

JULY 2024

# UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Hi UC students,

We hope you are all staying warm and keeping well!

In this newsletter we will focus on **consent**, **healthy relationships**, and **gender-based violence**.



*Disclaimer: This material contains information about consent, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. While this content is important to explore and intended to provide education, we acknowledge that it can be sensitive. So please proceed only if you are comfortable and take breaks as you need. If you find yourself wanting some support, reach out to one of our service providers listed on the last page.*



# WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is an exchange that we use every day.

It is a question and an answer.

When you ask for consent from another person, you are asking for their permission. It's a sign of respect. A sign that you value them and would like to share in an experience with them. As with any time permission is requested, it is totally up to the other person to decide whether they want to give it.

This concept is simple, however when it comes to the topic of sex, asking for and giving permission can suddenly feel quite different. How do I ask for it? How do I know that I have it for sure? What if I ruin the mood? How do I give it? What if I give it but I change my mind? These are all common questions and ones that, with practice, you will not only feel comfortable navigating but enjoy navigating.

So, let's start with what sexual consent is. Consent is a free, voluntary, and informed agreement between people to participate in sexual contact or activity.

This agreement is only present when these people mutually and genuinely feel they want to engage and actively make sure their partner does too. Consent cannot be assumed because a person does not resist sexual contact, verbally or physically and it can be withdrawn at any time.

What this means is that consent is an ongoing conversation, a question, and an answer, and to give consent, you must be doing it without the influence of anything or anyone.




Can I grab a lift with you?"



Sure you can!



Can I please have a chip?



Absolutely not. I'm way too hungry to share.



Can we walk to class together?



I would love that.

## SO, WHAT DOES CONSENT LOOK LIKE?

Consent looks like **an enthusiastic yes**. When you ask your partner if they're keen and they give you a big 'hell yes', you can be confident that you have their consent. If at some point, your partner starts to withdraw, check in with them again. Are they still enjoying this? Do they want to stop? If they say they're feeling unsure, don't try to convince them to keep going. Be kind, let them know that it's okay to feel unsure and stop what you're doing.

Consent is an ongoing process because your desires, choices and comfort level can change before, during and after a sexual encounter. There are many reasons why someone may change their mind and that is totally fair and needs to be respected.

## WHAT DOESN'T CONSENT LOOK LIKE?

### Consent does not look like:

- Silence
- Being incapable of saying yes or no (under the influence of drugs or alcohol or asleep)
- Permission to do an activity at a different time or whenever you feel like it
- Permission to do anything else other than what you've sought consent for
- Feeling pressured to consent (coerced consent)
- What someone is wearing
- How someone is acting

## SO HOW DO I CHECK FOR CONSENT?

'Can I kiss you?'

'Can I touch you here?'

'Do you want to have sex?'

