

# **‘Tips for Good Sex’ workshop**

## **(Pleasure, Safety, Consent)**

(Written by Michael Flood, 19 August 2002, Canberra, Australia)

### **Introduction**

These notes are for a workshop aimed at young people aged e.g. 14 – 18. The workshop can last anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours. I have run the workshop in both mixed-sex and boys only groups.

These notes include useful questions for discussion, brief writeups on elements of ‘good sex’, further reading, and a handout for young people on “Tips for Good Sex”. I have also included a lengthier discussion of working with boys and young men on ‘doing consent’, as I think this is a critical issue. The materials on consent easily could be turned into a workshop on their own, for boys and young men.

Comments and feedback are most welcome.

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### **What makes good sex?**

Begin with a discussion of what makes good sex. Divide the participants into small groups, and hand out butchers’ paper and textas. Get one person in each group to divide the sheet into two columns, headed “Good sex” and “Bad sex”. Invite the groups to write down as many ideas as possible about what makes each. (Walk around the groups, prompting them for further ideas.)

Then get one small group to read out their answers for “Good sex” to the whole group. See if other groups have anything to add. Do the same for “Bad sex”. Discuss.

Narrow this (good sex) down to;

Consent

Pleasure

Safety

Then explore how you get to each.

### **Pleasure**

What’s needed for pleasure?

Knowledge of how to give pleasure, e.g. of bodies.

(Where is the clitoris?)

Willingness to give as well as receive.

(Don’t be selfish.)

Broad definition of 'sex'

More than penises in vaginas

What turns women on...

Body-positivity and sex-positivity

Not shame, self-hate, guilt, etc.

Playfulness, creativity, joy

### **A short write-up on pleasure**

[Excerpted from: Flood, Michael. (2002). A recipe for good sex. *Woroni* (Student newspaper). Canberra: ANU Students' Association, Australian National University.]

Good sex depends on feeling sexually aroused, being physically comfortable and having one's sexual needs met. Hot sex happens when you're both as keen to give pleasure to each other as you are to have pleasure yourselves. And 'turning on' the other person itself is a turn-on, so giving and receiving pleasure becomes a lustful circle.

There are two obstacles to mutual pleasure: narrow definitions of sex, and selfishness.

First, there is more to sex than penises in vaginas. There is a delicious range of sexual and sensual acts you can get into with your partner. Many guys (and women too) focus on penis-in-vagina intercourse as the best kind of sex, as the ultimate goal of all other sexual activities, and as the very definition of "sex". But many women don't have orgasms from intercourse. Most women are much more likely to have orgasms from having their clitorises licked, kissed or touched, and they'll only have orgasms during intercourse if they're also getting extra stimulation or giving it to themselves. (So men who want hot sex with women need to know where a woman's clitoris is located!) Women may be 'turned on' by lots of kissing, sensual touching and caressing, as well as by being masturbated or oral-sexed or doing these things to their partner. Yes, intercourse is great, but it's not the only way, and it may not be the best way, for *both* people to have orgasms and full sexual pleasure.

Expanding one's sexual 'style' has real benefits for men as well. Men can enjoy forms of sex and touch which aren't about intercourse. Men can appreciate the sexual potential of areas of their and their partner's bodies other than just their genitals: lips, necks, ears, nipples, tummies, fingers, inner thighs, and more. Getting into non-intercourse forms of sex also gives you more choices for how to avoid pregnancy and disease transmission.

The second obstacle to mutual pleasure is selfishness. If a person is concerned only about their own pleasure, about 'getting their rocks off', then they're unlikely to take the time to give pleasure to the person with whom they're having sex. For example, if a girl is with a guy who doesn't like doing oral sex to women and who is happy just to have intercourse, roll over and fall asleep, she's likely to feel frustrated and bored. The 'orgasm count' between them will rapidly become very unequal. So hot sex depends on both partners being interested in giving pleasure to the other.

### **A short write-up on safety**

[Excerpted from: Flood, Michael. (2002). A recipe for good sex. *Woroni* (Student newspaper). Canberra: ANU Students' Association, Australian National University.]

