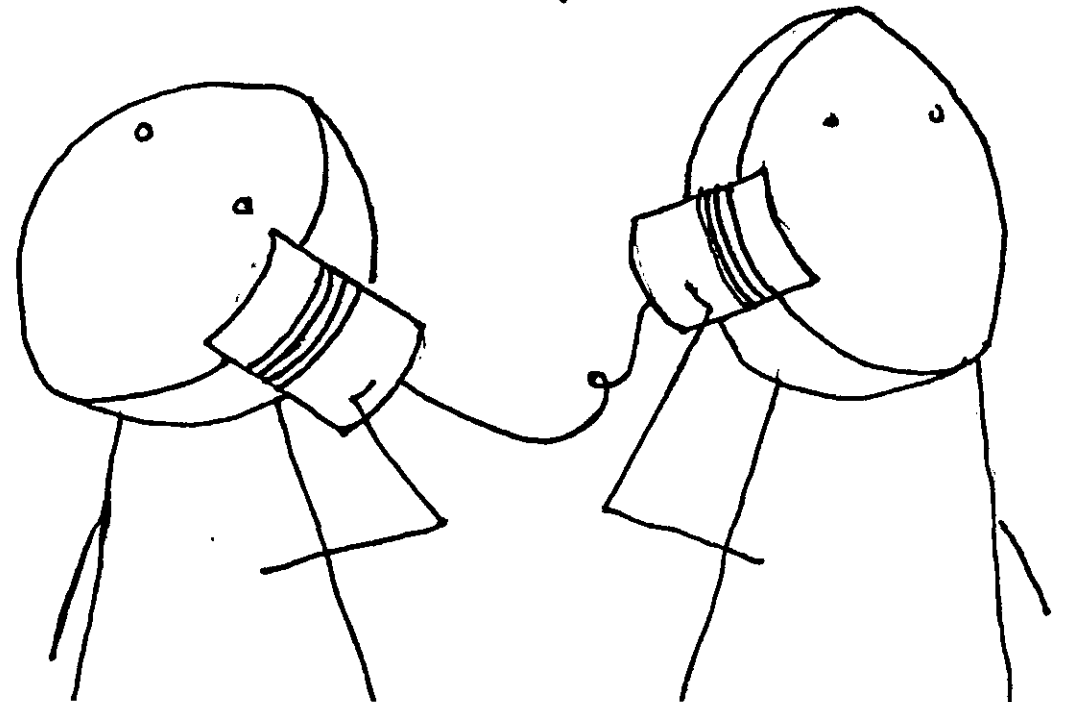


**FOR US, FEMINIST
COMMUNICATION IS
BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN
COMMUNICATION STYLES THAT
CAUSE OPPRESSION AND LACK
OF CHOICE. BY CHANGING
CULTURAL SCRIPTS IN OUR
SEXUALITY AND STRIVING FOR
KNOWLEDGE, SAFETY, RESPECT,
AND CONSENT, WE WORK TO
REDEFINE STANDARDS IN A
TRULY RADICAL – AND
HOT! – WAY.**

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FEMINIST COMMUNICATION
FOR RADICALIZING SEX,
CONSENT, & INTERPERSONAL
DYNAMICS



Ever feel like there is so much to say and so little time to say it? While Fuckin' (A) and Support New York were collaborating to build a workshop on feminist communication, consent, interpersonal dynamics, and strategies to work on healing from abuse, we realized that there was no way to fit everything we wanted to discuss into the limited workshop time we had. So this little companion booklet was created to be a guide for the workshop (presented at For the Birds's *Big She-Bang*), and since then has grown into the zine you're holding. This zine is divided into sections on Language; Communication, Boundaries & Consent; and we end with some Activities & Resources.



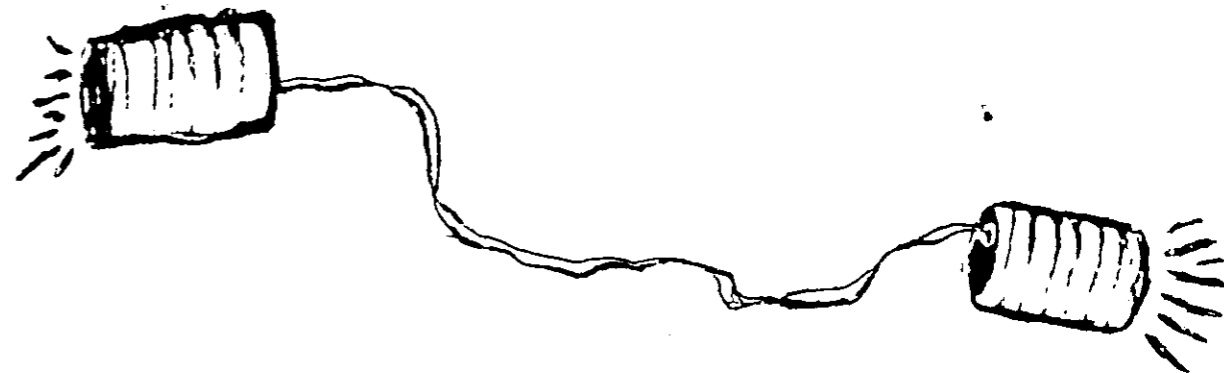
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PLACES, RESOURCES & ORGS

This NYC-based list is by no means a complete list -- these are just some of our favorites and some things to check out next!

