



## Elmwood Community Resource Centre

### Consent and Development of Relationships



Consent is a voluntary agreement to engage in activity with another individual. Consent needs to be freely given at all times; it cannot be given by somebody who is intoxicated, unconscious or otherwise considered incapable of giving consent. It is also important to mention that consent cannot be freely given if it follows from threats to personal safety or threats to harm others.

It is important to mention that consent can be withdrawn at any time and this can be either indicated with words or actions; no always means no, even if sexual intercourse occurred previously.

Consent should never be assumed based solely on the following variables:

1. **Body language, appearance, or non-verbal communication;** one should never assume that the way an individual dresses, smiles or makes eye contact with them is a form of consent;
2. **Dating relationships or previous sexual experiences;** even though you may have had relations or previous intercourse with that individual, it does not automatically imply consent;
3. **Marriage;** marital rape is just as serious as other sexual assaults;
4. **Previous activities;** consent to one type of sexual activity is not consent to engage in various activities
5. **Silence, passivity, lack of resistance or mobility;** somebody who does not respond to attempts to engage in sexual activity, even if they do not verbally say no or resist physically, is not agreeing to sexual activity;
6. **Incapacitation;** alcohol and other substances can render an individual incapable of consenting, even if they had previously consented before consuming the substances.

Even though asking for consent can be very awkward and uncomfortable, particularly in new relationships or with new sexual partners, it is extremely important to ensure that your partner and you are on the same page. Consent can be approached in simple ways, such as; do you want to? Is this okay? Are you comfortable? Do you want to keep going?

Without consent, sexual activity is considered to be sexual violence. Sexual violence can be classified as;

1. **Sexual assault;** any unwanted act done by one person to another including unwanted touching of a sexual nature such as kissing, fondling, oral sex or intercourse
2. **Sexual harassment;** any unwanted verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature

If you, or somebody you know such as your friends, family members or loved ones, have experienced sexual violence, there are resources available to support you through counselling:

-> Klinik's 24 hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line. 204-786-8631

-> Elmwood Community Resource Centre Counselling; 204-982-1720 ext. 201