Good sex is less likely if you are worrying about pregnancy and diseases, or if you actually get an infection, get pregnant or get the woman pregnant. Some people kid themselves that they're not at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (because they 'don't sleep around', the other person 'looks like a nice girl / nice guy', or 'it won't happen to me'). But the rate of at least one infection, chlamydia (which causes sterility in both women and men), has gone up fourfold in Canberra in the last year. And other infections such as genital warts and herpes are common too.

You've got three choices when it comes to avoiding sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

- (1) Don't have sex: don't engage in any kind of sexual activity with another person. Or;
- (2) Stay with one partner: Have a monogamous sexual relationship, where you know that both you and your partner are free from STIs. You'll need to make sure that both you and the other person have had sexual health tests, as you can't assume that a person is free from STIs. And you'll still need to make sure you're preventing pregnancy. Stay monogamous, or agree that you can have sex with people outside the relationship but must only have safe sex. Or;
- (3) Practise safe sex: Have sex with whoever you want, but only have safe sex, where you and the other person are protected from STIs and pregnancy. You can do this in two ways. First, you can stick to sexual activities which are no-risk or low-risk for infection, such as kissing, sensual massage, mutual masturbation and oral sex. (These activities are risky though for some STIs such as genital herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, pubic lice, and syphilis, so again it's a good idea to make sure that both of you are free from infections.)

Or if you're going to have intercourse (penis-in-vagina or penis-in-anus sex), use condoms. The great advantage of condoms is that they prevent both pregnancy and diseases.

## **Consent: Working with boys and young men**

### **Workshop approach**

(Notes by Michael Flood, 19 August 2002, Canberra, Australia)

Begin by asking;

How can you make sure that you're never pressuring the girl/woman you're with into sex?

How do you make sure that you're both happy with what you're doing?

Explore their answers, running through useful and not-so-useful signs of unwillingness, anxiety, fear, disinterest, and consent.

E.g.,

*ABSENCE OF RESISTANCE*: She didn't say "no", she didn't try to push you off.

Problem: She might be too scared to say no. She might go stiff with fear and anxiety, not say or do anything.

And this is only negative consent, not positive consent.

**BODY LANGUAGE:** she's smiling, she touched me on the arm, she's not pushing me off.

Problem: Easy to misread them. E.g., to interpret friendliness or touch as sexual. These don't tell you which sexual activities she's happy to do.

May hear and see only what we want to.

Using body language can be "justifying self-deception or pretending that we've established more than mere acquiescence or submission" (Weinberg & Biernbaum, 1993: 93).

**PREVIOUS / CURRENT SEXUAL ACTIVITY:** she kissed me, so she must be happy to have sex with me.

Problem: She may be happy to kiss or grope but not to go all the way.

Don't assume that doing one kind of sexual activity gives you the license to do every other sexual activity.

Also, being *DRUNK OR OUT OF IT* can make it more likely that you will not be aware of the other person's feelings and wishes. And less aware of what you are doing or of the possible consequences of your actions.

To arrive at the message that: Going on body language, reputation, previous sexual activity, or willingness to perform some sexual activities, is not good enough.

### **Some things that are not consent**

[This is summarised from Scarce (1995), pp. 33-34.]

**Coercion:** Wearing someone down or convincing them to give in.

**Manipulation:** Agreeing to do something out of fear of what will happen if they don't. Using money, guilt-tripping, etc. to exert control over another.

**Physical force:** Saying yes because of the threat or use of physical force.

### **Doing consent**

Explicit verbal negotiation is required.

It's important to check out consent at every stage of sexual activity. The simplest way to do this is to ask.

Can use general questions:

How do you feel about this? How are you doing? Is everything okay?

I.e., gentle 'check-in' questions (Weinberg & Biernbaum, 1993: 96).

And questions about sexual activities, and about moving from one sexual activity to another;

How would you feel about kissing? Can I touch you here? Can I lick you? Can I go down here? Can I be inside you?

Say what you'd like to do (in cute, playful, sexy or straightforward ways) and ask what she'd like to do.

And of course, take no for an answer.

Some men say they don't want to ask because might hear "no".

Can respond: Would you rather rape than risk hearing 'no'? (Weinberg & Biernbaum, 1993: 94) I.e., we have to be prepared to accept the answer.

