

Teacher's Notes



WELCOME TO CONSENT!

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary- aged readers (ages 11–14, grades 6+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English, Health and Physical Education (HPE) Respect Matters Curriculum
- General capabilities:
 - Actions and strategies to enhance health and wellbeing

in a range of environments, such as identifying and managing risky situations ([ACPPS091](#)).

- Impact of external influences on the ability of adolescents to make healthy and safe choices relating to sexuality, and risk taking ([ACPPS092](#)).
- Skills to deal with challenging or unsafe situations: refusal skills; initiating contingency plans; expressing thoughts, opinions and beliefs; acting assertively ([ACPPS090](#)).

THEMES

- Consent
- Self-Esteem and Self-Identity
- Power and Authority
- Puberty
- Cultural and Other Differences
- Consent and the Law

SYNOPSIS

An inclusive, frank and funny guide to navigating consent for tweens and teens of all genders, from the award-winning authors of *Welcome To Your Period*.

Adolescent health experts Dr Melissa Kang and Yumi Stynes have written the only guide you need to figuring out the rules of consent. Whether you're a curious 11 to 14-year-old, or the parent of someone with a bunch of questions, this book is reassuring, interesting, and full of the info you need!



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Yumi Stynes is a writer, broadcaster, television presenter, food fanatic, fitness enthusiast and mother-of-four – including two teenage girls. Among her daily responsibilities she presents a national radio show on the KIIS network called *The 3pm Pickup*. She also hosts an ABC podcast about women's health called *Ladies, We Need to Talk*. The podcast focuses on female sexuality and social issues and is known for its directness and taboo-breaking conversations. Yumi presented an SBS documentary called *'Is Australia Sexist?'*, has given keynote speeches at Dark Mofo Festival of Dangerous Ideas, Department of Rural Health Sexual Health Conference, The Australian Women's Leadership Symposium, One of One International Women's Day Conference and was the fearless MC at the 2019 Women's March in Sydney.

Dr Melissa Kang is well-known as the longest-serving expert behind the iconic Dolly Doctor column, but she's also a practising medical doctor for marginalised young people and has academic roles at the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney. She is fifth-generation Malaysian-Chinese Anglo-Australian, which makes specialising in adolescent sexuality and sexual health all the more interesting. She continues to speak about these topics in the mainstream media.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jenny Latham is a freelance illustrator based in Worthing, UK. Much of Jenny's illustrations revolves around female characters, often finding her inspiration from real, relatable women. In Jenny's free time she enjoys baking, going for long walks and drinking endless amounts of tea. <https://www.lathamsillustrations.com/>

THEMES

- **Consent**

Consent is a subject which can often be confusing for teenagers – and for adults. Such issues have been publicly discussed in the Australian media recently in the wake of the Brittany Higgins rape allegations case and the appointment of Grace Tame, a sexual abuse survivor and advocate, as Australian of the Year 2021. There have been calls for students to be better educated in matters of consent and the National Curriculum has prioritised a concerted response. This book aims to educate readers young and old about consent.

It outlines the meaning of consent and the challenges teenagers face in practice. It offers advice such as: 'Practise saying no in a low-stakes environment, such as when you're with family or trusted friends.' (p29) OR 'You don't have to explain your choices to anyone!' (p 70) OR 'Yes is a yes, a no is a no, and a maybe is a no. (p 104)

The authors caution that 'stranger danger' is more complex than it seems. Most teenagers meet people online and go to events and parties with people their parents don't know (see p 83). Developing a safety network can assist. (pp 85–6). Who would be listed on your safety network?



Your privacy is something you have the right to protect. Be careful what you choose to share, as it can often be shared with others. (pp 88–91) Also be aware of potential issues if someone older than you asks you to keep something unacceptable a secret. (pp 92–3) Sometimes a loved one asking you to keep a secret about an issue such as feeling suicidal or having an eating disorder breaches the 'secrecy bottom line' (pp 94–5).

- **Self-Esteem and Self-Identity**

As we grow older we develop more autonomy over our actions. It's important to recognise that we each have the right to control our own bodies, even though parents and carers, until the teenage years, are able to exercise some control over our decisions. 'If I'm the boss of my body, why do people keep telling me what to do with it?' (p 45) When do you have the right to decide that you would like a body piercing, or to wear clothes your parents don't approve of? Can a relative or friend touch you – for example, pat you on the head or hug you – without your consent? Exploring your feelings is part of your growing sense of self-awareness. What values are important to your sense of self-esteem?

- **Power and Authority**

As this book points out, giving consent can be complicated if the other person is in a position of power or authority, for example, teacher-student or boss-employee (p 97). What other situations have you experienced in which there has been a power imbalance between you and another person?

- **Puberty**

Puberty can be a confusing time and is 'the SECOND-FATEST GROWTH PERIOD, after that first year of life'. (p 40) Changes include mood swings, questioning authority, risk-taking, caring more about peers and suffering peer pressure, sexual arousal (or horniness), and developing personal values. With so many major changes, what challenges do teenagers face when they endeavour to decide on giving consent or not?

