

Boundaries and Consent

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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 and unhealthy relationship boundaries
- Emotions associated with healthy and 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:

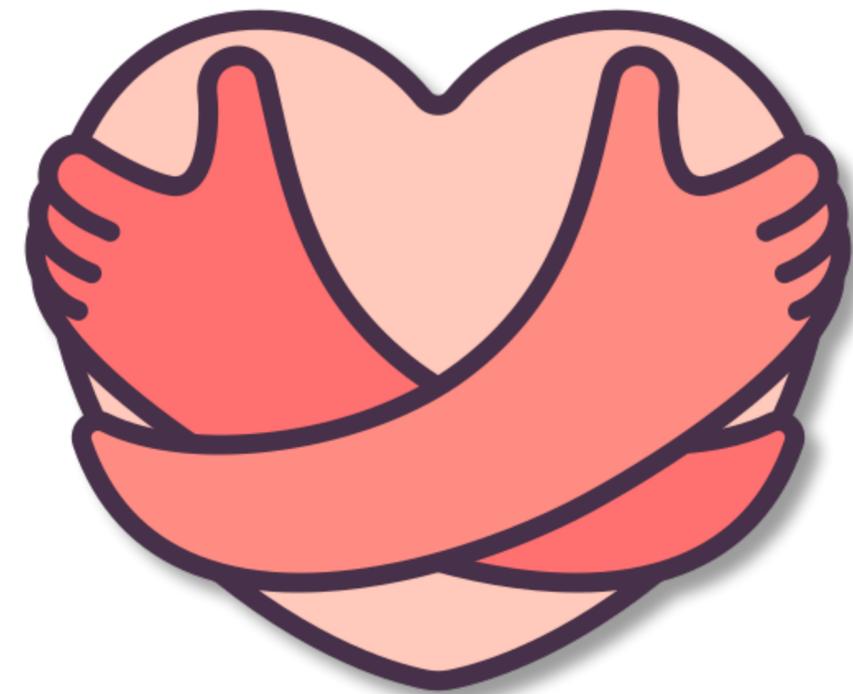
- Letting people walk all over you
- Giving of yourself because others expect it, not because you want to
- Ignoring the cons in a relationship, even if it makes you unhappy

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

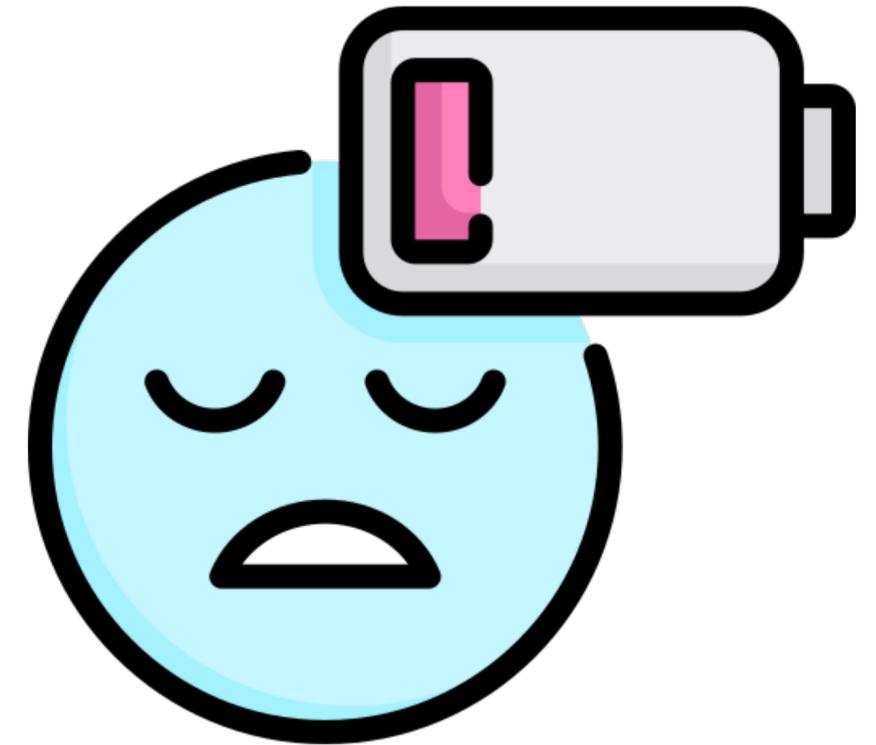
Healthy relationship boundaries can be recognized because they bring you...

- 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

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?”

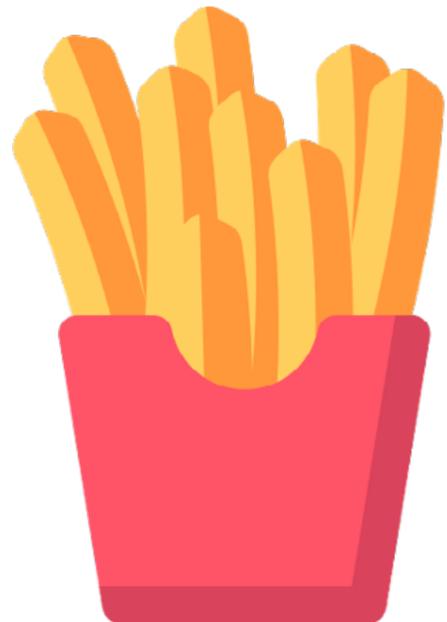
Ensure coherence:

“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



Freely given

Reversible

Informed

Enthusiastic

Specific



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)
- Tea Consent 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](#) 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
- Learn about your rights and how to take action on the [Stop Sexual Assault in Schools website](http://StopSexualAssaultinSchools.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.



THANK YOU

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**Students Against
Sexual Harassment**