- **Bluestockings Bookstore & Cafe:** NYC's radical, volunteer-run bookshop, working from a queer & feminist background. Also has free events almost every night, & free NYC condoms! 172 Allen St @ Stanton / 212.777.6028 / bluestockings.com
- **Callen-Lorde Community Health Center:** Health care for queer & trans folks, and folks with HIV/AIDS. Offers STI testing, free safer sex supplies, an awesome program for youth (HOTT), primary care, & trans health care, all on a sliding scale. 356 W. 18th St @ 9th Ave / 212.271.7200 / callen-lorde.org
- **List of free & confidential NYC Health Department STI clinics:** nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std2.shtml
- **Planned Parenthood:** STI testing, free safer sex supplies & abortion services at sliding scale. Locations in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. 800.230.PLAN / plannedparenthood.org/nyc
- **NY Anti-Violence Project:** 24 hour Spanish/English support & crisis hotline for survivors of violence. Hotline: 212.714.1141. Provides on-site 1-on-1 and group counseling and other services for LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities. www.avp.org
- **All Forney Center:** Housing for homeless queer youth under age 18. 212.222.3427 / aliforneycenter.org
- **Safe Horizon:** Domestic violence shelters for women, 800.621.HOPE / safehorizon.org
- **Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) & Sex Workers Action New York (SWANK):** SWANK provides community & peer support to current & former sex workers. SWOP is open to sex workers & allies. Both are grassroots, activist orgs doing lots of great work to advocate for & support sex workers. swop-nyc.org
- **The Icarus Project:** Awesome radical mental health community project, with a huge website, groups, and a bunch of cool zines. theicarusproject.net
- **LGBT Community Center:** Has lots of great identity-specific discussion groups. 208 W.13th St @ 7th Ave, Chelsea / 212.620.7310 / gaycenter.org
- **RightRides:** Free rides home for women, queers, and gender non-conforming folks on Fri & Sat nights, servicing many neighborhoods in NYC. 888.215.SAFE / rightrides.org
- **Scarleteen:** Sex education & support website for teens & youth with detailed, accurate, accessible information. scarleteen.com

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who we are 

FUCKIN' (A) is a NYC-based feminist political collective that exists to promote, support and facilitate radical sex positivity as a crucial aspect of liberating ourselves and our communities! We educate primarily through fun participatory workshops, discussing topics including communication, consent, safer sex, gender, knowledge about our bodies, and the role that sex practices play in radical social movements. We believe the embrace of autonomy through respect and love of self and others is a slap in the face of the system and a badass step toward the fuckin revolution!

SUPPORT NEW YORK is a collective dedicated to healing the effects of sexual assault and abuse. Our aim is to empower survivors, to hold accountable those who have perpetrated harm, and to maintain a community dialogue about consent, mutual aid, transformative justice, and our society's narrow views of abuse. We came together in order to create our own safe(r) spaces, and to provide support to people of all genders, orientations, races, and ages, separate from the police and prison systems which perpetuate these abuses. We believe that this type of work requires experience not experts, passion not professionals, and devotion not degrees.

Although our two groups have different focuses in our daily work, in the end we are striving for the same things. We want people to have the freedom to really make informed choices about sex, and that means feeling safe and awesome, having knowledge, and respecting ourselves and each other. Ultimately, we're all about folks having the cultural and emotional space to have the sexuality and relationships they want to have.

 *trigger warning* 

Just to give folks a heads up, some of the topics discussed in this zine can get a little heavy. Though you won't find any personal stories about boundary crossing in here, reading and thinking about blocks in communicating, boundaries and triggers can still bring up feelings and reactions to past experiences. If anything does come up for you, feel free to put the zine down and do something else -- making tea, cooking some food, taking a walk, listening to/playing music, writing, and talking to friends about this stuff are all things that often help people feel more grounded. Preemptively, you can also make sure you're in a place where you feel safe when you read this, or read it with a buddy so you can talk about it together. Taking care of ourselves is crucial!

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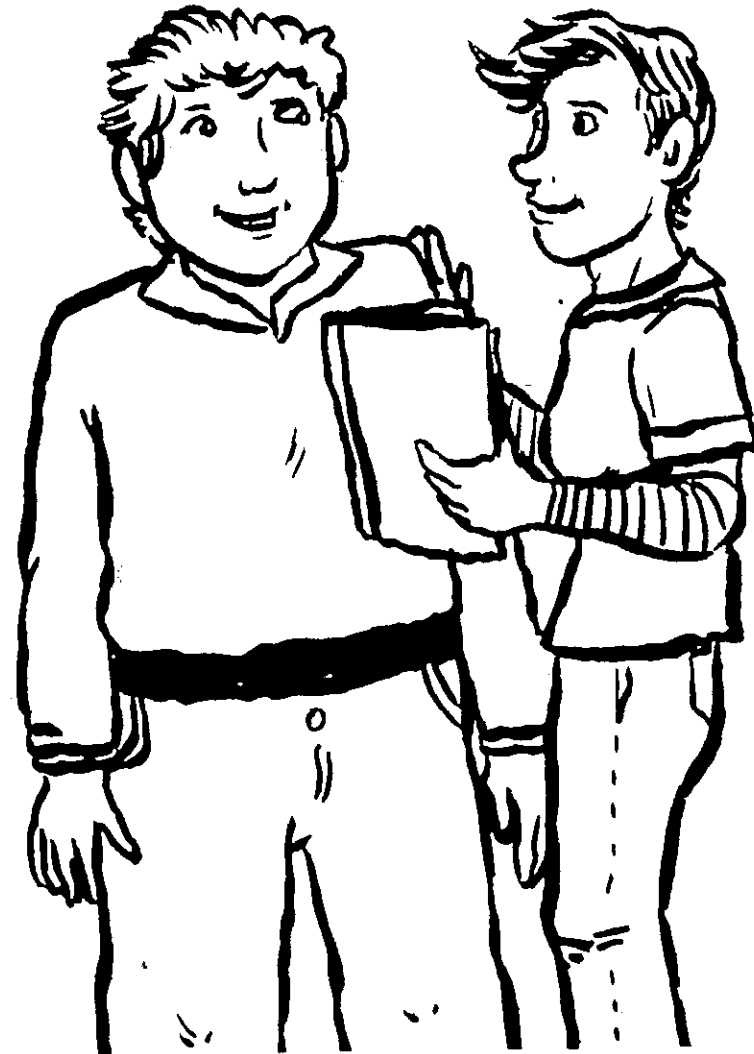
language

