



Rope Bottoming Roundtable

- chicago -

September 2017

Topic: Consent

Content Warning

- Difficult but necessary, in light of recent events
- We will try not to go into detail to avoid triggers, however many things can come up in the course of discussion. We understand and support anyone who needs to walk away. There is no judgement.
- If you find that you want to talk out some of your experience, you are welcome to approach us and we will figure out a time and venue, or find you an appropriately experienced person to talk to.

What is consent?

- Agreeing to participate in some specified activity with some specified person or persons. Ideally, it is verbal, enthusiastic, and informed.
- Consent CAN be revoked.
- There are some cultural differences in how we view consent--kink vs vanilla, US vs. Europe, etc. Be aware of this and make sure that your expectations line up with your partner's.

Negotiation

- Experience says that the majority of consent incidents are not malicious, but due to miscommunication or misunderstanding. While it is never your fault if someone chooses to violate your consent, we believe that a lot of consent issues are mitigated by thorough negotiation.
- Assumptions are dangerous
- Opt-in vs. opt-out
- Negotiate what sexual and sensual contact is okay. Be an adult.
- Negotiation is not obligation
- Practice your "no."

- “Maybe later” (be honest, though)
- “I’m not interested in that”
- “I don’t do that” or “I don’t do that with someone I don’t know well” (Some find saying “I don’t x” to be easier than saying no)
- Offer alternatives

YOU DO NOT NEED TO JUSTIFY YOUR NO. Anyone who pressures you to justify it or change a no is showing a known predatory red flag. While one red flag is not an indictment, it is something to be aware of.

- Mid-scene negotiation: You can negotiate whether or not you are okay with changing the game mid-scene. Better not to do this if you’re new. Learn how your brain reacts in-scene first.
- Figuring out limits can take time. Communicate as quickly as you can, and if you’re new or striking out into territory that could be triggering, make sure your top knows that and talk about how to deal with it if things go badly.
- Withdrawing consent is difficult, but it is the responsibility of every person entering the kink scene to delineate their boundaries.

Safewords

- In rope, we often use our words rather than safewords because there are usually pressing, specific physical concerns. However, safewords are still safewords and often better when you’re feeling an emotional reaction. Rope tops do still have to respect the traffic light system, or any other system you set up.
- Freezing up is common. Communicate as best you can, and if you know you do this, let your top know so that they can check in periodically.

Consent Violations

- Tops can’t read minds
- Even if it was an accidental consent violation, tell them. Destigmatize the conversation. This enables them to do better.
- Malicious consent violation--continue to communicate as clearly and calmly as you can, but above all do what you can to stay safe. It is not your fault. Take your time and space, find a friend to talk to. Preferably, talk to a group or community leader, even if you don’t feel that it was “that bad.” They need to know about patterns.
- Be kind to yourself. The community wants this to be a safe place for you.