

Boundaries and Consent



Content Warning



*****SASH Club Power Topics may include sensitive content that may be difficult to present and may possibly be triggering to some participants.*****

You may want to seek the support of an ally during this presentation, especially if you're a survivor of sexual violence.

What's Ahead

Boundaries:

- Examples of healthy & unhealthy relationship boundaries
- Emotions associated with healthy & unhealthy boundaries
- Importance of knowing and communicating boundaries

Consent:

- Defining, giving, and recognizing consent
- Clearly saying and recognizing “no”

- What can I do if I am sexually assaulted?
- What can I do if I experience or witness sexual harassment?

Establishing Healthy Boundaries

Establishing boundaries begins with knowing your worth and your values:

- Value yourself for who you are – you don't need to change to satisfy others
- Take care of yourself and your needs – prioritize caring for yourself mentally and physically so you're happy and healthy
- Give of yourself when it is reasonable, appropriate, and feels safe – it's okay to say no to things that make you uncomfortable or ask too much of you
- Understand yourself and your goals – don't rely on others to tell you who you are and whom you wish to become
- Stay true to your personal values – say no to anything that feels wrong

Examples of Healthy Boundaries

- Trusting people you know well
- Sharing pieces of your life with others
- Weighing the pros and cons of your relationships
- Taking things slowly (emotionally and physically)
- Asking if it's okay before touching/physical contact
- Advancing the physical relationship only if and when you feel ready

Make sure you recognize behavior that breaks your boundaries, and assert yourself when it happens – call out the behavior and reinforce your boundaries...

because having boundaries is only helpful if you keep them strong!

Examples of Unhealthy Boundaries



Relating to self-worth:

- Putting yourself down and feeling unworthy of self-love
- Letting other people set your goals or determine who you should be
- Letting others decide what you should wear or how to style your hair
- Giving up your values to match someone else's values

Relating to trust:

- Never trusting anyone
- Sharing intimate details with someone you've just met

Examples of Unhealthy Boundaries

In choosing relationships:

- Letting people walk all over you
- Giving of yourself because others expect it, not because you want to
- Ignoring the cons in a relationship, even if it makes you unhappy

In pacing a relationship:

- Rushing yourself and/or your partner
- Engaging in physical intimacy soon after you meet someone
- Touching your partner in a way that makes them uncomfortable

Healthy relationship boundaries can be recognized because they bring you...

- Happiness
- Hope
- Joy
- Contentment
- Excitement
- Growth
- Energy
- Optimism
- Enhanced self-esteem
- Self-respect
- Encouragement

Unhealthy relationship boundaries can be recognized by emotions like...

- Lowered self-esteem
- Feeling stuck/desperate
- Obsessive thoughts
- Feeling alone
- Feeling discouraged
- Fatigue
- Dread
- Sadness
- Fear
- Insecurity

Know Your Limits

- Before you can communicate your boundaries to your partner, ***you*** must clearly know them yourself.
- Take some time to decide what boundaries fit best with your value system and comfort level.
 - It's best to do this beforehand so your decisions are more rational.
 - Deciding in the moment can lead to impulsive choices.

Types of Boundaries You Should Set

- **Time spent together**
 - Compared to time with other friends, on activities, or on schoolwork
- **Online activities**
 - Posting on social media about the relationship
 - Posting or tagging images of your partner without asking them first
- **Phone/messaging activities**
 - Frequency and length of time spent talking and messaging
 - Acceptable length of time to respond

Types of Boundaries You Should Set

- **Intimacy of messages**
 - Agree on a level of intimacy in text messages that you are both comfortable with
 - Never ask for or send nude/partially nude images. Either can have very serious consequences, legal and personal, **and is never okay, under any circumstances.**
- **Physical intimacy**
 - Kissing, touching, intimate acts
 - Agree each time. Don't assume just because consent was given earlier that it is always okay.

Importance of Communication

- Once you know your boundaries, and confirm they are healthy, learn to communicate them clearly
 - It's easy to say “yes” without hurting someone’s feelings
 - Saying “no” should be clear and not leave room for confusion
 - It takes practice to clearly say “no” without hurting feelings, but do not dilute your “no” message in an attempt to be polite
- Have your partner clearly communicate their boundaries and ask questions if anything is unclear

Talk About It



- Why it is important to have healthy boundaries?
- Why is it important to know your own boundaries before they are tested?
- Can you identify examples of unhealthy boundaries?
- Have you ever felt bad saying “no” and deflected the question instead of clearly conveying “no”?