In order for good communication to occur, we need to come to mutual understandings of the terms we all use. It's important to check in with yourself and others about the words you use and the meanings, associations, and underlying intentions behind them. As members of Fuckin' (A) and Support New York, we have come to many of the terms we use through an intentional process, but it isn't static - we are always looking for better ways to say what we mean. Words are powerful, and can make you feel good, bad, and even triggered. We use the language we like, so if some of the language we use really doesn't work for you or you have other feedback, please do contact us and let us know!

sexy language

Talking about sex can be really hard! Most of us were never really taught how to talk about sex, and we may not know where to start. Try thinking about the kind of language you like to use. Maybe you like "proper" terms like vagina, penis, and oral sex or maybe you prefer slang terms like cunt, cock, and going down. Or we may need to get creative and come up with our own sexy and affirming language! Think about how you like to refer to your body, and don't forget to check in with others about how they like to have their body referred to, too. Just as we don't want to make assumptions about someone's gender (see pg.5 for further discussion), we don't want to assume that we know what to call their body parts. Think about how to talk about specific sexual acts, too -- the vagueness of expressions like "hooking up" can lead to miscommunication if folks have different definitions. Finding a common language is vital to consent, and for that matter, hot sex! What words do you think are hot? What words are not? Use this space to make some notes, if you'd like!

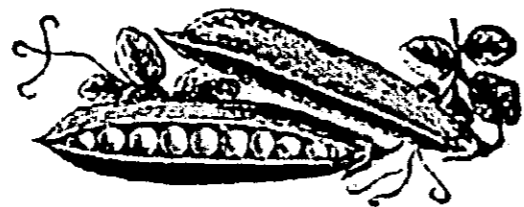
- **Gender Outlaw, My Gender Workbook, & anything else by Kate Bornstein:** Kate questions all our assumptions about gender, and creates the space for us to build our lovely genders (& the rest of our lovely lives) however the fuck we want.
- **Sexing the Body by Anne Fausto-Sterling:** Anne breaks the cultural assumption that all bodies "naturally" fall into binary sex categories, and, with biological and social evidence, shows us how "sex" is constructed.
- **SM 101 by Jay Wiseman:** An awesome intro to responsible, power-conscious BDSM practices, dynamics & politics.
- **Nobody Passes & That's Revolting edited by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore:**



Collections of essays on resisting assimilation in queer identities & activisms. Fuck homonormativity!

- **Healing Sex (previously The Survivor's Guide to Sex) by Staci Haines:** This book explores healing from sexual trauma using the practice of somatics, which is a mind-body approach. It's also queer & transformative justice-y.
- **Good Vibrations Guide to Sex & Moregasm: Babeland's Guide to Mind-Blowing Sex:** Solid sex guides covering a lot of ground. Both are by folks who own sex stores; keep in mind that you should never feel required to purchase your pleasure!
- **Cleis Press' Best [Women's / Bondage / Lesbian / Gay] Erotica:** Good, hot shit.

resources



We borrowed a lot of the content on Active Listening from the zine Support, edited by Cindy Crabb, and the activity questions from the book Healing Sex by Staci Haines.

If you're itchin' for more information or looking for resources, here are some other awesome things we recommend!



READING

- **Support Zine by Cindy Crabb:** A classic zine on preventing sexual violence & supporting survivors. Discusses consent, listening, power, sex, and lots more.
- **Learning Good Consent edited by Cindy Crabb:** Another great zine, considering lot of aspects around consent.
- **Taking the First Steps: Suggestions to People Called Out for Abusive Behavior by Wispy Cockles:** Being called out on abusive behavior can be intense, and this zine goes through a lot of important things to keep in mind in the process of being accountable.
- **Brainscan 21: Irreconcilable Differences by Alex Wreck:** This zine is about psychological abuse in a relationship, and does an awesome job in describing the subtleties of emotional abuse, manipulation, and power in relationships.
- **The Philly Dudes Collective:** A zine about a group of people who organized themselves to discuss and work on issues of masculinity. Talk about patriarchy and masculinity, without falling into the pitfalls of self-blame and guilt!
- **The Ethical Slut by Dossie Easton and Catherine A. Listz & Redefining Our Relationships by Wendy O. Matik:** Awesome starting points on the politics & practicalities of polyamorous relationships, and more broadly on communication and accountability to one's own emotions within all kinds of relationships.
- **Yes Means Yes! Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape edited by Jaclyn Friedman & Jessica Valenti, and What You Really Really Want by Jackyn Friedman:** A collection of essays on consent as process, sex-positive education, & transforming cultural violence into activism, and a follow-up book on figuring out your own desires and boundaries.

fair (fär), n. 1. a competitive exhibition of farm products, livestock, etc. 2. an exhibition of articles to raise money for a charitable purpose.
fall (fôl), v. 1. to descend or drop. 2. to come down suddenly from a standing or erect position. 3. to hang down. 4. to be cast down. 5. to succumb. 6. to lose high position, character, etc. 7. to drop down wounded or dead. 8. to pass into some condition or relation. 9. to become. 10. to come by.