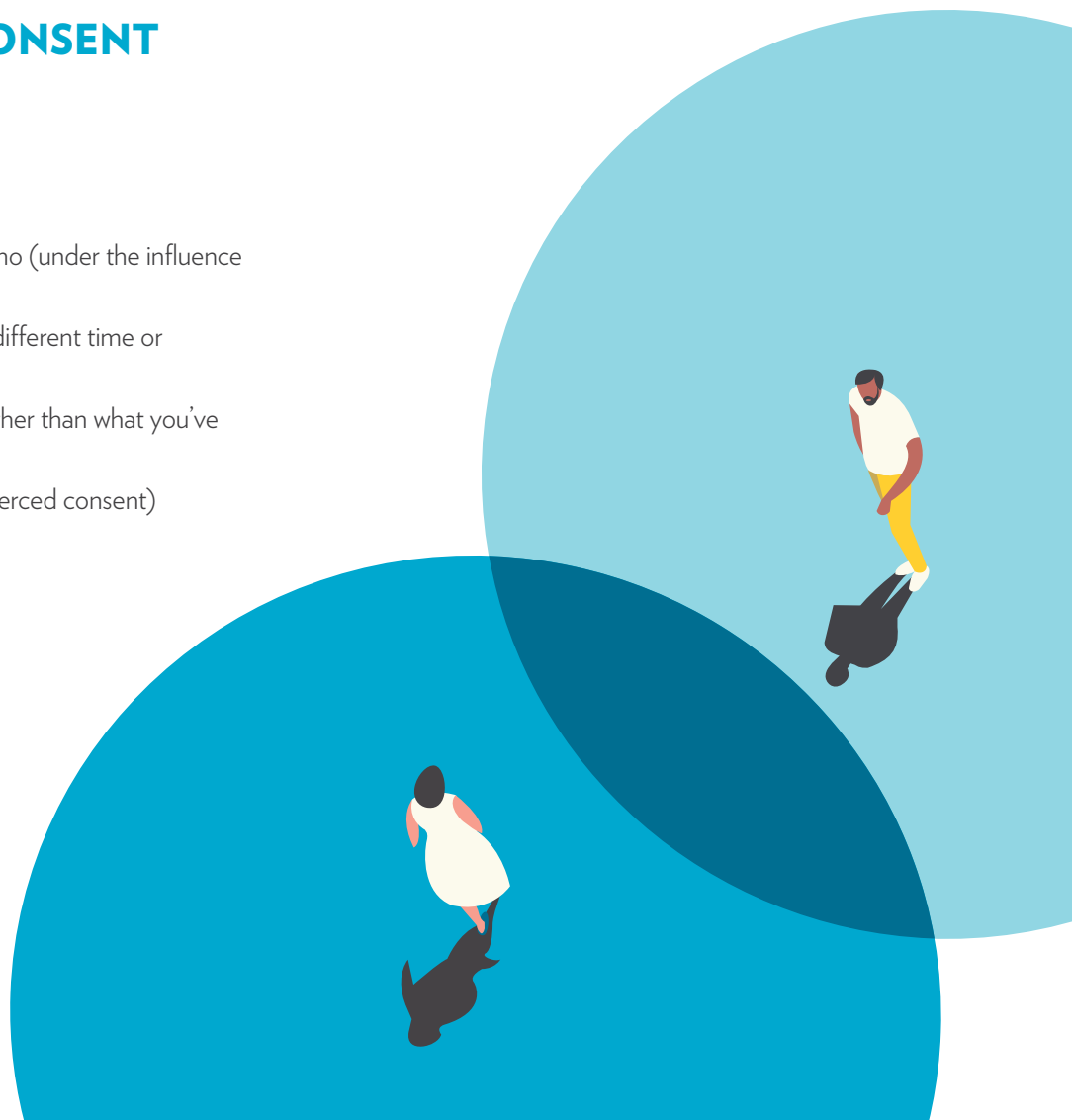
'Do you want to keep going?'

'Does this feel good?'

'Hey, you seem a little different, did you want to stop?'

'I'm really enjoying this; I'd love to try \_\_\_\_ if you're into it?'

'I'm ready to do \_\_\_\_ but I don't want to rush you, so just so you know, you can let me know if and when you're ready.'





## How do I change my consent?

- 'I know I said I wanted to do \_\_\_\_ but I'm not really in the mood to go there anymore'.
- 'This isn't quite right, could we please slow down?'
- 'I don't think I'm ready for this'.



## What can I say if I'm still working out what I want?

- 'Let's take it slow, I'm still working out what I like.'
- 'I'm really enjoying this but I'm not sure I want to go any further, so let's keep going with this for now.'



## When can't I consent?

You cannot provide consent if you are:

- Intoxicated (high or drunk)
- Unconscious or asleep
- Below the age of consent (in the ACT, the age of consent is 16 years old)
- Are too afraid to say no



## Why is checking for consent an important part of a healthy relationship?

Checking for consent is an important part of a healthy relationship because it shows your partner/s that you respect them. It shows them that they matter to you. This is a super important part of intimacy. It fosters a sense of safety and trust so that you can be vulnerable with one another and have a pleasurable and safe sexual experience. Without consent, your sexual experience isn't an intimate, safe sexual experience anymore. It's sexual assault.



