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Getting A Yes (Instead of Avoiding A No) – The Standard of Enthusiastic Consent

March 29, 2013(2013-03-29T08:00:03+00:00) by Dr. NerdLove<<http://www.doctornerdlove.com/author/admin/>>

The topic of rape culture and what it means to give consent has been coming up in conversations online and off lately. The discussion regarding whether a sex scene in HBO's *Girls* depicted rape, sexual assault or just bad sex helped bring the topic to the forefront of the Internet. Meanwhile, conviction of two of the suspects in the Stubenville rapes fired up the conversation again when the defense's primary argument was that the boys "didn't receive a definite *no*" from a girl who was so intoxicated that she literally couldn't stand upright and was being carried around like a side of beef.

In the aftermath of the guilty verdict, several people observed that many of the teens at the party *didn't realize that this was rape*. To them, the fact that the victim was *unconscious* didn't mean anything. "I didn't know this was rape," said one witness. "It wasn't violent." It wasn't a stranger leaping out of the shadows, knife in hand to drag her into a dank back alley. It was just some guys and a girl who was too drunk to say "no".



The idea of just avoiding a "no" is a distressingly common one. The emphasis on consent is often the idea of "No". "No means no" we are taught, that when a woman says "stop", we stop. That's good. That's incredibly important.

But sometimes it's not enough to just *not get a no*. You need more.

It's not *just* about not getting a "no". It's about getting a definitive "yes".

A Question Of Consent

The emphasis on avoiding "no" can sometimes make the discussion surrounding the idea of consent seem needlessly complicated.

In *Girls*, Adam (played by Adam Driver) and his new girlfriend Natalia (Shiri Appleby) start off having sex... and it's not pleasant. After having agreed to Natalia's preferences - no soft (ticklish) touching, no ejaculating inside her - things take a darker turn. Their first time having sex - where Adam even says "I like how clear you are with me" - was enjoyable. The next time... not so much. Adam demands that she crawl on her hands and knees across his filthy floor; ignores her protests that she hasn't showered as he goes down on her and pays no attention to her half-hearted participation. At the end, he pulls out and starts masturbating, aiming for a porn-style money shot. At the last minute he listens to her numb protests to not ejaculate on her dress and cums on her chest instead. "I, like, really didn't like that," says Natalia afterwards.

It's profoundly uncomfortable - intentionally so - and is designed to bring up many questions. Did she consent? Did saying "wait, I didn't take a shower" count as a "no"? Was Adam supposed to understand that Natalia was trying to refuse without upsetting him, or is it completely understandable to assume that her complaint was her worrying about his discomfort at her lack of cleanliness? When she's only half-heartedly participating in his demands - that she really likes him, how he looks and his apartment - should he have taken that as a sign to stop? Would it be reasonable to assume that she was still consenting?

For someone who liked clarity, shit got murky *really* fast... and left people wondering what the hell they just watched.



"So, um... I kinda feel like I need to watch a Disney movie now..."

All too often, when the subject of consent focuses on "no means no", you inevitably find people who will insist that the concept is muddled and

confusing. When we say that “no means no” and someone doesn’t give a *definitive* no, what does that mean?

In many ways, the focus on “no” puts the burden – yet again – on women to rein in the libidos of men who presumably can’t control themselves... and in many ways can put them at a disadvantage. Women are often socialized to be non-direct for fear of causing offense; many women are frequently uncomfortable with being up front with saying “No, I don’t want this.” In the case of *Girls*, Natalia protests to Adam that she hasn’t taken a shower; she’s trying to give him the wave-off as he pulls her underwear down but he either misses her meaning or possibly ignores it deliberately.

Alcohol also has a way of making a definitive “no” hard to recognize. While booze doesn’t *create* emotions – a person who doesn’t like somebody isn’t going to magically going to fall in love because he or she has had one too many cocktails – it *does* lower one’s capacity for rational thought and decision making. A person may not *want* to have sex with someone, but enough booze will can make them more likely to give in to pressure or to otherwise make poor decisions.

A focus on “no” also causes many people – mostly men – to worry about misreading signals. Others will incessantly challenge the idea of rape and rape culture by trying to rules-lawyer consent¹<#footnote_0_3204> with an endless repetition of theoretical situations and “what ifs” in order to “prove” that consent is confusing and difficult to acquire. “Is it rape if she passes out while we’re having sex she consented to? What if she gets off on being roofied? What if she forgot the safeword?”