- **Cultural and Other Differences**

Many people have different views and beliefs which determine how they might interpret consent. If you define consent differently to someone you encounter, how do you convey that difference of interpretation so that they can appreciate your point of view, when sometimes racist, ageist or other prejudiced views impede mutual understanding?

- **Consent and the Law**

Teenagers should realise that some actions have legal consequences. For example, sexual harassment (p 142) is illegal; the age of sexual consent is governed by laws (pp 160–3), and sharing or even viewing graphic online images of persons under eighteen is also illegal. Discuss the legal ramifications of consent with students.



WRITING STYLE

This is an expository text. It aims to explain a topic in a logical manner using very clear language. The contents page outlines the many sub-topics to be explored when discussing 'consent'.

COMPREHENSION

What is coercion?

Who should you turn to if you feel that your right to consent has been denied?

How should you respond if you are sent a sext message that makes you uncomfortable?

Why is 'appeasement', when faced with a threat, not always the best response?

WRITING EXERCISE

Write a brief expository text exploring one of the following topics based not only on the information contained in this book, but also on further research:

- Stranger Danger
- Personal Boundaries
- Privacy Settings
- Alcohol and Consent

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Jenny Latham's cartoon drawings add humour and interest to the publication and reflect her interest in empowering young readers.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Draw a cartoon exploring the issue of gender and consent between a boy and a girl.

Create a book cover for this text which reflects the messages it conveys.

Create a graphic-novel page based on the statement 'Consent needs to be specific'. Include several images of how consent might be specific or not specific enough.



RELATED READING

Non-Fiction For Teachers

McGuire, Laura *Creating Cultures of Consent: A Guide for Parents and Educators*. Roman and Littlefield, 2021.

Junior Non-Fiction

Brian, Rachel *Respect, Consent Boundaries and Being in Charge of You* Wren and Rook, 2020. (Picture book)

Freitas, Donna *The Big Questions Book of Sex & Consent* Levine Querido, 2020.

Hancock, Justin *Can We Talk about Consent?* Ill. by Fuchsia MacAree. Allen & Unwin, Quarto Group UK, Imprint: Frances Lincoln Children's 2021.

Spilsbury, Louise, and Necati, Yas *What is Consent? Why is it Important? And Other Big Questions*. Wayland, 2018.

Wallis, Pete and Wallis, Thalia *What Does Consent Really Mean?* Ill. by Joseph Wilkins. Singing Dragon, 2017. (Graphic novel)

Websites

'Age of Consent Laws' *Australian Government Australian Institute of Family Studies*
<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/age-consent-laws>

'Australian of the Year Grace Tame Calls for National Reform Around Sexual Assault in Press Club Speech' *Global Citizen*
<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/grace-tame-calls-for-sexual-assault-reform/>

Chrysanthos, Natassia and Visentin, Lisa "'Still a way to go' on consent and power content in new Australian curriculum' *Sydney Morning Herald* April 30, 2021
<https://www.smh.com.au/education/still-a-way-to-go-on-consent-and-power-content-in-new-australian-curriculum-20210429-p57nfs.html>

'Consent' *Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People*
<https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/participation-resources/consent>

'Grace Tame says the definition of consent needs to be established at a federal level' *Sydney Morning Herald* February 28, 2021
<https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/grace-tame-says-the-definition-of-consent-needs-to-be-established-at-a-federal-level-20210228-p576gp.html>

McDonald, Shae "'You can't be a little bit consenting": Grace Tame lashes out at sexual assault laws' *news.com.au* March 8, 2021
<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/you-cant-be-a-little-bit-consenting-grace-tame-lashes-out-at-sexual-assault-laws/news-story/966e70d1f27621fcc82789327fa806c8>

Maley, Jacqueline 'The milkshake ad: since when do we have to be coy about sexual assault?' *The Sydney Morning Herald* April 25, 2021



<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/the-milkshake-ad-since-when-do-we-have-to-be-coy-about-sexual-assault-20210423-p571ur.html>

‘Milkshake consent video pulled amid mounting political backlash over “woeful” campaign’
ABC News on YouTube April 20, 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICY-d5W3IMY>

Murphy, Katherine ‘Brittany Higgins’ shocking story must be a turning point. Women in politics have had enough’ *The Guardian* 20 February 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/feb/20/brittany-higgins-shocking-story-must-be-a-turning-point-women-in-politics-have-had-enough>

‘Respect Matters’ *Australian Curriculum*

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/curriculum-connections/portfolios/respect-matters/>

‘Sexual consent and the law’ Department of Health Government of Western Australia

<https://gdhr.wa.gov.au/-/sexual-consent-and-the-law>

‘Touch and Consent in Healthy Relationships’ *kidpower*

https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/consent/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIisnSzvmp8AIVyX4rCh0xDgTwEAAYASAAEgLJrPD_BwE

‘What is Consent?’ *Kids Helpline*

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/what-consent>

‘What is Consent?’ *Queensland Police Service*

<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/units/victims-of-crime/support-for-victims-of-crime/adult-sexual-assault/what-is-consent>

‘Young Australians confused about consent and control in the age of Tinder and Snapchat’ *VicHealth*
c22 May, 2019

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/media-releases/ncas-youth-report-2019>