## Do I have to still get consent if I am in a long-term relationship?

As mentioned before, consent is an ongoing conversation. So no matter how many times you have been intimate with someone, you must check for consent every time. There are many reasons why someone may change their mind from moment to moment, hour to hour, day to day and that is totally fair and needs to be respected.

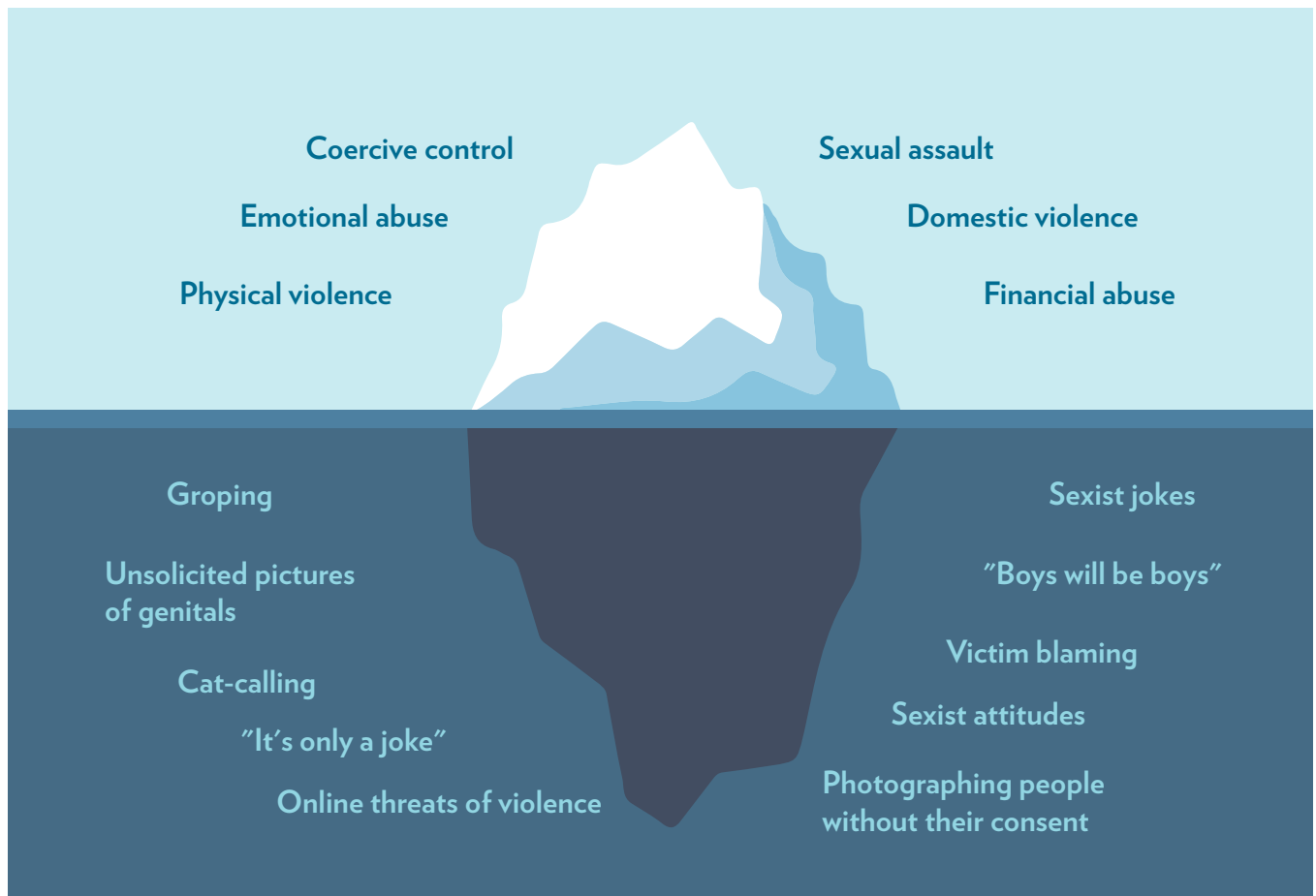
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Consent is an ongoing conversation.