You can what-if and “is it rape if” until the cows come home. When you switch to the idea of affirmative or enthusiastic consent – focusing on getting an unambiguous “YES” instead of stopping at “no” – it changes the equation entirely.

“Yes Means Yes”

Enthusiastic consent is fairly simple. It’s the idea that while “no means no” is important, getting a “yes” is even *more* important.

Hope I didn’t just blow your mind there.

More seriously: think about it. The idea of enthusiastic consent is all about making sure that your partner is *genuinely* into having sex... that you are getting clear and unambiguous signals that he or she *wants* to fuck. It’s the difference between “Dear God I want to fuck you right now” and “Yeah... I guess, whatever” when they really mean “no”. Similarly, a partner who is simply *not resisting* but otherwise not saying anything is not giving enthusiastic consent. It’s about more than just needing to get off – because that’s easy enough to do on your own – but having an experience *with your partner*. It makes sex about the *two* (or more...) of you rather than one person using the other as a sex toy that can occasionally help move boxes and dust the window sills.



Not that this doesn't have its appeal...

The focus on an *unambiguous yes* (or a “give me your cock” or “I want you to eat me out *right the fuck now*”... you get the idea) cuts out any murkiness around the idea of whether somebody is consenting. It’s hard to mistake a “please fuck me”, after all. It simplifies the issue rather nicely. Didn’t get a “Yes”? You don’t have sex. End of.

That “enthusiastic” part is important, too, because it comes with the understanding that consent isn’t a binary decision – it’s not all or nothing, always on or always off. It’s an understanding that consent falls on a sliding scale and can be dialed back *or forward* as both partners feel the need. Just because somebody said “yes” earlier doesn’t mean that they couldn’t change their mind later on... even in the middle of things, if it comes to it. If one partner or the other indicates that they’re no longer in the mood or that they don’t like what’s happening – such as Natalia’s lackluster, limp agreement to Adam’s requests – the sex stops.

Thing is though: this doesn’t necessarily mean that things are over. A person can decide that he or she is no longer willing to have penetrative sex... but is perfectly happy (again: enthusiastic, not just offering to keep the other person from getting angry or upset) to have oral sex, or give a handjob or just cuddle for a while. The important part, though, is what it says: that you respect and are invested enough in your partner – even if it’s a one-night stand – that you want their full and eager participation. It’s an expression of the collaborative model of sex<<http://www.doctornerdlove.com/2012/07/its-ok-to-want-sex/>>, the idea of sex as a jam session between two people who want to have fun *together*, rather than the adversarial model that encourages men to get what they want as cheaply as possible.

This approach encourages active communication with your partner, something that I believe to be required for *really good* sex<<http://www.doctornerdlove.com/2012/09/get-sex-you-want/>>. You have to be willing to talk about what you want and what you *don’t* want before and even *during* sex, establishing important boundaries<<http://www.doctornerdlove.com/2013/03/boundaries-self-esteem-dating/>>. It mandates that you’re paying attention to your partner’s pleasure as much as you are to your own and being sensitive to their level of participation and involvement. It means that you can’t just take consent for granted – even if your potential partner has been giving *every possible signal* that the two of you are going to have sex – they *still* have to assent in the affirmative rather than one person assuming that it’s *fait*

accompli and risking making a huge mistake.

The Difference Between "...yes" and "YES!"

I want to put a special note on the word *enthusiastic* because, frankly, not every "yes" is equal. In fact, there are many times when "yes" *still means no*. <<http://www.doctornerdlove.com/2012/01/coerced-consent-yes-means-no/>>

I've seen many discussions on the ways of turning a "no" into a "yes". Some people are known for suggesting that a woman's first couple of "no's" don't count, or that phrases like "We're not having sex tonight" is meant to be a shit-test, a "can you change my mind?" challenge rather than an explicit statement that she does not intend or want to have sex with you tonight. Some will talk about making it about what she "owes" him - he bought dinner /rented the movie /paid for the plane tickets and now she's *required* to pay him back with sex. Others will rely on guilt - "I guess I thought you really loved me..." or emotional threats like "If you don't, I'll find someone who *will*".

