



LawEd

TAKING THE LAW FURTHER



CONSENT - LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Consent is an **extremely important topic when it comes to all relationships we find ourselves in**. A **recent survey** was carried out on impressionable **teenagers from transition year and fifth year class groups** by researchers and students from NUIG and members of the Active Consent campaign. The results were shocking. **These facts and figures solidify the vague knowledge students have surrounding consent.**

It goes without saying that **consent is a sensitive topic**, and can sometimes trigger people's past trauma, so we at LawEd want to assure everyone reading, that **we provide a safe space for all of our followers**. Our main goal since day one is to educate people to make the right choices in life and teach everyone what is acceptable and what isn't. **Consent is something that requires more awareness because not everyone is on the same page.**

So, let's begin with defining what consent is. **Consent is an agreement between two people to partake in something**, anything between agreeing to carpool together to a football match, to engaging in sexual activity together. Although consent comes into all aspects of life, it is mostly associated with romantic relationships.

Consent should **always be expressed clearly and freely**. Therefore, consent cannot be given by those who are underage, intoxicated, unconscious or asleep. Here are some examples of verbal consent:

- "yes"
- "I would like to"
- "I want to keep doing this"
- "Let's do this"

It is important to know that **consent is also reversible**. You may agree to do something and at the last minute change your mind, which is completely fine. **No one can force you to do anything you do not feel comfortable doing, and no one should make you feel guilty for this.**

The main issue surrounding consent is associated with young people today and how they effectively use consent and when. **Recently, a study was carried out by NUIG students who created Active* Consent, a programme for college students used to raise awareness about healthy sexual relationships and the importance of the conversation of consent.** A survey was carried out on a total of 613 secondary school students and it was found that 93% of females and 79% of males agreed that consent was a vital aspect of sexual activity. This left 18% of boys to have no opinion on the topic of consent and a small percentage disagreeing and claiming consent was not necessary in sexual relationships. As well as this, 6% of girls surveyed were neutral in the conversation of consent.

The figures show that 62% agreed consent should always be verbal, meaning that there is a minority of teens that feel you can show consent without actually saying it. 7% of females said they were comfortable with intimate touching, while 51% of males said they were comfortable.

In all situations, **there can be a blurred line between what you say and what you do, and people can interpret your actions in completely different ways to what you are expressing.** The fact that a percentage of young people feel consent can be given without verbal communication is a frightful fact in today's society. **Only yes means yes, it is easy to think someone meant something by their actions, even if this was never their intention.**

It is time to raise awareness about the issue of consent and the need for it to be implemented into all relationships, **as young people are still not understanding the gravity of the consequences of forcing someone into doing what they are not comfortable with.**

There is still a minority of people that are of the impression that consent is not needed when intimately connecting with someone, and this is not true. **Any sexual activity conducted without consent constitutes as rape or sexual assault, and is a criminal offence.**