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# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-Based Violence is a term that covers actions like sexual harassment, coercive control, financial abuse, and sexual assault. It is used to describe any behaviour that is used against someone because of their gender, gender expression or sexual orientation that makes someone feel uncomfortable, intimidated, frightened, or threatened.



Gender-based violence is an incredibly important issue. The Australian Government has declared the prevention of gender-based violence as a national focus and is taking steps towards ensuring this.

One of these steps is the role out of a National Code which will see tertiary institutions like ours have to work

actively and meaningfully to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in a way that is trauma-informed and victim-survivor centric. We have committed to the code and are taking steps to prevent these acts from happening in the future. If you or someone you know has experienced anything like this, you do not have to go through this alone. We are here to support you:

# AT UC:

## Within business hours

On campus, **UC Medical & Counselling** staff can help you.

You may want to visit your UC GP for STI testing and treatment and info on emergency contraception (the morning after pill) to prevent pregnancy.

You may also want to speak with a psychologist at UC for further support, short term, and long term.

Reach out to UC Medical & Counselling Centre for confidential doctor and psychology appointments. Contact 6201 2351, book on **HotDoc**, or drop in (Building 1, Level B) and ask for 'nurse triage'.

You can call UC Security, available 24/7 on **6201 2222**.

Connect with UC Student Wellbeing for support in a safe and inclusive setting. Call **6206 8841**, email [wellbeing@canberra.edu.au](mailto:wellbeing@canberra.edu.au) or head to Student Central to talk to someone.

## After hours

Call or text UC Crisis line for after hours, confidential support. Call **1300 271 790** or text **0488 884 227**.

For services in the broader Canberra community, scan the QR code:



If you're interested in learning more, there are some awesome resources about gender-based violence, healthy relationships and consent out there. Here are some that we recommend checking out:



- **Consent can't wait**
- **Affirmative consent: Everything you need to know**
- **Signs of an abusive relationship**
- **Dating in Australia: Stories from International Students**
- **Stop Campaign**
- **Learn about violence against women**

## Wellbeing Break

Exploring these topics can be tough so make sure you take a moment for yourself.

[Here are some for you to download and enjoy.](#)



# STUDENT HEALTH AT THE UC MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING CENTRE

The UC Medical and Counselling Centre is committed to ensuring student ensuring student physical and mental health remains a priority area throughout the year.

With a professional team of psychologists available from 9am–5pm Monday-Friday, Medical and Counselling is well equipped to assist any students requiring mental health support. Whether you are struggling with relationship breakups, workload, traumatic incidents or depression, our psychologists are here to help. Psychology services are confidential, FREE and available exclusively to all currently enrolled UC Student with no referral required.

**As well as psychologists, the Medical and Counselling team is made up of:**

- Medical Practitioners
- Visiting Psychiatrist
- Psychologists
- Registered Nurses

Appointments can be made by calling **02 6201 2351**, by booking through HotDoc, or visiting the centre and speaking to our reception staff.

Do you require more information about how to deal with specific mental or physical health concerns?

**Click here** to access specific resources from the Medical and Counselling Centre.

**Emergency Contacts for mental health include:**

- Lifeline Phone: **131 114**
- Mental Health Crisis Service Phone: **1800 629 354**
- University of Canberra 24-hour Crisis Line Phone: **1300 271 790** or Text: **0488 884 227**

## 24-hour contacts to keep in mind:

- **6201 2222**  
UC Security
- **131 444**  
Police assistance
- **1800 737 732**  
National Sexual Assault Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service
- **02 6280 0900**  
Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- **02 5124 2185**  
Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care
- **1300 224 636**  
Beyond Blue
- **1300 78 99 78**  
MensLine Australia
- **1800 184 527**  
QLife
- **1800 629 354**  
Access Mental Health

# OTHER SUPPORTS

## Citizen Centred Justice Clinic

Provides free legal advice on a variety of issues including:

- Housing
- Financial matters
- Addressing scams
- Dealing with domestic violence
- Handling divorce cases
- Addressing citizenship issues
- Managing employment situations within the community, such as addressing pay parity for international students.

