of sexual health education content in Canada

www.sieccan.org/shebenchmarks

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