In PUA circles, you will find discussion about handling "no" in jargonistic terms like "Anti-Slut Defense"^{2<#footnote_1_3204>} or "Last Minute Resistance" (LMR for short). The tactics involved in "handling" LMR or breaking through her "Anti-Slut Defense" can vary from ignoring her first signs of refusal to utilizing social pressure to coerce a women into sex via freezing her out. The freeze-out involves withdrawing all positive attention - essentially giving her the silent treatment - until she feels the pressure to reinitiate sexual contact. It plays directly on the social contract and the way that women are trained to interact with men, as well as our instinctive need for social approval. It plays on a person's complexes and insecurities, making them want to reconnect with those good feelings and leave her believing that it's *her* fault for all of it going away.

Sound a little ridiculous? Imagine if you will, that you're hanging out with someone you care about; everything's happy, you're having fun. You're having incredible conversations, the kind where you feel like you're communicating on the deepest levels... and then you do something innocuous and *it all turns off like a light*. Now all that warmth has gone. You're getting short, curt, single syllable answers, they refuse to look at you. They insist that nothing's wrong, but everything about the way they're acting screams that they're pissed at you... and implies that it's all your fault.

If you're at *all* emotionally invested in this person, you're going to feel confused. You're going to feel upset and a little anxious and want to make things better. You're much more likely to try to do whatever it takes to melt that ice that's suddenly developed between you.

Now imagine that applied to sex.

I want to be clear: this sort of "yes", a "yes" gained through coercive methods *does not count*. This runs *counter* to the entire idea of affirmative, enthusiastic consent. It's not a true, enthusiastic "yes", it's just a way of manipulating someone so that - once again - you're just avoiding a "no".

Similarly, a "yes" under the influence of alcohol is not the same. A "yes" after a night of drinking could be that he or she really wants to bone... or it could be they *don't* but would be more likely to give in or have sex anyway even though they don't really want to. Like I said earlier: booze doesn't make emotions appear from nowhere, it just lowers inhibitions and impairs decision making. Someone who *really* wants to have sex with you while drunk will still want to have sex with you later. Someone who doesn't want to but will anyway is

someone you shouldn't be having sex with in the first place.

Rule of thumb: too drunk to drive is too drunk to consent. You can wait until he or she is sober.

Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!

Having just put the emphasis on enthusiasm, I want to make a point or two that inevitably arises whenever the subject of enthusiastic consent comes up. One frequent issue in relationships – especially long term relationships – is the idea of sex when one or the other partner isn't terribly in the mood but is willing to go for it anyway. Passion *does* fade; when the relationship is still in the honeymoon phase, you frequently can't breathe without both of you wanting to bang right then and there, but as time passes, there will be plenty of occasions when one's libido isn't 100% in tune with one's partner. Many a person will frequently have sex – or some form of sexual contact – when he or she *isn't* absolutely in the mood and their partner is.

Some will question whether this does or does not meet the level of "enthusiastic consent". In the strictest definition: no, not really. But in a long-term relationship, one presumably, *hopefully* has lines of communication wide open. People in a long-term relationship will often have long established occasions where consent can be assumed and the understanding that there will be times that they are willing to be giving for the sake of the person whom they love and want to be happy... even if they'd rather be catching up on Game of Thrones and Facebook. As long as they are able to talk about what they are and aren't willing to do, establish boundaries, and aren't pressuring one another to act in a way they aren't comfortable with, or engage in acts that they would rather not perform, I'd say that this is fine.



And occasionally a little bribery encourages the helping hand...job.

Communication is *always* key. Consent is not just about what you aren't willing to do, it's about being willing to *talk*, to communicate openly and without reservation with your partner about how they feel and how *you* feel. It can be intimidating, especially for guys, to take ownership of their feelings about sex, especially if they *don't* want to have it. Many men feel that they *have* to have sex, even when they're not comfortable with it, because they're *men* and that's what men do so they have to suck it up. There will be times that men will feel pressured, even coerced, just as women do. There have been times where *I've* felt pressured into sex that I didn't want, yet went ahead and had anyway... at the time I didn't feel that I could communicate with my then-girlfriend and just went along with what she wanted in order to avoid the fight that would have occurred otherwise. And I know I'm not the only man who's had experiences like this.

Being able to communicate with one's partner, to know that one's limits and wants will be respected, is key to enthusiastic consent.