Some men complain or worry about getting "mixed messages".

People don't usually say, "Touch me, don't touch me."

Claim of mixed messages is usually an excuse, an after-the-fact justification.

Only way to find out the person's wishes and meanings is to ask, to use direct and explicit language. If you're unsure or uncertain, check it out (Weinberg & Biernbaum, 1993: 95)

Practise asking.

Become comfortable at it.

Idea (versus negotiating consent) that uncertainty and ambivalence are romantic.

But this is an abusive and confusing form of romance. Genuine romance is consenting, sexy, etc.

Some other key points;

If she feels assaulted, then she *has been* assaulted (Weinberg & Biernbaum, 1993: 92).

### **Three things needed for consent**

[This is summarised from Scarce (1995), pp. 34-35.]

**AGE:** Legal age at which someone is seen as capable of giving consent. They must be old enough to make sexual decisions.

**SOBRIETY:** If someone is drunk, stoned or out of it, then they may not have the ability to give consent. Because their ability to make decisions is impaired. (Scarce's manual is blunter, saying that they cannot consent to sex if...)

Crimes Act says that consent can be negated "by the effect of intoxicating liquor, a drug or an anaesthetic".

I.e., it's safest to have sex only when both people are sober / straight.

**MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ABILITY:** Have to have the mental ability to make decisions. Vs e.g. being severely intellectually disabled.

And the physical ability to communicate your desires. Vs e.g. being asleep or unconscious.

What can negate consent (from the Crimes Act)

(Michael's write-up;) It is against the law for a person to force or pressure another person into a sexual act. The law (*Crimes Act 1900*, s92P) says that it is sexual assault (rape) if one person persuades or coerces another person into sex by using or threatening to use violence or force against them, by threatening to do these to another person, by threatening to publicly humiliate or disgrace or physically or mentally harass the person or another person, or by abusing their position of authority over, or professional or other trust in relation to, the person. The law also says that it is sexual assault if the person is too intoxicated or drugged to be able to consent, or if the person believed they were having sex with someone else, or if the person was physically helpless or mentally incapacitated.

(Australian law) CRIMES ACT 1900 - SECT 92P

#### 92P. Consent

(1) For the purposes of section 92D, paragraph 92E (3) (b), section 92J and paragraph 92K (3) (b) and without limiting the grounds upon which it may be established that consent is negated, the consent of a person to sexual intercourse with another person, or to the committing of an act of indecency by or with another person, is negated if that consent is caused:

(a) by the infliction of violence or force on the person, or on a third person who is present or nearby;

(b) by a threat to inflict violence or force on the person, or on a third person who is present or nearby;

(c) by a threat to inflict violence or force on, or to use extortion against, the person or another person;

(d) by a threat to publicly humiliate or disgrace, or to physically or mentally harass, the person or another person;

(e) by the effect of intoxicating liquor, a drug or an anaesthetic;

(f) by a mistaken belief as to the identity of that other person;

(g) by a fraudulent misrepresentation of any fact made by the other person, or by a third person to the knowledge of the other person;

(h) by the abuse by the other person of his or her position of authority over, or professional or other trust in relation to, the person;

(i) by the person's physical helplessness or mental incapacity to understand the nature of the act in relation to which the consent is given; or

(j) by the unlawful detention of the person.

(2) A person who does not offer actual physical resistance to sexual intercourse shall not, by reason only of that fact, be regarded as consenting to the sexual intercourse.

(3) Where it is established that a person who knows the consent of another person to sexual intercourse or the committing of an act of indecency has been caused by any of the means set out in paragraphs (1) (a) to (j) (inclusive), the person shall be deemed to know that the other person does not consent to the sexual intercourse or the act of indecency, as the case may be.

### **A short discussion of consent (for heterosexual men)**

(This is excerpted from: Flood, Michael. (2002). A recipe for good sex. *Woroni* (Student newspaper). Canberra: ANU Students' Association, Australian National University.

In this article, I argued that there are three key ingredients to good sex: pleasure, consent, and safety. The following is the section on consent.)