Appointments are available every Wednesday and can be booked through the UC Medical and Counselling Centre: Building 1, Level B. Phone: 02 6201 2351.

## Student Wellbeing and Support

Can assist with:

- Transition and first year support
- Accommodation and safe housing
- Financial Support
- Navigating Study

Contact: [wellbeing@canberra.edu.au](mailto:wellbeing@canberra.edu.au)

## International student support

Can assist with:

- Settling into life at UC and Canberra
- Programs that aim to enhance their study experience, health and wellbeing
- Understanding their student visa requirements and what is expected of them
- Tailored support for Australia Awards students
- Under-18 student welfare and accommodation needs
- Connections to other key services at UC and within the community
- Additional support for students

Contact: [InternationalStudent@canberra.edu.au](mailto:InternationalStudent@canberra.edu.au)

## UC Thrive and Student Mentor Program

Provides targeted and individualised peer-led support for commencing students through a scaffolded 8-week transition program.

Contact: [ucthrive@canberra.edu.au](mailto:ucthrive@canberra.edu.au)

## Multi-faith support

- Multi-faith and Chaplaincy

Contact: [Chaplaincy@canberra.edu.au](mailto:Chaplaincy@canberra.edu.au)

## Study Skills

Provides a range of face-to-face and only study help programs for UC students to assist with academic goals. These include:

- Drop in Study Help session
- Peer-Assisted Learning Sessions (PALS)
- The Maths and Stats Help Centre
- The ASK Advisors
- Study Skills English Language Support
- EndNote and Mahara support
- Referrals for Study Skills individual consultations etc.

Contact: [studyskills@canberra.edu.au](mailto:studyskills@canberra.edu.au) or by phone on 02 6201 2205.

For self-paced online resources and further information about Study Skills programs and services, visit the Study Help UCLearn (Canvas) site (log-in required).





# TRAINING, COURSES AND GROUPS

## BYSTANDER TRAINING

A free workshop on identifying safe and effective strategies to combat common bystander situations. Students will explore how challenging situations affect our perception and decision-making and offers techniques for taking clear action under pressure.

Contact Sam Smith to register: [sam.smith@canberra.edu.au](mailto:sam.smith@canberra.edu.au)

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Join an early intervention training program on responding to someone experiencing a mental health problem or crisis. Led by a Licensed instructor, this is a practical skills-based program that equips people with the skills needed to face these situations with confidence.

Contact UC Medical and Counselling Centre on **02 6201 2351** for more information.

## 'ACT FOR ANXIETY' GROUP

A FREE, six-week group program informed by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for students struggling with anxiety. This group aims to provide you with skills and strategies to better manage your anxiety and to improve your day-to-day life.

Your psychologist may refer you to this group, and the UC Medical and Counselling Centre will contact you to join once this referral has been received.

## THE WEEKLY PSYCH SESSION

This is a FREE weekly psych skill workshop for UC students. Run in person and online, learn a new set of skills and tools to improve your wellbeing and coping skills.

Register at: [events.humanitix.com/weekly-psych-session](https://events.humanitix.com/weekly-psych-session)

## CITIZEN CENTRED JUSTICE CLINIC

If you have a problem with your employment, discrimination, workplace bullying, housing, immigration, family or custody matters, violence, sexual assault or other matters causing you concern, the UC Medical and Counselling Centre offers a free confidential legal service for UC students and staff on Wednesdays.

Book a face-to-face or telephone appointment through the UC Medical and Counselling Centre **02 6201 2351**

## EMOTIONAL SKILLS GROUP

This group aims to provide you with skills and strategies to manage emotions and communicate effectively. The content is informed by resources from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and will include mindfulness and strategies to manage/tolerate distress, understand and manage emotions and interpersonal skills.

Your psychologist or GP at **UC Medical and Counselling** may refer you to the group. You are also welcome to contact UC Medical and Counselling reception to book an intake appointment.

Keep an eye out for our next issue.

On behalf of the UC Medical & Counselling Centre, **stay safe everyone!**