The Benefits of Enthusiastic Consent

Part of rape culture is a culture that makes excuses for – even *tacitly approves* of rape. It's a culture in which the victim is blamed for his or her own assault because "she got drunk" or "she should have known better" or "she didn't say 'no' clearly enough". It's a culture in which consent is thought to be a tricky thing, and in which people complain of "mixed messages" and flirting, acting in a sexual manner, dressing provocatively or even having a drink is often portrayed as tacit consent.

It's a culture where gender roles are strictly defined; men are the hypermasculine <<http://www.doctornerdlove.com/2013/03/selling-masculinity/>> aggressors who are expected to be insatiable and perpetually aroused while women are valued only for how much sex they *haven't had* yet and how dearly they parcel it out. It's a culture wherein men aren't allowed to have doubts or uncertainties about sex or even moments where they don't want to have it; men who are less than insatiable are "pussies". Meanwhile women are scorned for taking ownership of their sexuality, devalued or insulted for not restricting access to sex; in rape culture, one's sexual history makes the difference between a victim and someone who was "asking for it", who in effect *deserved* to be raped because she didn't guard it strongly enough.

Enthusiastic, affirmative consent helps strip this away. It removes the excuses that rapists and rape apologists hide behind. It doesn't matter that she was drunk or being flirty or even gave some guy a lap-dance at a bar because consent is about saying an explicit "Yes, I want you to fuck me" not about whether she's a cocktease or made him think that she was OK with it *without* saying the words. It transforms sex from the gatekeeper model where men try to bribe or bargain with women in order to get off, to one of explicit partnership, where sex isn't about transaction but collaboration and building something amazing *together*. It helps create a culture of understanding and – more importantly – *safety*, where women can feel fewer restrictions on their own sexual expression and are freer to enjoy the sex *they* want, too <<http://www.doctornerdlove.com/2012/11/women-casual-sex-pleasure/>>.

It's about open communication with your partner, learning how to express how you feel, checking in with them about *their* pleasure and being a better, more attentive lover.

But more importantly, it's *hot*.

Enthusiastic consent isn't about a call and response for every step of the way; it's not "may I touch you here? May I kiss you now? May I undo your bra?" It's about dirty talk; grabbing your lover by the back of the head and growling "I want you inside me *now*." It's about saying all the nasty, dirty things you want to do to them and hearing "Oh GOD yes...". It's hearing "Yes, like that" or "Here, touch me here!"

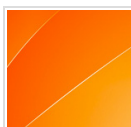
There aren't mixed messages when it comes to enthusiastic consent. In a world where an explicit, enthusiastic "yes" is the threshold of consent, you know damn good and well *that your partner is really excited to be having sex with you*.



"Oh man, you have no idea..."

And really, isn't that what we all want?

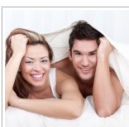
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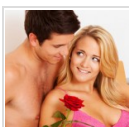
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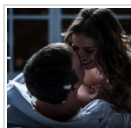
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It's OK To Want Sex



F*ck Like A Gentleman (Pt. 2)



Be The Greatest Lover She's Ever Known

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- 1. Hat tip to Amanda Marcotte for that phrase, by the way [↔]
- 2. That is, that she's afraid of being seen as a slut by her friends and thus is hesitating in order to build up plausible deniability [↔]

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Gman · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606697587>

+25

Fantastic post doc, I really love this "enthusiastic yes" consent model as opposed to the older one. I mean to me – there is nothing that turns me on more than knowing that the other side is REALLY into me :-)

Plus, I would also like to add that body language also transmits quite a bit of information all on its own – from my experience, when you are kissing someone, it is enough to know how much the other side is into it and if he is giving you an "enthusiastic yes" through his body or something that feels like a "whatever... I guess" kind of signal. I will emphasize that this is just an add-on to vocal, unequivocal consent communication, not instead of it.

Reply 6 replies · active 44 weeks ago

Report



Rja · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606737588>

+34

Doc, the convicted Steubenville rapists aren't suspects anymore. They're rapists and sex offenders - confirmed, not suspected or accused. There are other parties involved that are still only suspects and may be charged, but Trent Mays and Ma'lik Richmond? Rapists.

Reply **3 replies** · active 53 weeks ago

Report



Gentleman Horndog · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606750711>

+30

Hell, I came to this conclusion years before I ever heard a name for it. Once you've been with somebody who, in that moment, wants nothing more than to fuck your brains out, "Yeah, sure, I guess" sex feels like a bad imitation of the real thing.