‘Your Guide to Sexual Consent’ *healthline*

<https://www.healthline.com/health/guide-to-consent>



WORKSHEET 1. CONSENT

QUESTION	RESPONSE
During a sleepover at her house, your friend wants to drink alcohol but you don't. How do you convey your feelings about this?	
'We each belong to ourselves.' What does this mean?	
Why do we often find it so difficult to say no?	
'What if I don't know what I want?' (p 31)	
'You can take back your "yes" whenever you feel like it.' (p 34)	
A recent Australian government campaign about consent featuring two people sharing a milkshake was roundly criticised for misrepresenting the issues involved. Watch a video clip of this ad and write your own response to it. [See Related Reading .]	
'Sometimes we have to consent to doing something a bit boring (if it doesn't actually hurt or bother us) ... because it's the right thing to do.' (p 53) When have you had to give consent like this?	



WORKSHEET 2. SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-IDENTITY

QUESTION	RESPONSE
<p>Setting your own boundaries is based on how you view yourself and your values. What are your personal boundaries? Make a list of them. (See the list on p 67 after you have made your own list.)</p>	
<p>FOMO is a powerful force in young people's lives. They often feel impelled by peer group pressure to do something they don't feel comfortable with. Have you ever experienced this sort of pressure? How did you deal with it?</p>	
<p>Games such as 'spin the bottle' or 'truth or dare' can often put people into a vulnerable position. Can you withdraw from the game if it doesn't feel 'right' or 'safe' to you?</p>	
<p>Some people are female, some male and some feel somewhere in between. How might that affect what they choose to consent to?</p>	
<p>If someone you like threatens to 'dump you' if you don't want to do something with them, how should you react?</p>	
<p>What aspect of your own personality makes it difficult for you to decide to offer or deny consent?</p>	



WORKSHEET 3. POWER AND AUTHORITY

QUESTION	RESPONSE
People in power often have an unfair advantage over someone else. Describe a situation where you have felt such disadvantage and how you dealt with it.	
How do you respond to a teacher when they ask you to do something which transgresses your personal privacy, or to speak about something which may not be a pleasant subject for you?	
Teenagers who work may be in a situation where their supervisor makes them uncomfortable by, for example, telling sexist jokes, or making comments about personal appearances. How should you respond?	
Doctors automatically seem to have authority over their patients. What rights as a patient do you have?	
Family members often take liberties with younger members of the family, teasing them or being over-familiar physically. How do you prevent this without giving offence to your relative?	
Grace Tame, Australian of the Year 2021, was abused by a teacher. Have you ever witnessed behaviour you thought was inappropriate?	



WORKSHEET 4. PUBERTY

QUESTION	RESPONSE
Does physical contact with your family make you feel uncomfortable now that you've reached puberty?	
Reaching puberty can be confusing. What was the most troubling aspect of this change for you and was there any incident where this affected your ability to exercise your right to consent?	
Sexual arousal is part of puberty. Has this caused you to do or think things which are troubling to you? Have you considered your own personal values in order to confront this dilemma?	
Taking risks can be exhilarating but it can also be extremely 'risky'! Have you ever been tempted to take an extreme risk by a peer but instead exercised your right to say no?	
Has puberty given you new capacities for empathy?	
What are the dangers of indulging in sexual activity before you are really ready for it?	



WORKSHEET 5. CULTURAL AND OTHER DIFFERENCES

QUESTION	RESPONSE
<p>In some cultures it is considered rude to touch someone, or to look someone in the eye. Have you ever denied someone consent by inadvertently doing something to offend them?</p>	
<p>People who are disabled are sometimes patronised by, for example, having someone put their hand on the back of their wheelchair. How should someone respond to that?</p>	
<p>How might an elderly person respond if a young shop assistant addresses them as 'love' or 'dear' in an effort to seem caring?</p>	
<p>Some people of African or South Pacific Islander background have frizzy hair. Sometimes other people will touch their hair and comment on this aspect of their appearance. This makes them feel very uncomfortable. Is it not okay to touch a stranger's hair?</p>	
<p>Asian people are often complimented for their 'lovely complexion'. Is such a statement also possibly offensive?</p>	
<p>Why do some people deny others the right to dress as their culture requires them to?</p>	



WORKSHEET 6. CONSENT AND THE LAW

QUESTION	RESPONSE
<p>The age of consent varies from state to state and the law can be malleable depending on the age of the two parties involved as well. What do you understand about the 'age of consent' laws?</p>	
<p>'Alcohol is involved in over one third of the sexual assault cases involving teenagers that I see. In these cases the teenager has not been able to give consent. – Dr Tania May' (p 189). What did you learn from this book about alcohol and consent?</p>	
<p>In not recognising another person's right to consent, what other laws might you break?</p>	
<p>Coercive behaviour can be considered unlawful. Have you ever felt that someone you are close to has exercised coercion? What did you do about this?</p>	
<p>Did you know that bullying in a workplace is unlawful? How would you define such bullying?</p>	
<p>'Sexting' is something people do online but it's important to realise that some images of people under 18, for example, when shared with others, can be considered illegal. Have you had any experiences like this?</p>	

