

# The Art of Healthy Relationships: Choice, Consent, and Communication

## Materials Needed

- Pen/Pencil and notebook paper or digital document.
- Printouts of Scenario Cards (provided in the body of the lesson).
- (Optional for classroom) Whiteboard or chart paper.
- (For Homeschool/Training) A partner (parent, sibling, or colleague) to practice role-play scenarios.

## Learning Objectives (We Will Be Able To...)

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define the three core elements of a respectful relationship: Communication, Choice, and Consent.
2. Practice using "I Statements" to clearly express personal opinions and needs without blaming others.
3. Apply the principles of seeking, giving, and denying consent clearly and respectfully in various social situations.

## Success Criteria

You will know you have succeeded when you can draft a short dialogue that respectfully denies a request and clearly communicates a personal boundary.

## Introduction: Why This Matters (10 minutes)

### Hook: The Group Project Dilemma

Imagine you are working on a huge group project. One person in your group keeps signing you up for tasks you hate, and they change your work without asking you first. How does that make you feel?

Respectful relationships—whether with friends, family, or teammates—are drama-free relationships. The key to keeping them strong is knowing how to communicate your needs and respecting the needs of others.

### Setting the Stage

Today, we are building a communication toolbox focused on three powerful strategies: expressing **Choice**, practicing **Consent**, and mastering clear **Communication**. These tools help you build trust and respect in every interaction.

## Body: Building the Communication Toolbox (40 minutes)

## I DO: Modeling Respectful Communication (10 minutes)

### Pillar 1: Expressing Needs and Opinions (The "I Statement")

Often, when we express needs, we start with "You never..." or "Why do you always...". This immediately makes the other person defensive. A respectful relationship means taking ownership of your feelings.

**Educator Modeling:** I will demonstrate how to use a standard "I Statement" format:

**"I feel [EMOTION] when [SITUATION HAPPENS] because [WHY IT MATTERS TO ME]. What I need is [SOLUTION/CHOICE]."**

- **Example 1 (Opinion):** Instead of: "That movie idea is terrible." Use: *"I feel anxious when we watch horror movies because they keep me up at night. I would prefer if we chose the comedy instead."*
- **Example 2 (Need/Boundary):** Instead of: "Stop touching my stuff!" Use: *"I feel uncomfortable when my desk items are moved because I need everything in its place to focus. I need you to ask me before you borrow anything."*

### Pillar 2: The Three C's of Consent

Consent isn't just about big situations; it applies to borrowing notes, sharing personal details, or deciding how to spend time together. Consent is an active agreement.

#### The Three C's:

1. **Clear:** The agreement must be obvious, not implied. (Yes means Yes, Silence does not mean Yes).
2. **Coherent:** The person giving consent must be able to understand the decision and its consequences (not under duress or too overwhelmed).
3. **Ongoing:** Consent can be withdrawn at any time. You can agree to something for 10 minutes and then change your mind—and that is okay.

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## WE DO: Analyzing Consent Scenarios (15 minutes)

### Activity: Consent Check-In (Think-Pair-Share)

Review the following scenarios. Discuss whether consent was given (or sought) and if it met the three C's (Clear, Coherent, Ongoing).

#### Scenarios:

1. **Scenario A:** Liam asks Maya if he can post a picture of their group on social media. Maya shrugs and says, "Whatever." Liam posts the picture. (Did Maya give Clear consent?)
2. **Scenario B:** Sarah is upset and tells her friend, Jake, a secret about her family. Later, Jake tells the secret to one other person. Sarah gets angry. (Was Jake's use of the information Ongoing consent?)
3. **Scenario C:** Alex asks if they can borrow Kai's new, expensive gaming headset. Kai stares at the floor and mumbles, "I guess." (Was Kai's consent Clear and Coherent?)

**Guidance for Discussion:** For each scenario, identify who had the power to give or deny consent. What would respectful communication look like in this situation?

## YOU DO: Practicing Respectful Denial and Choice (15 minutes)

### Activity: The Dialogue Challenge

Your goal is to practice respectfully **denying consent** and **communicating your personal choice** using "I Statements."

#### Instructions (Choose ONE Scenario):

1. **The Weekend Plan:** Your friend (or partner in the activity) wants you to spend all Saturday helping them build something elaborate, but you had planned to spend the day relaxing and reading. Write a short script where you deny their request respectfully and suggest a respectful compromise.
2. **The Embarrassing Story:** A teammate wants to tell a slightly embarrassing but funny story about you to the whole team. You are uncomfortable with this. Write a script where you clearly and politely deny their consent to share the story.

**Success Criteria Check:** Your dialogue must include:

- An "I Statement" that explains your feeling or choice.
- A clear and firm denial of consent ("No, I don't want that," or "My choice is to...").
- A suggestion for an alternative (compromise).

**Practice:** Perform or read your script with your partner (parent, peer, or educator).

## Conclusion: Recap and Reflection (10 minutes)

### Review: The Takeaways

Let's quickly review the core ideas we covered today:

- What is the most effective way to express a feeling or need? (Using "I Statements").
- What are the three C's of Consent? (Clear, Coherent, Ongoing).
- Why must consent be ongoing? (Because you can change your mind at any time).

### Formative Assessment: Quick Check

On your paper, complete this sentence about expressing opinions:

**"A respectful relationship means I am responsible for expressing my needs clearly, but I am not responsible for controlling the other person's reaction."** (True/False)

*(Answer: True)*

### Summative Assessment: My Relationship Pledge

Write down one concrete commitment you will make this week about communicating in your relationships (e.g., "I pledge to use an 'I Statement' when I need to ask for quiet time," or "I pledge to clearly ask for consent before sharing someone else's information").

## Adaptability and Differentiation

### Scaffolding (For learners needing support)

- **Sentence Starters:** Provide pre-written templates for the dialogue challenge: "*I appreciate that you invited me, but I feel \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. I choose to \_\_\_\_ instead.*"
- **Simplified Role-Play:** Focus only on giving and denying consent using simple yes/no questions (e.g., "Can I borrow your pencil?" "Can I skip ahead of you in line?").

### Extension (For advanced learners or longer lessons)

- **Media Analysis:** Watch a short clip from a movie or TV show (G-rated/PG) where someone denies consent or expresses a need poorly. Analyze the clip and rewrite the dialogue to make it respectful and effective using the "I Statement" and 3 C's framework.
- **The Compromise Challenge:** Design a step-by-step process for resolving a conflict when two people have entirely different choices, emphasizing finding a solution where both parties feel heard and respected.