Like Doc said, this can be a bit tricky to navigate in a long-term relationship. If you care about your partner, there are times when you'll want to round a "Maybe" up to "Yes" just to do something nice for them. But I've had the discussion with my girlfriend that if she's just plain not feeling it, I'd much rather she tell me "No" than "Take one for the team." I've found that getting myself into a headspace where quality is just as important as quantity (as opposed to "MUST HAVE AS MUCH SEX AS POSSIBLE!!!", which can lead you to some dark places in a hurry) has made my sex life much more satisfying.

It cannot be said enough: if you just want to get off, you don't need a partner, just a bit of privacy.

Reply **2 replies** · active 52 weeks ago

Report



Eve · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606769345>

+29

Just wanted to say a quick thank you Doc for this post. I think this kind of thing needs to be included in sex ed classes so people know from an early age. Most sex ed seems to be about disease and not getting pregnant- whilst these things are vital, educators should talk about the emotional side of sex more, like when you know you're ready, consent, love etc.

Reply **1 reply** · active 52 weeks ago

Report



Jay · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606762962>

+33

THIS. SO MUCH THIS. I was already expressing enthusiasm (haha, see what I did there?) before you even wrote this article, but now that I've read it now I want to go around pointing at this article anytime anyone anywhere starts trying to rules-lawyer their way into sex.

I haven't been raped. But I have definitely been coerced, I have definitely had my half-hearted attempts to slow down overridden, I have definitely had to say no again and again to people who took it as permission to keep trying to change my mind. I am so goddamn tired of feeling like the guilty party, like the bad guy, like the shrewish girlfriend for putting an end to the sexyfuntimes because, fuck, my vagina really hurt or I wasn't in the mood or I just wanted to go to sleep. I have had some wonderful partners who were otherwise receptive to my needs, but I have still yet to meet the partner who didn't try to keep going at least once.

Well, it ends now. No more just "submitting" to sex. No more feeling guilty or making up for some imaginary guilt in the past. There is not going to be any sex until I am 100% into it.

Reply

Report



LeeEsq · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606801810>

+13

Anybody care for a wager on what obnoxious bouts of self-pity we will here on this thread?

Reply **6 replies** · active 52 weeks ago

Report



boo · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606816585>

+10

Doc, thank you for bringing up that sometimes "enthusiastic consent" isn't always enthusiastic in and of itself. I'm in an LTR and sometimes I'm just not in the mood, but want to please my partner and make sure he's happy. I wish there was a compact way to say "I'm not that into it, but am making this decision freely so it's a mental enthusiasm even if it isn't an emotional enthusiasm"-consent. Enthusiastic consent doesn't have to mean you're 100%-so-horny-a-stiff-breeze-could-get-me-off into it.

Reply **3 replies** · active 53 weeks ago

Report

Bas Kleijweg <<https://www.facebook.com/bas.kleijweg/>> · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606820699>

+5

Sorta relevant: <http://pervocracy.blogspot.nl/2012/05/real-consen...>

Also anticipating reactions of "but she/he clearly wanted it at the moment" when the examples hit too close to home. Everyone can see the difference between tipsy and too sloshed, between nervous and uncomfortable and between likes-to-be-taken and lays-back-and-thinks-of-England. There is no gray consent, there is no plausible deniability and there is no mind-changing after it has already happened in order to save a reputation. The red herring of coddling or patronizing the shy with this model misreads enthusiastic consent as a caricature of itself.

Reply

Report



Gil · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606845276>

-16

Why do I get the feeling it's the argument of a "real man wouldn't..." is preaching to the choir? Any guy nodding his head reading that article isn't the sort of guy who would ever get into such a dubious encounter anyway?

On a similar topic, I wondering what the feminists here think of "rape by fraud/deception" or that date-rape only covers when a woman is involuntarily intoxicated (as opposed to a voluntarily drunken woman might technically consent but wouldn't have if she was sober)?

Reply **24 replies** · active 39 weeks ago

Report



deadliftman · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606860280>

-81

Oh boy. Another article about consent. Feminism seems fascinated with consent. First it was "No means No". You are saying "Yes means Yes" and some feminists dare to go as far as saying "Yes doesn't even mean Yes".

<http://evebitfirst.wordpress.com/2012/04/19/quant...>

This crazy feminist is basically claiming that all heterosexual sex is a form of rape because almost all women are socially conditioned not to directly say no to men, or to depend on men financially/emotionally.

