



Relationships Matter: Navigating Friendships, Boundaries, and Love

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Ground Rules & Emotional Safety

- ▶ Everyone deserves respect.
- ▶ What's shared here stays here.
- ▶ You can take a break anytime.
- ▶ Ask questions — no judgment.
- ▶ Trigger warning: we'll discuss consent and feelings.



Why Relationships Matter

- ▶ Relationships can help us feel connected, supported, and valued.
- ▶ We all deserve healthy relationships.
 - ▶ What do healthy relationships mean to you?



Different Types of Relationships

- ▶ Family
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Co-workers / classmates
- ▶ Neighbors / community
- ▶ Romantic partners
- ▶ Different relationships can have different boundaries — that's okay.
 - ▶ How might a boundary differ with a co-worker vs. a friend?

SECTION: Friendships





What Makes a Good Friend

- ▶ Listens
- ▶ Is kind and honest
- ▶ Respects your choices
- ▶ Makes you feel safe
 - ▶ What other qualities make a person a friend?

Not-So-Good Friend Behaviors

- ▶ Only calls when they want something
- ▶ Ignores your feelings
- ▶ Spreads rumors
- ▶ Pressures you to do things you don't want



Good behaviors



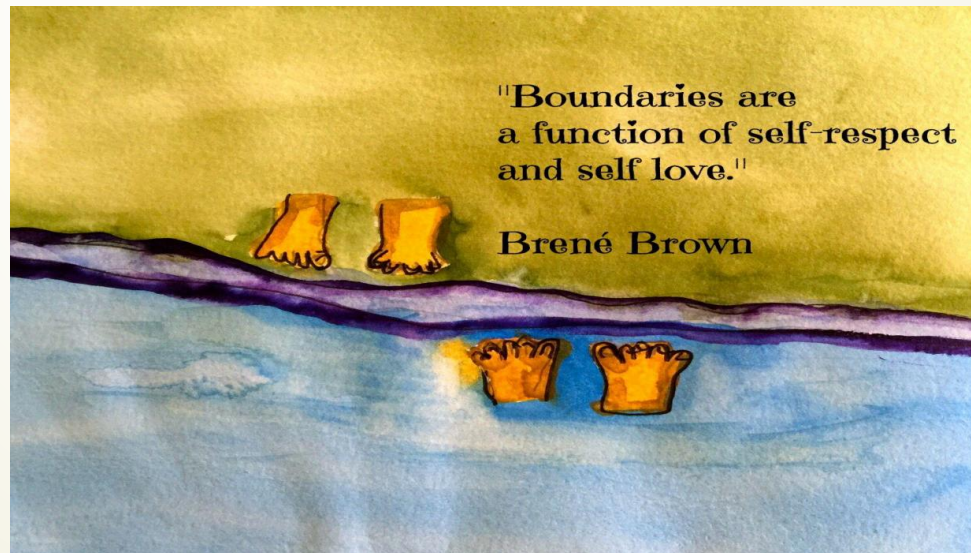
Not good behaviors



Scenario 1: Friendship

- ▶ Your friend only calls when they need help.
- ▶ What would you do?

SECTION: Boundaries & Consent





What Are Boundaries?

- ▶ Boundaries = rules that help you feel safe and comfortable.
- ▶ Types: Physical, Emotional, Personal, Material, Time, Intellectual



Different Types of Boundaries

- ▶ Personal: what feels okay/not okay for you
- ▶ Physical: your body and personal space
- ▶ Intellectual: thoughts and ideas
- ▶ Emotional: protecting your feelings
- ▶ Material & Time: belongings, money, and time