Characteristics of Consent

Consent is always:

- Clear
- Specific
- Voluntary
- Ongoing
- Coherent

Characteristics of Consent

Examples of confirming consent:

- Ask clearly:
 - “Is this okay?” “Are you comfortable with this?” “Can we ____?”
- Be specific:
 - “Can I kiss you?” “Would you like a shoulder rub?” “Can I put my arm around you?”
- Ensure it’s voluntary:
 - “You can say no.” “I only want this if you do.” “We don’t have to do something you’re not comfortable with.” “Tell me to stop whenever you want.”
- Don’t assume it’s ongoing:
 - “Do you want to keep going?” “Do you want to slow down?” “I know we’ve done this before, but do you want to do it now?”
- Ensure coherence:
 - “Are you sober?” “We can stop at any time.” “Are sure about this?”

The FRIES Acronym: Another Way to Identify Consent

- You must give and receive consent before any type of physical intimacy begins
- The more often consent is obtained, the better
- **FRIES:**
 - **F**reely given
 - **R**eversible
 - **I**nformed
 - **E**nthusiastic
 - **S**pecific



Note R for Reversible: consent can be reversed or withdrawn at any time

Importance of Communication



- How do you clearly ask for consent?
 - If you're too uncomfortable to ask your partner about doing something, you probably shouldn't be doing it.
- How do you know if you've received consent?
 - **There is only Yes and No. If it's not a Yes, it's a No.**
 - "Maybe" is not Yes, so it is **No**.
 - "I guess so" and "If you really want to" are not Yes, so they are **No**.
 - If you are not sure you received a Yes, ask again or **STOP**.

Recognizing Non-consent

- If your partner appears unsure, uncomfortable, intoxicated, or explicitly rejects your advances, that is non-consent. Non-consent can be verbal or non-verbal.
- Examples of Non-consent:
 - “I don’t know” “Um...I guess” “Maybe” “If you really want to” “No”
 - Pulling away, tensing up, flinching
 - Becoming silent, failing to respond, laughing nervously
 - Saying “yes” under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- If you sense your partner is uncomfortable, they most likely are.

**You are free to consent only when YOU want.
You are free to withdraw that consent AT ANY TIME.**

How to Hear “No” Respectfully

- It is okay for your partner to say no even if they have said yes in the past. Many factors can influence a person’s decision to engage or not engage in physical intimacy, and they have the power to make that decision independent of your desires.
- Sincerely respect your partner’s boundaries and be appreciative of their honesty; express that to your partner.
- Reassure them that you honor their boundaries and are grateful for their ability to be honest with you.

Talk About It



- Role play in pairs: practice saying “no” to each prompt, making sure you leave no room for misunderstanding:
 - Would you like to see a movie?
 - May I kiss you?
 - Come over to my place first and we’ll leave from there.
 - Do you want to stop for ice cream before the party?
 - Let’s go somewhere private to talk.
 - It’s late. Why don’t you stay at my place tonight?
 - Do you want to go skating this weekend?
 - We’ve done this before, don’t you want do this now?
 - Would you like a beer?
 - It’s just sex. What’s your problem?
 - Can I borrow \$20?
 - I know you want to have sex, you’re just afraid of what other people will say.
 - Do you want to go to a party with me this weekend?

Do More



- Can you think of how you might personally share this information with friends?
- What activities can we brainstorm today for our club to share this information with others?
- Can everyone in the room share one thing they learned today and one thing they will commit to doing to move forward?

Sources & Acknowledgments



Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) www.pcar.org

Video courtesy of Blue Seat Studios

To Do Immediately if Sexually Assaulted



- Get away from the attacker to a safe place as fast as you can.
- Then call 911 or the police.
- Call a friend or family member you trust.
- You can call a crisis center or hotline to talk with a counselor.
- One 24/7 option, for all genders, is the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE (4673).
- RAINN will connect you with a rape crisis center in your area.
- Visit the Survivor Support page at www.sashclub.org/survivor-support/ for more helpline options and details.

To Do Immediately if Sexually Assaulted

- Preserve the evidence, even if you are unsure you will report.
- **Do not:**
 - Wash, comb your hair, or clean any part of your body
 - Brush your teeth
 - Change clothes, if possible, so the hospital nurse can collect evidence
 - Touch or change anything at the scene of the assault
- Seek medical attention ASAP at your nearest hospital ER:
 - You need to be examined, treated for any injuries, checked for possible sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy, and can receive preventative medicine.
 - The nurse or doctor will collect evidence the attacker may have left behind.
- Ask hospital staff to connect you with a local rape crisis center.



If You are Sexually Harassed

- It isn't your fault...and you can get help to make it stop.
- Reach out ASAP to a friend, school counselor or trusted adult for immediate safety & support to bring the issue to your Dean of Students, Principal or Title IX Coordinator.
- Confidential National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
www.rainn.org

Feedback & Suggestions

- SASH Club welcomes your feedback and suggestions on the content of this presentation. Contact us via:
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- Contact an adult advisor with your questions or concerns about local issues.