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#### **Consent**

Consent — both person's agreement to sex — is the bottom line of good sex and a healthy sexual relationship. Consenting sex is hot sex. You're both into it, you both want it, and you both feel safe and in control of your choices. And this builds sexual closeness and intimacy.

For guys, the quickest way to destroy the possibility of hot sex is to use pressure or force. When a guy tries to pressure a girl into sex, he spoils whatever trust, closeness and respect there may have been. She is likely to feel used, abused or even raped. And she's certainly not going to be keen on having sex with him, let alone interested in building anything long-term.

So how can you make sure that you're not pressuring someone into sex? How do you make sure that you're both happy with what you're doing? Some people go on body language: she's smiling, she touched me on the arm, she's not pushing me off. Some people go on what's already happened: she kissed me, so she must be happy to have sex with me. One danger here is that she may be happy to kiss or grope but not to go all the way. Don't assume that doing one kind of sexual activity gives you the licence to do every other sexual activity. Another danger is misreading her signals, especially when you're drunk or stoned.

It's important to check out consent at every stage of sexual activity. The simplest way to do this is to ask: "Can I touch you here? Can I lick you? Can I go down here? Can I be inside you?" Say what you'd like to do (in cute, playful, sexy or straightforward ways) and ask what she'd like to do. And of course, take no for an answer.

Doing this gives you both the room to express your sexual desires and preferences and to learn about the other person's. And that means you'll both have a sexier time.

#### **Useful further reading on consent and boys / young men**

The following provide useful discussions of working with boys and young men on issues of consent;

Weinberg, Joseph and Biernbaum, Michael. (1993). The conversations of consent: Sexual intimacy without sexual assault. In Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher, and Martha Roth, (eds) (1993) *Transforming a Rape Culture*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

Scarce, Michael. (1995). *Men Can Stop Rape: A rape education curriculum guide for men*. Ohio State University Rape Education and Prevention Program, Columbus, Ohio.

Kilmartin, Christopher T. (2001). *Sexual Assault in Context: Teaching College Men About Gender*. Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications.

Also see references listed under “1) Men’s anti-violence education and activism,” in the section on violence in *The Men’s Bibliography*. This can be found online at:  
<http://www.xyonline.net/mensbiblio/>

# Tips for Good Sex

Good sex involves...

- 1) Consent
- 2) Pleasure
- 3) Safety

## 1) Consent

Good sex involves consent (both people's willingness to have sex).

Based on respect for the other person.

Both people must be able to give consent;

Not drunk or stoned. (Especially with someone you don't know, it's safest to have sex only when both people are sober / straight.)

Old enough to make sexual decisions.

How can you make sure that you're never pressuring the person you're with into sex?  
Check it out at every stage of sexual activity;

Ask, talk, listen;

How do you feel about this? Is this good? How are you doing? Is everything okay?

Can I touch you here? Can I lick you? Can I go down here? Can I be inside you? Does that feel good?

Say what you'd like to do (in cute, playful, sexy or straightforward ways) and ask what they'd like to do.

Take no for an answer

Silence isn't consent

## 2) Pleasure

Good sex involves mutual pleasure. You'll need...

Knowledge of how to give pleasure, e.g. of bodies.

(Where is the clitoris?)

Willingness to give as well as receive.

(Don't be selfish.)

Broad definition of 'sex'

More than penises in vaginas

What turns women on... (Many women don't have orgasms from intercourse alone.)

Body-positivity and sex-positivity

Not shame, self-hate, guilt, etc.

Playfulness, creativity, joy

### **3) Safety**

Good sex involves freedom from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

There are four ways to avoid getting or giving an STI;

a) Don't have sex

Choose not to engage in sexual activity with another person. (And this includes any kind of sexual contact.)

b) Stay with one partner.

Have a monogamous sexual relationship, where you know that both you and your partner are free from STIs. And make sure that neither of you have sex outside the relationship.

Or agree to have only safe sex with people outside the relationship.

c) Sexual alternatives (safe sex)

Do sexual activities other than sexual intercourse. E.g., kissing, sensual massage, mutual masturbation, oral sex. (Although oral sex can still transmit an STI.)

d) Condoms (safe sex)

Use condoms for intercourse.