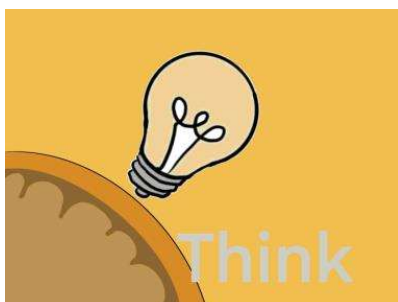


Consent

Consent in the context of sexual relations means giving permission for a sexual activity to happen AND being happy with that decision. You can give consent and you can also seek consent. In the context of sexual relations, giving and/or seeking consent is essential. Consenting to one sexual activity does not mean you have thereby consented to a different activity. Consent is ongoing and is always reversible - you can withdraw your consent (*ie* change your mind) at any point. Consent can only be sought or given if both partners are awake, not under the influence of drink or other substances, and have all the information and skills they need to make an informed choice. It is only consent when it has been freely given. If your answer is no, say “no”. If your answer is maybe, say “no”.



Autistic people may experience sexual desires and the need for a sexual relationship in the same way as their non-autistic peers. However, Autistic people may face particular challenges in meeting their sexual needs as a result of stigma, bullying, exploitation and using different ways of communicating. Autistic people may resort to masking in order to protect themselves from these challenges. Masking, in turn, may further increase their vulnerability to unwanted sexual activity.



Seeking and giving consent requires effective communication. This may be a challenge for some Autistic people, particularly those who have different ways of communicating or expressing themselves. For example, an Autistic person whose body language or use of speech is different to that of their non-autistic partner. It is essential to remember that, in the context of sexual relations, consent is ongoing and reversible, meaning that it may be withdrawn at any point. This concept may be difficult for some people, Autistic and non-autistic alike, to understand.



Discussing consent can be helpful as a way of supporting Autistic people to have their sexual needs met safely. Any discussion should pay particular attention to the ongoing nature of consent in the context of sexual relations. Discussing consent in this way may help Autistic people to develop strategies for ensuring they have given or sought consent in their sexual relations.