God save the world.

Reply **12 replies** · active 27 weeks ago

Report



deadliftman · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606869879>

-60

I seem to agree with the Doc's "Yes means Yes". I'm just warning y'all of the perils of excessive focus on defining the boundaries for the entire female population. Adult men and women are capable of making their own decisions and that a non-consensual sexual act by itself does not constitute rape. At least one of the parties has to feel they were wronged.

Reply **20 replies** · active 52 weeks ago

Report



deadliftman · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606873264>

-61

No. If a girl/guy gets drunk to the point of not being able to consent and hooks up with someone and wakes up next morning to find out what happened last night and decides it was cool or fun or whatever and does not feel wronged in any way - then it is not a rape.

Reply **42 replies** · active 27 weeks ago

Report



LeeEsq · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606885441>

-15

I think we need a less intimidating term than "enthusiastic consent" to describe the type of consent necessary for sex. The problem really isn't in the consent part but in the enthusiasm. We recently had a series of threads about the concept of the alpha male. Its a ridiculous concept but a lot of men believe that you need to be the best of the best to stand any chance to get a woman. I think the enthusiastic in enthusiastic consent triggers these sorts of fears. When a lot of men, and this includes me in my more self-pitying moments, hear the term "enthusiastic consent", they imagine that it means that the woman has to be ripping off your clothes and dragging you to wherever to get sex. A lot of men can't really envision this happenign to them.

Reply **30 replies** · active 52 weeks ago

Report



Gentleman Horndog · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606895403>

+14

Think of it this way: Would you rather your first partner be enthused that she gets to fuck you? (I know it seems impossible now. It isn't.) Or would you rather she be technically willing, but obviously disinterested and eager to get it over with?

The former is so very worth holding out for.

Reply **10 replies** · active 52 weeks ago

Report



CaseyXavier<<http://intensedebate.com/people/CaseyXavier>> · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606947694>

+33

79p

(Here's a translation from the better commentor the poster number)

Thanks for this entry, Doc. I've had a few experiences that I don't really know how to feel about, in part because it's in the past and I have no desire to ever think about any of these guys ever again. There was one experience that was the most egregious to me, in terms of 'enthusiastic consent'. One of my very first partners (in his very-late 20s) fucked me WHILE I WAS CRYING. I wasn't crying about the sex, but it had to do with something I was upset about in the relationship. We'd talked about it and objectively I was fine with everything, but I was still emotionally raw. I was still red and puffy in the face and eyes, tears still trickling and my nose was running with snot, and the noises that were coming out of me were pretty gross thanks to said snotty nose. SEXY, right? We couldn't even kiss properly because my face was still all scrunched up.

I don't know why I didn't say "Dude, really? No." Mostly my thoughts were. "Wha? Are we really? What? Jesus Christ this must be the most unattractive lay he's ever had" and he was still in his Prince Charming phase and I was in my 'make everything be perfect and happy and don't do anything to hurt his feelings' mode. I thought (and part of me still thinks) that he intended it as make-up sex, comforting sex, etc. and I felt obligated to do it or risk making a mountain out of a molehill by saying no. Certainly I don't consider that incident rape. But instead of feeling like I'd had sex, I felt like he'd had sex with my body, if that even makes sense. It is confusing because in terms of mechanics and how the sexytimes progressed it was just like all our previous sexytimes, except this time I felt completely disconnected and ugly.

Don't really know where I was going with that! Maybe that enthusiastic consent can be an issue even in established relationships. I did learn a lesson from that though, and now I'm a lot better about policing my own boundaries and telling someone that I don't want to do something or am not comfortable with something.

Reply **6 replies** · active 11 weeks ago

Report



Sam · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606951517>

-22

Hey Dr Nerdlove,

I agree with the benefits of enthusiastic consent. But as you acknowledge with respect to long-term relationships, it's not without problems. For one, consent can be real without being enthusiastic, and not just in a long-term relationship. Sure, enthusiasm is better, but that doesn't make other expressions of consent invalid. Also, people do often drink so they can do things they want to do (and are enthusiastic about) but aren't able to do when sober - it is unfair to always assume that sober decisions are the true

expressions of subjective enthusiasm and not drunk decisions. Of course, there's a point when drunk is too drunk, but there's also a point, for most people, at least, when too sober is too sober.