A DEFINITION OF SEX POSITIVITY

Most of us have been exposed to negative messages about sex throughout a large part of our lives. We can easily internalize messages we received as kids, and many of us were told that our body parts and our sexuality are dirty, shameful, or wrong. In talking about sex and our bodies now, a lot of us still experience embarrassment because of this training. Being sex-positive means moving past what we were taught to the truth that our bodies and what we do with them (consensually) are not just okay but good; they are a healthy and important part of our being human. Sex can be one of the most powerful experiences one can have -- which is why sexual assault can also be so devastating. But that also means that sex can have the power to heal and transform our relationships to our bodies. It's a non-capitalist (free!) pleasure, and enjoying ourselves, our bodies and each other's bodies can be a truly radical act. Ultimately, sex positivity means creating space for (and not judging) people's desires and consensual decisions (your own or others'), and, at the same time, working to reclaim our bodies from cultural norms and institutions that maintain sex-negativity as a way to keep us in line.

A DEFINITION OF PARTNER

In this zine, we use the word "partner" to mean anyone you are in a sexual or romantic situation with, spanning the range from someone you may kiss to someone you've made out with to someone you've dated for years.

fallow (fôl/ô), adj. 1. plowed and left unseeded. 2. land unseeded after plowing. 3. to make (land) fallow.
fallow deer, a yellowish Eurasian deer.
Fall River, a seaport in SE Massachusetts. 115,428.
false (fôls), adj., falsar, falsast. 1. not true or correct.



Fallow deer (3 ft. high at shoulder)

familiarity (fô mil/yar/et), n., pl. -ties. 1. close acquaintance. 2. undue intimacy. 3. informality.

familiarize (fô mil/yar/iz), v.t., -ized, -izing. 1. to make familiarly acquainted, as with someone.

famine (fâm/yn), n. 1. extreme scarcity of food. 2. starvation.
famish (fâm/yah), v.t., v.i. 1. to starve. 2. to starve to death. —fam'ished, adj.
famous (fâ/mos), adj. 1. renowned; well-

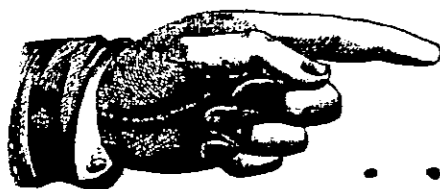
ton, adj., adv. —n. a loud voice, esp. in a whistle. —adv. 3. in a noisy way.
-fying. —v.t. 1. to falsify. 2. to make false. 3. to mislead. —v.i. 5. to make false. —falsify, -falsified, -falsifying.
falsity. —n. 1. quality of being false. 2. a false statement. 3. a false accusation. —falsify, -falsified, -falsifying.
falsify. —v.t. 1. to falsify. 2. to make false. 3. to mislead. —v.i. 5. to make false. —falsify, -falsified, -falsifying.

language around sexual assault

Talking about good consent often involves talking about what happens when consent isn't there. We define the term "sexual assault" broadly as any sexual boundary crossing. Using this definition acknowledges how people can be harmed by many situations, even if our legal system wouldn't necessarily define it as sexual assault or rape. This highlights the necessity of everyone being aware of their own and others' boundaries (see pg.13)! When we talk about consent and sexual assault we often use the terms "survivor" and "perpetrator."

Survivor is used in response to the older common term "victim," which can often feel disempowering. Survivor is meant to be a more positive term that conveys that the event has been overcome but is still part of the person's experience. However, the term "survivor" is not perfect. Not all folks who have experienced sexual violence are comfortable with the term or feel that it applies to them, and in some ways it can still become an identity that reduces all the complexity of a person to one experience.

We use "perpetrator" for the person who caused harm. It is intended to emphasize what someone did as opposed to who they are, but it has similar problems in that it can become, or give the impression of, a permanent identity that doesn't recognize people's capacity for change. It also retains connotations of the oppressive police, court and prison system that we are trying to work outside of. We have also used the terms "aggressor," which possibly puts too much emphasis on physical boundary crossing, and "perpetuator," which refers to someone perpetuating the patriarchal capitalist system that encourages the use of power and privilege to take power and resources from others. This helps to keep the focus on the societal factors that keep abuse so prevalent, but the term can be too confusing. As our dialogue on sexual assault evolves, so should our language.



What other terms have you heard used to talk about sexuality, intimacy and consent? What do you think works, and what doesn't?

a note on gender & language

As feminist collectives comprised of folks with a wide variety of genders, we see gender as socially constructed and more like a continuum than strict a division into "man" and "woman." Not only is there an infinite variety of genders and gender expressions, there's also more variety in biological/physical sex than "male" and

1. Explore what being dissociated or "checked out" is like for you. What happens in your body when you dissociate? What do you say to yourself internally?
2. How can you recognize this state for yourself? How could a partner or friend help you recognize it? What would they sense or see in you when you dissociate?
3. What do you have to gain by living an embodied life? What do you have to gain by having an embodied sex life?
4. List three ways you can begin to re-enter your body, or re-associate. What embodiment practices are you willing to take on regularly?

Reflect on the following questions. Write about them in your journal and have a conversation about them with a support person.

1. Why heal sexually? What do you want to gain from it? How will your life be different and more satisfying? How will you know when you've gotten what you want?

2. What is safety to you? What is the difference between safety and comfort? What are examples of experiences in which you were safe yet uncomfortable?

3. Practice building an internal sense of safety. What sensations and feelings in your body give you a sense of safety, settledness, or resourcefulness? Where do you feel that now?

4. What support do you have now to assist you in your sexual healing?
- a. Self-care: journal writing, positive self-talk, ability to feel your emotions, eating well and exercising, somatic practices, spiritual practice.
 - b. Community support: peer support group, therapist, friends you can talk to about sex and recovery.

