

Practicing Everyday Consent

Consent is when someone willingly agrees to engage in an interaction that directly affects them. Understanding consent empowers us to communicate and enforce our boundaries, while respecting the boundaries of others. Everyone has the right to consent, and consent is relevant in our everyday lives. For children, this might look like saying “no” to a hug, “yes” to being in a class photo, or asking a friend before borrowing a crayon. By creating spaces where learners can practice asking for consent, communicate their boundaries, joyfully move their bodies, and respect the boundaries of others, we are encouraging them to be confident and considerate in all aspects of their lives.

In this Invitation to Play, we give some suggestions about creating opportunities for children to experiment, explore, and find ways that they can practice consent in their everyday lives.

Planning

Summary: The educator will introduce the concept of consent to the learners by reading the book *Don't Hug Doug* out loud. The educator will help learners brainstorm different ways they can say “yes” and “no” and record these on a whiteboard or flip chart. Break off into pairs or small groups and use posters depicting different interactions as a guide to practice asking for consent.

Materials Needed

The picture book *Don't Hug Doug* (or a similar children's book about consent)
Posters showing different interactions, such as:

- Hug
- High five
- Handshake

(See sample posters at end of document)

Preparing the Space

Create space for learners to sit in a circle. Set up a whiteboard or flipchart nearby and write “YES” on one side and “NO” on the other. Display the 4 posters around the room, with lots of space between each.

Engaging

Supporting

During the first half of the activity, educators can ask guiding questions to help learners express their thoughts on *Don't Hug Doug*.

When brainstorming different ways to say “yes” and “no”, educators may offer suggestions to add to the list that may not be immediately obvious, such as non-verbal ways of saying “yes” or “no”.

During the second half of the activity, educators can circulate around the room and observe how the learners are communicating about consent.

Extending

Children may communicate in ways we might not expect. They might find creative ways to express themselves that help them talk about consent in their own way. Encourage learners to find their own voice. And reflect on these observations to see if anything inspires future changes or expansions to the activity.

If learners found being able to see the list of ways to say “yes” and “no” valuable, consider leaving the list on display after the activity ends, or convert the list into a poster for the classroom.

Connecting with Community

Consider inviting members of your local queer community to lead an activity for your learners. For example:

- Invite Pride organizers to talk about community care—how do we take care of each other in ways that honour each other's boundaries?
- Invite a parent and baby into the space and inquire about the many ways that babies demonstrate consent and withdraw consent.

- Invite an artist into the learning environment to help guide learners through a painting or drawing activity where they show what their boundaries look like and feel like.

Noticing and Recording

After the initial brainstorm session, keep the list of ways to say “yes” and “no” up to date as learners come up with new ideas.

Take photos of the learners while they are doing the activities. Remember to ask learners if it is okay to take photos, and offer the option to not have their face in the photo

Reflecting

Documenting

Take photos of the set up before and during the activities.

Ask learners if there is anything they would like added to the whiteboard where you’ve been keeping notes. Document the whiteboard notes by either taking a photo or writing them down.

Write down your observations about what the learners enjoyed about the activities, how they engaged with the activities in ways you didn’t expect, and any ideas you have for changes you’d like to make for next time.

Reviewing

How did the learners respond to the invitations to play?

What can we add to foster curiosity and creativity?

HIGH FIVE



HUG



HANDSHAKE

