Creating a Culture of Consent @ Berkeley

a consent discussion guide brought to you by SHAC
(Student Health Advisory Committee)

You Deserve to be Safe flier (PDF): http://bit.ly/youdeserveUCB

At UC Berkeley, sexual assault is defined as any physical act of a sexual nature that is accomplished toward another without his/her consent. This means that the entire definition and campus understanding of sexual assault is predicated on the idea of consent to sexual activity. Therefore, it is important that, in order to empower our community to be free from violence, students at Cal should be talking about consent—what it is, what it means, what it is not, what it looks like, and what it doesn’t look like. We have created this guide with some basic information about what consent is to help spark and guide conversations across campus.

Remember, issues of violence can be difficult to talk about, so as you and your community engage in these discussions, be sure to look out for each other, respect each other and each other’s stories and thoughts, and take care of yourself. After a community discussion of consent, check in with yourself, take a walk, read a book, listen to some music, and reflect on the conversation: What are you feeling? How did you respond to your colleagues and peers? Did you learn something new? What kind of actions do you want to take after your conversation?

Ok, so what is consent?
Consent at its most basic level means everyone involved wants to participate.

There are three pillars to consent:
1. Knowing exactly what and how much a person is agreeing to
2. Expressing intent to participate
3. Freely and voluntarily expressing that intent

At UHS, we support a culture of “enthusiastic consent,” which means YES MEANS YES! This idea of enthusiastic consent encourages individuals to provide their yes, to express their own intent to participate, and to ask their partner(s) for their yes.

Some Things to Remember about Consent:
• Agreeing to one kind of sexual activity does not mean agreeing to another kind of sexual activity (for example, agreeing to oral sex does not mean agreeing to intercourse).
• Agreeing to sexual activity once does not imply future consent (just because you hooked up once doesn’t mean you will hook up in the same way again).
• Consent is a continuous process, so it’s a good idea to keep checking in with your partner(s) throughout the exchange (“Is this ok? How are you doing?”). Consent can be withdrawn at any point in the sexual encounter.
• The golden rule is ask! Asking for consent is mandatory, and it leads to more respectful, consensual, and communicative sex!

Consent Cannot Be Given:
• Under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
• If someone is passed out, unconscious, asleep, or coming in or out of consciousness
• Under direct or implied threat of bodily harm or other forms of coercion
• If any party is under 18 years of age
• If someone has a physical, developmental or mental disability that impairs their ability to understand the act

If you have questions about any of this info, check out our consent video: http://bit.ly/consentvideo.
Discussion questions for your community

1. Are you talking about sexual assault/consent in your community? What are the conversations?
2. What types of messages should we giving new students about consent?
3. What do you think the University should be doing differently to address the issue of sexual assault? What should the campus do to prevent it in the first place?
4. What can you as a student do to change the culture of consent at Berkeley?
5. What kind of strategies should be done before students get to college?

Facilitation Tips and Tricks:

1. **Take a deep breath.** Collect yourself. Remember, YOU are the facilitator. You are there to share your knowledge and learn from others.
2. **Watch the room.** If you feel like one person is dominating the conversation or silencing others, help create a space for those other voices in the conversation by asking those quieter people for their input and asking others to share the airtime.
3. **Set some ground rules for conversation.** Common rules include, one person talks at a time, everyone gets a chance to share, listen to each other, etc.
4. **Have questions ready.** Listen to what others have to say and respond to it. Ask questions of the group, of individuals, and create a space where others feel they can ask questions, too.
5. **Provide closure.** As you move from one topic to the next, try to summarize what the group has said so you can use that summary to lead into the next discussion.
6. **Remember, your story is your story.** Sometimes we facilitate workshops on topics that are important to us because we have personal experience with these issues. If you want to share your experience, you can. We can always learn from each other. But, if you want to keep your story to yourself, you have that right. Your story is your story, so you make the decisions about it!
7. **It's okay if you don't know the answer.** If someone asks a question that's tough because you don't know the answer, don't panic. Be honest. Don't make up an answer, don't talk about things you've heard from other places that aren't official, and don't guess. It's better to say, “I don't know; let’s look into it for the next time” than to make up false information.
8. **Follow up.** After a conversation with your community, send out some kind of wrap up message about what was talked about and thank others for participating and providing their thoughts & opinions.

Questions? Want to share your story? Email telltang@berkeley.edu.