But the most important point is that most people are unable to engage in the kind of sexual dialogue you present as ideal. For two reasons: One, they're not always aware of what they really want, and two, even if they are, they're unable to talk about it in a sexy way. Most people are shy about this stuff, particularly if they're not in a committed relationship. It's not that it's unsexy to talk about sex, it's just that most people are unable to do so in a sexy way. And I think it's unfair of those who are able to do so to tell everyone else that they're doing it wrong. If only because it will not make them any more willing to accept the advice, particularly when, usually, there's really nothing teaching them how to do it.

Just like in this case: you're presenting something as an ideal that most people aren't able to do and then you just leave them hanging with the notion that it's not like in Antioch, but good dirty talk. I believe it would only be fair to do a followup that breaks down how to sexily talk about sex without ruining the mood, which, I am aware, is f***king difficult...

Reply **94 replies** · active 52 weeks ago

Report



thebutterfly · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606963330>

+6

As a technical point, 2-3 standard glasses of red wine could easily put you over the drink-drive limit in the UK (depending on gender, age, weight, stress), but I wouldn't worry too much about your average person's ability to enthusiastically consent to sex at that point (obviously there will be exceptions).

Basically the levels at which you can safely drink and then drive are far lower than people imagine.

Reply

Report



Gentleman Johnny<http://intensedebate.com/people/nomadzophie/> · 53 weeks

+9

104P 104P's comment on: "The best comment: the comment number 1" ago<#IDComment606972841>
A concept so simple, an English teacher can explain it in one class period - <http://accidentaldevotional.com/2013/03/19/the-da...>

Reply **1 reply** · active 53 weeks ago

Report

How to Ask Someone Out: A Primer for People Who Pretend Not to Know |

Latestwire<<http://latestwire.com/2013/03/29/how-to-ask-someone-out-a-primer-for-people-who-pretend-not-to-know/>>

[...] *Except #6, which a lot of people legitimately don't know. That's okay, because unlike "don't bother people", it's not entirely obvious. For real advice like that and other things, I always like to recommend Doctor Nerdlove. Hey, his top post is about getting a real, instead of a reluctant, yes. [...]



BritterSweet · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606983637>

+5

Thank you so much for bringing up the "what-ifs" and "...yes" vs "YES!" Especially the latter because sadly, whenever rules or guidelines are set, people will inevitably search for ways around them. Just saying, "yes means yes" is still not clear enough for these boneheads. There are always those assholes who will reinterpret something or miss the point to a degree that it just has to be intentional.

Reply

Report



Paul Rivers · 53 weeks ago<#IDComment606985284>

-41

If you're a geek or a nerd who's having trouble even finding a date, let alone sleeping with someone, and you're reading this and thinking "Oh, I'll try to do that" - you need to STOP and realize that a lot of this article will make you WORSE with women, not better.

The article mentions socialization, but what it doesn't tell you is how strongly women are socialized to NOT EXPRESS enthusiasm towards sex, or to feel bad about desiring it.

To quote another commenter from the other day - "wait, did he pop the let's have sex question in their first meeting? cuz damn, son that ain't right - she's not a hooker" - it's a strong sentiment among women that a woman who wants to have sex "to soon" is doing something wrong, aka a hooker.

Slut shaming from something recent - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EU20JnsYiXc&fe...>

Have you ever been talking with a bunch of guys about how cute some girl is, everyone is having a good time, then a girl joins the group and goes "that's disgusting" that you're even talking about something remotely related to sex? That's the world women often live in - where discussing or acknowledging sexual things is frowned upon. Where her expressing enthusiasm towards sex is always eyed with a response of "you don't want to be THAT kind of girl do you?".

Do you know when I stopped being the constant beta-orbiting "always the friend, never the boyfriend" friend to girls and started having sex and a girlfriend? When I started treating girls like adult human beings who were fully capable of making yes/no decisions, or saying no to things they didn't want to do, while acknowledging that they lived in a world that made them hesitant to express unabashed enthusiasm towards sex or even dating, especially the first time.

It was when I stopped buying into the model in the above article that assumes women's emotional state is something to be treated like a fragile glass slipper that I'm solely responsible for, and assuming that yes, she was actually capable of saying something if she wanted to stop. You ALWAYS respond to her saying she wanted to stop by stopping. But I was a lot more successful - AND the girl I was dating started having a lot more fun when I stopped worrying if I was "accidentally pressuring" her into something. She was an adult - she could make her own decisions, and say something if she didn't want to do something.