5. What do you need to support your sexual healing? What actions can you take to build this network of support? Think big. Go beyond the bare minimum requirements for survival. Imagine having all the support you possibly could use. What would that be?

6. Take a look at your own attitudes and biases regarding sex. Make a list of what you think is healthy and not healthy regarding consensual sex. Discuss your list with a friend. Be sure to include issues of sexual orientation, what you consider appropriate sexual expression for women, fantasy, monogamy and nonmonogamy, abstinence, anal sex, religious beliefs, bondage, sadomasochism (S/M), cross-dressing, etc. This is an opportunity to explore your own beliefs about sex and sexual expression.

Where do these ideas about sex come from? Where did you learn what you believe? Is there more for you to learn about anything on your list? Do you know anyone who practices any of the consensual activities that you

listed as "not healthy"? This is an opportunity to explore and learn more about your own beliefs and values, those you want to keep and those you may want to change.

2. Take a piece of paper and make three columns, titled "yes," "maybe" and "no." In the "yes" column, list all the sexual activities that you enjoy or think you would enjoy. In the "maybe" column, list all the sexual activities that you enjoy under certain circumstances or that you might be willing to try. In the "no" column, list all the sexual activities that you do not enjoy and do not want to explore. Include both masturbation and partner sex. Now, look at your lists. Which column most closely resembles your current sex life?

3. Imagine an activity that is physically pleasurable to you, enlivening to your senses. It could be walking on warm sand, feeling the breeze against your face, touching your partner, having oral sex. Imagine yourself in that scene now. What kinds of sensations are you feeling while you experience this specific pleasure? Where in your body do you feel them? How much pleasure or desire can you take in?

4. What sexual activity or fantasy would you like to try out? Be explicit. What's stopping you?

1. Consider two consensual sexual experiences you've had. What sensations and signals in your body, emotions, and thought process let you know they were consensual?

2. Consider two nonconsensual sexual experiences. What sensations and signals in your body, emotions, and thought process let you know they were nonconsensual? Did you dissociate? When and how?

3. Practice saying your "yes," "no," and "maybe" about sex out loud: "I would like to _____." "I might like to _____." "I do not know if I want to _____." "No, I do not want to _____." Fill in the blanks with your own sexual desires and boundaries. Start by saying these out loud to yourself, then try practicing with a friend. It gets easier quickly with a little practice.

4. Consider two healthy sexual risks. How will these risks serve your sexual healing? Who can support you in taking these risks? How can you take care of yourself in the process?

5. What forms of safer sex do you use? What is your risk level for contracting a sexually transmitted disease? What are your standards for safer sex in your sexual relationships?



"female." Our society loves the male/female binary – after all there's a whole system of power dependent on it – but the truth is that people and bodies are infinitely more complicated. Not only do intersex and trans people point out the limitations of the gender binary, but bodies and body parts in general have so much variety in appearances, shapes, sizes, hormone levels, etc. that nobody's body fits the abstract idea of male vs. female.

That's why we encourage everyone not to assume the gender, sex, or body of anyone, pretty much ever. That's also why we use terms like male-identified/female-identified or male-bodied/female-bodied rather than collapsing all those ideas into male/man/boy/dude or female/woman/girl/lady. For more information on broadening our ideas about sex and gender, check out our resource list, which has some awesome suggested readings.

sexual behaviors, and to ask yourself how they are serving you. If you feel like you might want to stretch yourself, ask yourself what you would need to help you feel safe doing this. This isn't to say that you're not healed unless you can participate in any and all sexual activities, but rather that being able to take risks *and* maintain a sense of safety are great steps towards giving ourselves a whole range of experiences to choose from, and not be limited by past experiences of trauma. It comes down to choice -- are you choosing to do what you want (with your partner's consent)? Or are there constraints from past trauma? From cultural norms? From other internalized fears? Being able to choose what we need and want and to really respect other peoples' choices is a huge part of what makes healing possible, and is one small, radical way to stop cycles of abuse.



activities!

A lot of us have found the following activities really helpful in parsing out our own ideas around boundaries, default sexual beliefs and behaviors, and consent. These questions, borrowed from Staci Haines' book *Healing Sex*, are good questions for everyone -- even if you don't identify as a survivor, that doesn't mean you don't need to examine hang-ups, desires, and ideologies about sex. This is especially true because we're all products of a sexually violent culture. Work on knowing your boundaries, desires, and needs, and then if you'd like.... stretch! Gently test yourself! Experiment safely, and feel good! Once you practice and learn about yourself within the context of consent, you may be able to tap into creativity, confidence and communication you never thought possible. Check it out!

Communication, boundaries & consent breaking cultural scripts & roles

Growing up in mainstream American culture, and in many other cultures as well, we are fed (and then we internalize) all sorts of whack ideas on gender roles, sexual games, and mating rituals that need to be deconstructed for us to find the liberating desires that are truly ours. When we redefine and revalue our relationships, we can no longer assume or take anything for granted. So we have to recreate and redefine every dynamic we come in contact with, and establish new community and personal standards for communication. What standards have you been taught and what stereotypes have you been fed that would be good to examine? Think about sex, gender, race, class, dis/ability, body image, and other markers of difference.

To give a pervasive example: There's a widespread standard heteronormative (and gender binary) script regarding sex that says that boys are the drivers (initiators) that will go as far and as fast as they can with a girl, and it's the girl's job to be the brakes. This script is pervasive even in radical communities, and is harmful to everyone. It's harmful to folks doing the masculinity thing because there's no space to have a full range of emotions, or to not want to have sex. And it's harmful to the folks put in the position of having all the responsibility for how much happens sexually. Regardless of the sex or gender of the person you're with, it's good to be conscious of how your chosen or perceived gender might affect your expectations about what acts you take part in, what roles you play, and how you initiate or respond. It's important that we reject imposed expectations in favor of focusing on our actual, internal desires.

