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Consent is Sexy!

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April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, an effort to raise awareness around and prevent sexualized violence in our world. While everyone is affected by and can be a survivor of sexualized violence, LGBTQ communities (particularly communities of color) have much higher incidence rates and face more barriers towards getting support.

So, what can YOU do to help prevent sexual assault in our communities? One major way is to work towards enthusiastic consent!

Consent, in its most basic definition, is asking for permission for something to happen or agreeing to do something. But we all know that it's not as simple as saying 'yes' or 'no' or even 'maybe? (which, yes, is also an option -- 'maybe' allows room to negotiate and come to an agreement that feels comfortable for all people involved in the activity). It's important to remember that when giving consent it should be an informed decision and when asking for consent, that the person responding is 100% sober. Consent must be a verbal yes; body language and flirty eye contact does not equal "yes." Only a verbal yes is considered consent!

So how do you learn to give consent? What does it feel like? Consent is not just about knowing what feels good to you and saying yes, but also knowing what doesn't feel good to you. It's about knowing what activities you?re interested in, but may not be 100% sure you want to engage in. Remember that you can negotiate. The bottom line is that all people involved should feel comfortable, should be enjoying themselves, and should feel excited about consent. A really good way to think about sex is to ask yourself and/or your partner these questions:

- What would you like?
- Where would you like it?
- How would you like it?
- What barriers do we need to protect ourselves? Condoms? Dental Dams? Etc.

Remember, consent is Sexy!!!

Consent should inspire you! Through consent you can creatively express your sexuality, your

desires, your boundaries and ultimately make you feel free and empowered!

Remember: There are a lot of myths about sexual assault, particularly surrounding the LGBTQ community. The reality is that anybody can be assaulted, and every assault is serious and harmful. It is never your fault if you have experienced sexual assault.

Resources

Communities United Against Violence [1]
Gay Men?s Domestic Violence Project [2]
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects [3] (Includes a list of national partners and their crisis lines)
The Survivors Project [4]
Virginia Anti-Violence Project?s Survivor Handbook [5]
The Consensual Project [6]

National Crisis Lines:
Anti-Violence Project - (212) 714-1141
Gay Men?s Domestic Violence Project ? (800) 832-1901
Trevor Project ? (866) 488-7386

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Links:
[1] http://www.cuav.org/
[2] http://gmdvp.org/
[3] http://www.avp.org/ncavp.htm
[4] http://www.survivorproject.org/index.html
[5] http://www.avp.org/documents/VAVPSurvivorHandbook2011.pdf
[6] http://www.theconsensualproject.com/?int=close