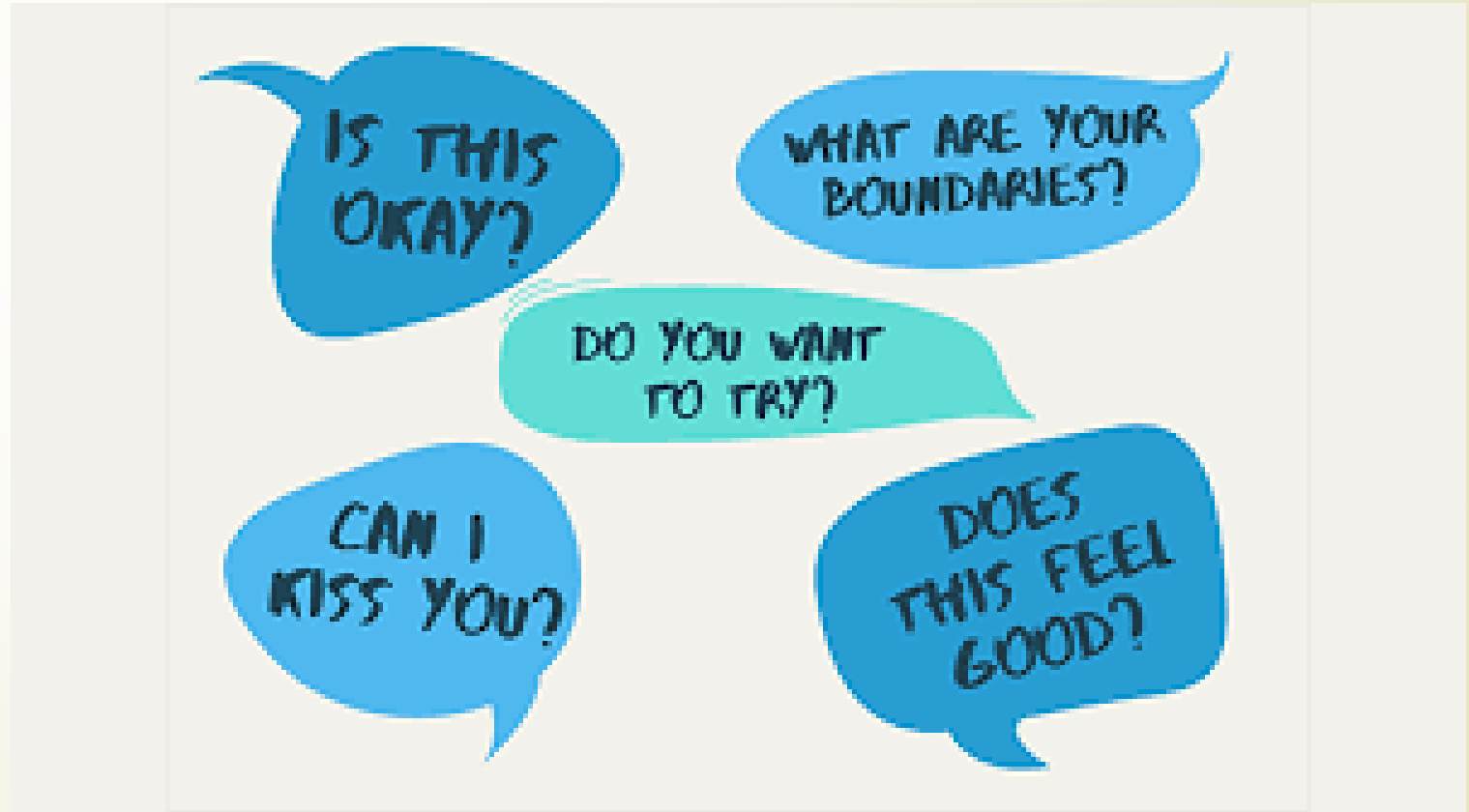


Consent: Ask • Listen • Respect • Stop Means Stop

- ▶ Consent = permission every time.
- ▶ No one owes a 'yes.'
- ▶ You can change your mind at any time.
- ▶ If someone says 'stop,' you stop.

What is consent?

➤ Permission



A consent conversation

Can I kiss you?

Yes.

Sure.

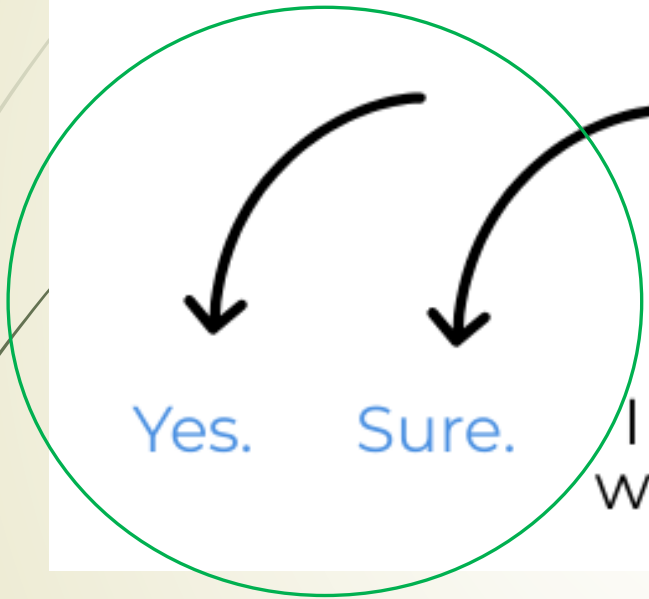
I don't
want to.

I don't
know.

No.

Maybe
later.