Another cultural script (that applies to folks of all genders) tells us that we shouldn't need to talk about sex -- that romance is about meeting eyes with a stranger, and then BAM! Or that we can just grab a partner and kiss them -- think of how many times we've seen someone get grabbed and kissed in the movies, often in the middle of an argument. The truth is that sex can be mysterious, romantic, and surprising while still talking about it. Talking about sex is sexy!

Breaking cultural scripts involves throwing away old limited ideas of what sex is and communicating with yourself and others in new ways: "What do I like?" "What do I want?" Then letting your partner know: "I like this," or "please touch me here." ⑧

gendered differences in communication

Like we mentioned, the binary gender system sets up and reinforces roles that aren't necessarily good or authentic to anyone -- and this includes norms around communication. Female socialization pins ladies as the "gate-keepers" of sex, keeping men at bay from their sexual aggression. We know this is bullshit, but may not recognize that it's hard to undo indoctrination. People who are socialized as women are taught to react, not to act. Female desire often takes a back seat during sex, and prioritizing it is a big part of good consent.

Male socialization often discourages male-identified peeps from sharing too much of their feelings, or even from feeling too much of their feelings. Did you ever get messages to "suck it up" or "keep a stiff upper lip"? It can put a huge damper on communication if you think that sharing is a weakness. Recognizing this pattern in yourself and others is a good first step to reclaiming honest communication of feelings as the brave act that it is!

listening

Listening is a critical part of making space for everyone to communicate. It's supposed to be this universal thing we all know how to do, but in reality there are a million ways to listen. There are extremes in listening practices. On one end, you can be silent and non-responsive. On the other, you can listen while quickly coming up with your own opinions or adding in your own experiences as soon as you get an opening. Different listening styles are appropriate for different situations and people.

Think about listening. Pay attention to the different ways people you know listen. Figure out what it is that makes you open up to certain people and not others. What qualities of listening do they have? What responses do you need to feel heard? Of course everyone is different, and what you need in a listener most likely won't be the exact same thing that the person you're trying to support will need. But thinking about listening, instead of feeling like it's something we should inherently know how to do, is a good first step.

Check in with the people you're invested in listening too, too. Ask them whether they prefer to get everything on their mind spoken before they receive a response, or if they prefer to have each point they're bringing up discussed as they bring it up, or if some entirely different pattern of listening and response will best help them feel heard and supported. Also check if their needs vary according to their emotional state, and keep checking in because needs change over time.

think in dualities that removes decision and process, meaning that it removes *true* choice. Excellently, intimacy can be an awesome place for exploration and redefinition of cultural ideals.

As radicals we know that the complexities of interaction go beyond yes or no, good or bad. And we also know that we can be good people and still fuck up at times. We're human, and the fact is that we will all likely cross someone's boundaries at some point. Normative cultural roles give us only two options -- guilt or silence -- but we can go another way. We can be accountable for our actions, making things as right as possible. Being immediately accountable can do a great deal to limit the trauma to an individual. The way to cause the least harm is to fight denial or any defensive reactions and simply say, "I am so sorry I hurt you. Please tell me what I can do."

radical healing

I We've talked a lot so far about how crucial it is to talk about your limits and desires, and to listen to the those of your partner(s). However, the experience of previously having your boundaries violated or denied can often make the already difficult task of talking about and defining your desires feel near impossible. It's easy to devalue your judgment and lose trust in yourself if you feel like your safety and needs have been disregarded by others.

A common response to sexual violence is for survivors to either put up a ton of boundaries or none at all. People might feel like they need to have a ton of control to make sure they stay safe, or they might give up control, so that they don't have to deal with the possibility of having someone else take that away again. If you don't set any limits then your limits can't be violated, right? While these are both totally reasonable and normal reactions, that's just what they often are -- reactions; ways to cope with an experience where power has been taken away.

I Part of healing is taking that power back in way that offers more choice, that lets you get back in touch with what *you* want, and that helps you find the means to communicate that to others. In fact, learning what your boundaries are and how to communicate them is the first step to forming healthier sex relationships for everyone, regardless of whether you are a survivor or not, and whether you are negotiating a one-time playdate or a long term partner. Most of us need healing in some ways from the sexual culture we were brought up in. It's good to ask yourself about your default



radical consent

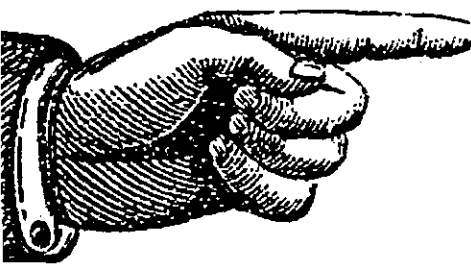
The culture of consent is one we are all responsible for shaping. The moment of an assault and the painful aftermath has a ripple effect through the community and reveals how interconnected we are to one another. While we can clearly see how harm to one person touches so many of us, the reverse is also true. Positive, trusting, respectful, creative relationships and friendships are part of our survival. This tangible type of love and care is what moves us closer and closer to collective liberation.