But I also had to realize that because she didn't want to do something now, that didn't mean she wouldn't want to do it later. Or that because she didn't like doing something I was enthusiastic about, didn't mean that it was "bad" to express my enthusiasm about it - it's like with anyone, there's a point where you need to just let it go, but that point is not the very first mention of it.

Reply 10 replies · active 29 weeks ago

Report



rondy · 53 weeks ago <#IDComment607001313>

-49

This article is paternalistic and ignores the sexual agency of women, and sums up what I think is an overall problem with the blog, which is how it proposes irrational ideas that are far more idealistic in nature than they are realistic.

By your standards, a person would have to refuse every single sexual encounter where their partner has either had a few glasses of wine, or isn't uninhibitedly and visibly enthusiastic about having sex despite the fact that this isn't how most women behave in bed.

On a side note, I've noticed something about my nerd peers which is a tendency to rely on moral guidelines in order to compensate for their inability to perceive social subtext, and I just can't help but feel like a lot of the idealistic stuff that Nerdlove is suggesting is related to this cloaking of social ineptitude or lack of charisma, since I don't understand how any of it would ever work in real life, outside of maybe nerd circles.

Reply 467 replies · active 52 weeks ago

Report



Vic · 53 weeks ago <#IDComment607069120>

-34

Sorry, no. The women I am with are full-grown adults, not addle-brained children I've "tricked" into sleeping with me (This kind of thinking is classic beta pedestalization.) . As such, they are fully capable of telling me if they don't like something, and I, them.

It's not my job to try and read girls' minds.

Reply 14 replies · active 53 weeks ago

Report



1000Lives <http://intensedebate.com/people/1000Lives> · 53 weeks ago <#IDComment607096357>

+4

20p

Is this article a description of the kind of consent necessary for something not to be rape, or is it describing the higher standard of 'consent level necessary for the sex to be really good'? Because if it's the former, then by those criteria I am both a rapist and the victim of rape. For the record, I believe neither of these things to be true.

Let me describe the first time with my most recent partner. It was our second date, and we hung out at a bar for a while. I lived nearby, and I invited her to my place, which she accepted. We hung out and watched some House of Cards and chatted, while drinking wine. After a couple drinks, we kissed, at which point she backed off a bit. I immediately sensed her reluctance, and backed off myself.

At this point, she went for more wine. I took this opportunity to tell specifically tell her that no matter what, I expected nothing from her - if she needed to crash on a couch, or needed a couple hours to sober up, or needed me to drive her home, it was all ok in my book. She understood and thanked me.

After about another hour and yet another glass of wine (we were both about three in at this point), she started to initiate physically. The only thing she said to me at this point was, "please don't use me." I told her I wouldn't, and that was it. That was the last thing that was verbalized before we were fully engaged.

Now, I look back on this and I see it as consent. Body language, assertiveness, and my explicit statement that she had escape routes if she needed them - all of these contribute to my belief that I engaged in consensual sex that night. But if we follow the enthusiastic yes standard, it falls short. So again, is this a standard for 'not-rape' or is it a standard for optimal sex enjoyment?

(For the record, when I say that I am a 'victim of rape' by the Doc's criteria, I'm not referring to this example. There have been other situations, however, when I have not 'enthusiastically' consented, but had sex despite this.)

Reply 11 replies · active 52 weeks ago

Report



Max · 53 weeks ago <#IDComment607132648>

-15

So here's one issue I noticed while reading the article: there really are no varying degrees of rape (at least, not when you're talking about it. I don't know the legal definitions). Either you are having consenting sex, or you are raping your partner, you are a rapist, and you should burn at the stake. While that Girls scene sounds awful, is the guy really raping the girl? Getting a half-hearted "okay" from a drunk girl is bad, but does having sex with her make you a capital-R Rapist? (Honest questions, I don't know the answers)

This is problem when discussing this issue, because calling someone a rapist is really one of the worst thing you could call someone, up there with "murderer" and "Hitler." It's an incredibly loaded term, and I think it makes people shut down and become defensive instead of really thinking about what they or their friends are doing. Maybe it would be more helpful to call the Girls guy is a third-degree rapist, while the classic "predator in a dark alley" is a first degree rapist?

Reply 26 replies · active 52 weeks ago

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