Silence



CONSENT



Freely Given
Reversible
Informed
Enthusiastic
Specific

Giving and Asking for Consent

➤ IMPORTANT!!!

Verbal answers that indicate “yes”:

- “Yes!”
- “You can kiss me on the cheek”
- “A hug would be nice”

Verbal answers that indicate “no”:

- “No”
- “Not now”
- “I don’t think I want that”
- “Maybe”

Non-verbal Ways to Give Consent

Nonverbal ways to indicate “yes” include:

- Moving closer towards someone
- Holding onto someone tighter
- Smiling
- Nodding
- Making eye contact often

Nonverbal cues that indicate “no” include:

- Silence
- Moving away from someone
- Shaking your head
- Trying to physically move someone away
- Looking away from someone
- Looking around a lot
- No longer moving/going limp
- Becoming tense
- Crying



Get Consent

- ▶ **Every time:** This means that, for example, if someone gives consent to kiss you one morning, you still need to ask again if you want to kiss them that evening.
- ▶ **Every activity:** If you are kissing someone while lying on a bed, for example, you don't need to ask them for consent each single time that you kiss them while lying there. BUT if you want to do something else, like touch them other than kissing, you **MUST** ask again.



Remember

▶ Ask politely

“Do you mind...?”

“Would you mind...?”

“Could I...?”

“Would it be ok if...?”

“Would it be possible...?”

“Would you be willing to...?”

It's OK!

If you say "no"



If someone you are with
says "no"



Examples



Good behaviors



Not good behaviors

Putting your hand on a person's knee without asking



Hanging out with good friends and putting
arms around each other when everyone is
happy.



Hitting someone's behind without them knowing



Holding hands with your girlfriend after
you ask



Putting your arm around someone without asking



Getting in someone's personal space



Asking your girlfriend if you can kiss her



SECTION: Love & Mental Health





What Is Love?

- ▶ Love means caring, respect, trust, and kindness.
- ▶ Love is NOT fear or control.
 - ▶ How do you know someone cares about you in a good way?



Healthy Relationships Feel...

- Safe
- Equal
- Honest
- Supportive
- You can be yourself



Unhealthy Relationships Can Feel...

- ▶ Controlling ('You can't talk to other people')
- ▶ Jealous all the time
- ▶ Put-downs and insults
- ▶ Not listening to 'no'
- ▶ Making you feel guilty



Scenario 3: Love & Control

- ▶ Your boyfriend/girlfriend gets upset when you hang out with friends.
- ▶ What could you do?



Taking Care of Your Heart

- ▶ Self-care helps relationships:
- ▶ Sleep and rest
- ▶ Doing things you enjoy
- ▶ Talking to people who listen
- ▶ Asking for help when you need it



Mental Health Matters

- Everyone has mental health.
- Good relationships can help; bad ones can hurt.
- Check-in colors: 🟢 Calm 🟡 Worried 🔴 Upset



If Something Feels Wrong

- ▶ Trust your gut.
- ▶ You can say 'No.'
- ▶ You can leave.
- ▶ Talk to someone you trust.



Who Can Help Me?

- ▶ Who do YOU trust?
 - ▶ Family / friend
 - ▶ Staff / counselor
 - ▶ Peer support leader
 - ▶ Write down at least two people. (page 5)

Online & Texting Boundaries

- ▶ Don't share private photos/information.
- ▶ Ask before posting about someone.
- ▶ If a message feels wrong → block and tell someone.
- ▶ You **NEVER** have to send pictures you don't want to send.





Reflection Activity

- ▶ Think about today:
 - ▶ Friendship
 - ▶ Boundaries & consent
 - ▶ Love & dating
 - ▶ Mental health
- ▶ What is one thing you learned or want to remember?

Your Rights in Relationships

- ▶ You have the right to:
 - ▶ Feel safe
 - ▶ Say yes or no
 - ▶ Spend time with friends
 - ▶ Change your mind
 - ▶ Get help if something feels wrong





Support and Resources

- ▶ National:
 - ▶ Love Is Respect (loveisrespect.org)
 - ▶ NAMI HelpLine: 1-800-950-6264
 - ▶ 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call/text 988)
 - ▶ The Arc (thearc.org)
 - ▶ Thrive Autism Coaching (thriveautismcoaching.com)
- ▶ Virginia / Local:
 - ▶ DARS
 - ▶ ASCV (ascv.org)
 - ▶ Local CSB (mental health/crisis)
 - ▶ For more information or support, contact: secarr@vcu.edu

You Deserve Love and Safety

- ▶ You deserve respect, safety, and love — always.
- ▶ For more information or support, contact:
secarr@vcu.edu