If you are committed to change and radical re-envisioning of how we interact with each other, you've got to be committed to consent. We do not live in a consensual culture -- that is, we don't live in a culture that values consent on the large scale. Capitalism is the denial of consent; as a cultural system, capitalism convinces us to

One useful communication technique (that can be combined with all of the above examples and questions) is called Active Listening. The purpose of active listening is to help you understand what is going on inside the other person. Because the other person may not always be able to share what's inside of them, the statements they make are sometimes coded or clouded. This means that you have to decode or clear up the message to be able to understand what they are really trying to communicate. The only way to know whether you are understanding correctly is to reflect back to the person what you are hearing from them. In other words, restate (tell them) what you think they are saying. They can let you know in turn whether you are correct or not, and provide further clarification. The purpose of active listening is to show that you are interested and engaged, and that you've not only heard them but that you understand (or are trying to understand) what they said. It helps check your accuracy in decoding what they are saying. It lets them know you're actually there. It communicates acceptance. It helps the person do their own problem-definition and problem-solving and keeps the responsibility on them, not you, to know what's up within themselves.

It's helpful to use this back-and-forth process to bring out hidden feelings – otherwise you might assume the wrong ones. You can ask, "Do you mean...", "Are you saying...", "What does it feel like?" Common errors to avoid when active listening include: exaggerating the feeling, minimizing the feeling, adding insight that's not theirs or rushing insight they might be coming to themselves, omitting or ignoring things they said, parroting what they said rather than decoding it, analyzing what they said or why they feel the way they do. Instead, try to have an attitude of acceptance, non-judgement, patience (having time for them), and trust.

Active listening can be particularly hard to do in a neutral way when it's about you. How do you respond when someone doesn't like something you've done? We recommend trying hard to hear without getting defensive. Sometimes it's really healthy to take a break to process on your own before continuing a conversation.

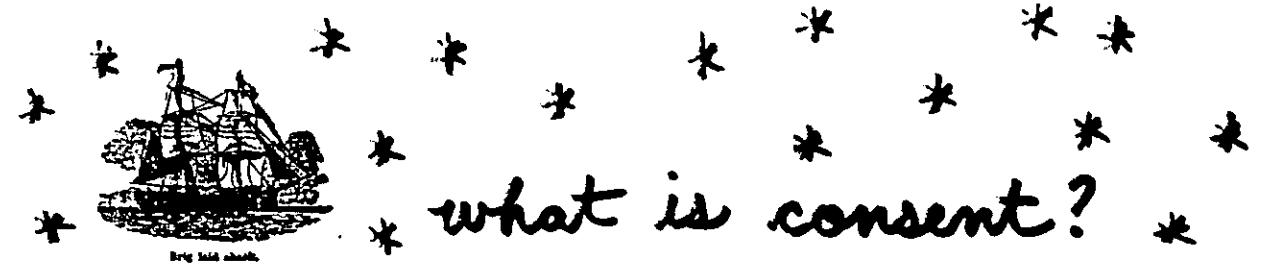


Here are some other questions to ask yourself about listening: How do you give yourself or someone else the space to figure out what you/they want? How do you communicate what you want or don't want? How do you know when someone is excited to be doing what they're doing? How are you sure they are fully present? Do you feel it's the other person's responsibility to say something if they're not into what you're doing?



One cool thing about listening is that it's not always external – communicating with others is reliant upon listening to yourself, upon knowing what you want and need. Talk to yourself, for reals! If you're with someone else, take a time out if you need. Check out the activities section for some self-listening exercises.

Another interesting thing about listening & communication is that it's impossible to not communicate. Everything done in the presence of another person gives out a message. Silence, facial expressions, body language – all say something without words. How do you listen to other folks' body language? What do you think your own body language communicates? How do you address it when someone else's words and body language don't match up?



Good consent is the continuation of good communication. Developing your own process for consent is an important part of defining your desires and learning how to communicate them to others. We've talked about how people communicate about sex differently; similarly, there is no one consent model. In terms of sex, some people might want to be asked how they are in the middle of things, some prefer check-ins at each new level of activity, some might prefer precise negotiation beforehand. Ask up-front how someone prefers to communicate their desires, preferences and boundaries – and be clear enough on yours to say "no, thanks" if they don't line up. Some people don't like verbal consent in the middle of the action -- maybe they find it triggering or mood killing. But many find that talking before things get hot and heavy can be best for a lot of reasons: there's a good chance people are thinking more clearly, it's less likely to cause triggers, plus a lot of people find it really hot to discuss what kind of sex they're going to be having before it happens. Try discussing consent during a massage, or when negotiating some role play. Creativity can also be a big help here, in coming up with new ways to communicate consent – Sign language? Number system? Code words for activities?

Some ways to ask: often "do you want me to..." is better than "can I..." or "may I" (unless you're playing some sexy sergeant thing!). And sometimes in the heat of the moment it's good to start with something you like ("I think it's hot when..."), which can encourage someone to open up with their own desires.

To be clear, consent can't be true consent with coercion or lying. All parties involved need accurate information to make a free choice. What information might you need to feel like you're making an informed decision? STI status, relationship status, expectations, and a lot of other things can feel important for folks to know. Answers to these questions might affect individual choices about what kind of sex they might want to have, safer sex practices, and more.

Consent is not a one time yes/no but a constant process of engagement. It's the continual presence of "yes!", and a commitment to making sure everyone is having a positive experience. Consent is sexy! And fun! It means you're having the sexy experiences you want to have!

Boundaries & communicating them



Boundaries are basically the lines where you stop and others begin. Healthy boundaries are flexible depending on the context and people involved. For instance, you may be comfortable getting a backrub from your partner, but not your boss (or former President Bush!). Often people who push physical boundaries are ones who have the power in our hierarchical society – for instance, a boss would be more comfortable touching a subordinate than the subordinate would be touching the boss, and bosses even often have accessories like desks and large offices to prevent others from getting too close. Men touch women much more than they would feel comfortable being touched, and people often touch (hug, pat) children without a second thought. Part of breaking down oppressive patterns is examining the space you take up (how you impose on other people's space) and how you communicate healthy boundaries.

It's important to check in with yourself about how much you are respecting other people's boundaries. Part of that is being aware of what messages you are sending, verbally and non-verbally, and what effect you have on others.

In a world that all too often doesn't ask us what we want, boundaries are about getting to define what we want, with whom, when, and how. In respecting your own boundaries, knowing your own comfort level is key. The conversation with yourself of what you like and don't like is vital and never ending. Then you need to communicate your needs, desires, and boundaries with others. It's extremely important to let anyone you're intimate with know about things that make you uncomfortable – you don't need to disclose survivor status, and you decide how much to say or not say, but you do need to be clear on your boundaries. It's often safer for your partners and yourself if you disclose your triggers before engaging in situations that could come up against triggers. If you don't want to use the word triggers or boundaries, you can simply state what you don't like. You don't need to justify or explain. Just say, "I can't have my neck touched" (or whatever the case might be). If you want to add mystery or test the waters you can add, "maybe some day I'll tell you why."

in contemplation, and to examine the relations they bear to each other, as to ascertain their agreements or points of resemblance or difference; to compare two pieces of cloth, coins; to compare reasons; 2. To liken; to represent purpose of illustration; fol

Solon compared the people and counselors to 3. In grammar, to form comparison, as an adverb black, blacker, blackest. To compare notes; to exchange views; to compare the results of a investigation.

gōm-pār'ē, s. 1. To be in comparison with anything equal.

2. To vie; to compete. [I gōm-pār'ē, s. 1. To prepare [Obs.]

gōm-pār'ē, s. 1. Comparison. Their small galleys may vie with our tall ships.

2. Simile; similitude; 11 parison. [Obs.]

Protest, and oath, and 1

gōm-pār'ē, s. One who compares.

gōm-pār'ē-sōn, s. [ME. com parison; L. comparatio, comparare, to compare.]

1. The act of comparing; the relation between persons or things, with

1. A passing round; a circuitous course; a gōm-pār'ē-ā-ble, a. Capable of being compassed. 3m'pār'ē-ā-ble, s. The glass box or receptacle of a mar-

A kind of curved brick, so

The circular card to which

is attached in a mariner's

which has the thirty-two points

marked on it.

A compass-card; or a com-

pass; a small sun-dial.

d. Arched; rounded; as, a

An instru-

ment used in

usually of

branches,

of brass,

or pivot,

compasses

for drawing

or circles

for mens-

ure, such

as called

Compass.

1. 1. A

2. With pen

leg for

describing

circle.

Arched;

to timber

in ship-

building.

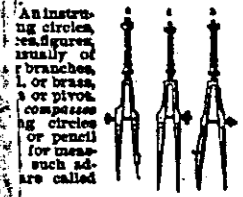
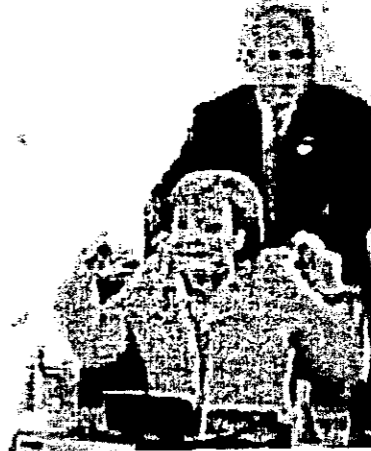
[Obs.]

L.L. com-

passio, s.

[L. com-

passio, s.



ANGELA MERKEL'S (GERMAN CHANCELLOR) SURPRISE BACKRUB FROM GEORGE W. BUSH.

or adverb in its several degrees of signification: as, strong, stronger, strongest; glorious, most glorious.

4. A simile; similitude, or likeness; similitude; a parallel.

Wherunto shall we liken the kir God? Or with what comparison compare it? —Mar

5. In rhetoric, a figure by which two are considered with regard to pre quality, which is common to them in the sentence, as hero is like a lion in ec

A in phonology, the faculty of analyzing, or making contrast.

Comparison of Ages: In law, the test writing to determine its genuineness pearing it with writing known to be at

Beyond comparison; so surpassing 1 as not to admit of comparison with else.

In comparison with; as contrasted with reference to.

Syn.—Likeness, analogy, similitude gōm-pār'ē-sōn, s. 1. To compare. [Obs.]

gōm-pār'ē, s. 1. To compare. [Obs.]

ing, s. [Obs.] To divide, to divide parts; to share; com, with, and part

vide.) To divide; to mark out into subdivisions.

gōm-pār'ti-men'tō, s.; pl. gōm-pār'ti-men'tō, s. [L.] One of the conventional divi-

gōm-pār'ti-men'tō, s. [L.] One of the conventional divi-

gōm-pār'ti-men'tō, s. [L.] One of the conventional divi-

gōm-pār'ti-men'tō, s. [L.] One of the conventional divi-

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gōm-pār'ti-men'tō, s. [L.] One of the conventional divi-

gōm-pār'ti-men'tō, s. [L.] One of the conventional divi-

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gōm-pār'ē-sōn, s. 1. Having a disposition to pity; full of compassion; inclined to show

reful; sympathetic.

ver was a heart truly great and gen-

erous that was not also tender and com-

passionate.

—South.

ing compassion; pitiable; piteous.

erful, tender, soft, indulgent, kind,

fractious.

gōm-pār'ē, s. 1. To pity, to commiserate.

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HOW CAN YOU SURVIVE IN A WORLD WHERE... —Denham.

NON-CONSENSUAL TOP: PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON. THIS BOUNDARY-PUSHING BEHAVIOR WAS NICKNAMED GIVING SOMEONE "THE JOHNSON."

no such commission had been executed.

Acquire, master, obtain, gain, accomplish, achieve, effect, secure.

gōm-pār'ē, s. 1. To pity, to commiserate.