



# Voice & Choice:

Embracing Boundaries and Consent



**10-SESSION UNITY CIRCLE  
FACILITATOR ACTIVITY GUIDE**  
For Ages 11 – 18

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## Session Four Theme: **RESPECT THE YES AND THE NO! PERIOD.**

Through group discussion and group think-pair-share, participants will further explore their thoughts, concerns, and decisions regarding consent, coercion, and boundaries in romantic relationships.

### **ACTIVITY**

- Popcorn Feelings Regarding Consent & Coercion (Discussion)
- “Ways to Say Yes and No” (Think-Pair-Share Activity)
- What to Do When Your No is Refused? (Discussion)

### **MATERIALS**

- Talking piece or focusing tool
- Sticky notes (the same color), at least five notes per participant
- Pens
- Sticky easel pad paper
- Colored markers (preferably bleed free to protect walls)
- Fidget toys, smooth rocks, or other nature objects

### **PURPOSE**

- To identify one’s feelings (physical and mental) when they experience consent and when they don’t
- To gain confidence and positive feelings about their own decisions and be the “ruler of their own body”
- To establish boundaries regarding ways to say yes and no
- To develop ideas for what to do and/or say when someone does not accept a no graciously

### **FACILITATOR PREPARATION**

- 1 Read through the entire session for familiarity with the content and activities.
- 2 Choose a Warm-Up Activity from the tabbed section of this guide.
- 3 Have easel pad paper and markers ready before participants arrive.
- 4 Ensure that you have enough free wall and/or table space in the room for participants to place their easel pad paper on.
- 5 If Activity #2 (Ways to Say Yes and No) is new to you, practice it in advance. Retain your answers in case the youth need an example of how to participate in the activity.



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## OPENING RITUAL

Open with your chosen ritual that marks the beginning of your Circle.



## THEME INTRODUCTION

Introduce the theme for the week. Say:

- The theme of the week is “Respect the Yes AND the No! Period.”, where we will further explore views regarding personal bodily autonomy and establish ways to say yes and no when enforcing personal boundaries in romantic/intimate relationships. We will also discuss what to say and do when someone does not accept their no with grace.



### CAUTION STATEMENT AND ALTERNATIVE:

For some, one or more of the activities may be uncomfortable or potentially triggering due to possible situations where their consent was not considered and taken seriously. We encourage youth to participate in all activities, however, it is important to offer options for participation, such as just listening. Alternatively, an externalizing option would be for anyone who might wish to hold a simple fidget toy, smooth rock, or another object from nature; focus and look at the object; feel it; and notice its features such as shape, color, texture, etc., as a means of re-centering oneself during the activity(ies).

- Say and demonstrate the example: *“Unity Circle® is an inclusive and expansive program that promotes safety and belonging for all youth. We encourage all youth in the Circle to participate in the session activities, However, if you feel uncomfortable, you are free to just listen or hold one of the fidget toys or rocks. If you feel comfortable enough to participate, please let me know.”*



## WARM-UP

Choose a Warm-Up Activity from the Warm-Up Activities tab of this guide.



## CHECK-IN

Go around the Circle and have each group member “check in” as to what is going on in their life. Invite them to share any thoughts or feelings that came up for them after the last session.



## ACTIVITY 1

### Popcorn Feelings Regarding Consent & Coercion

- 1 Inform the group members that in the next activity, they are going to explore their feelings regarding consent & coercion. Ask for one or two volunteers to answer the following questions:
  - How would you define consent?
  - How would you define coercion?



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- 2 Share aloud the definitions for both terms:
  - “Consent is permission for something to happen or agreement to do something. Affirmative consent relies on “yes means yes” rather than “no means no.” It is knowing, voluntary, and mutual.”
  - “Coercion is the act of using pressure, alcohol or drugs, or force to have sexual contact with someone against their own will.”
- 3 Hand each participant at least five sticky notes and a pen.
- 4 Inform them to write a response to the question that you will ask them. Tell them not to share their response with anyone.
- 5 Ask them the question, “How does it feel to say yes to something you really want?”
- 6 Once they have written their answer, inform them to fold up their answer and toss it in the center of the circle.
- 7 Once everyone’s sticky note is in the center of the circle, have each person pick up one of the folded sticky note.
- 8 Have everyone open their sticky note and one-by-one read aloud their peer’s response. Make sure that everyone has a chance to recite their answer.
- 9 Repeat the previous steps and ask the group the following questions:
  - “How does it feel to say yes?”
  - “How does it feel to say no to something you do not want?”
  - “Do you feel your no is respected most of the time?”
  - “Is it easy or hard to say no to something you do not want?”
  - “Is it easy or hard to say yes to something you want?”



### SHARING OF ACTIVITY

After all questions have been answered, ask the group the following:

- How did it feel hearing everyone’s answers?
- Did anything surprise you?



### ACTIVITY 2

#### “Ways to Say Yes and No”

- 1 Inform the group that in the next activity, group members will work together to come up with ways to say yes and no.
- 2 Explain that some people may think this is an easy task, but it is oftentimes a difficult thing to do.
- 3 Break up Circle members into pairs. If you have an uneven number of group members, ask a pair to be a mini-group of three.



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- 4 Hand out two sheets of easel paper and two markers to each pair/mini-group.
- 5 Instruct them to write “Ways to Say Yes” at the top of one easel paper, and “Ways to Say No” at the top of the other sheet of easel paper.
- 6 Tell the pairs/mini-groups that you will give them several minutes to write down all the ways a youth can say “yes” and all the ways they can say “no”. Encourage them to work together and also listen to the experiences of each participant when engaging in the activity.



### SHARING OF ACTIVITY

- 1 When complete, invite the pairs/mini-groups back to the Circle to share what they wrote.
- 2 Have each participant pair stand (if possible) and go over each list (“Ways to Say No”; “Ways to Say Yes”)
- 3 When the pairs/mini-groups are done sharing, engage in a group discussion.
  - What was it like to do this activity?
  - What did you think of your pair’s/mini-group’s answers? What did you notice from the other’s answers?
  - How many of you (by show of hands) knew at least 5 of the yes’s/ no’s listed on your peer’s lists? 10? 15? More than 15?
  - Which responses surprised you?
  - How do you feel after doing this activity?
  - Why is it so difficult for some youth to express their consent or non-consent?



### ACTIVITY 3

#### **What to Do When Your No is Refused?**

- 1 Ask the Circle for a volunteer to be a scribe. Provide the volunteer with easel paper and a marker. Inform the scribe that they can participate in the discussion as well.
- 2 Say:
  - “Even though we previously completed several lists of ways to say no, sometimes a no is not accepted graciously by others. Sometimes the no can be met with frustration, denial, and sometimes, even aggression.”
- 3 Ask Circle participants to turn their chairs around so their faces and bodies face out of the Circle. Ask them to close their eyes if they are comfortable with doing so. Instruct them to use their left or right arm and casually hang it at their side. Participants should relax their arm and hand at their side so you can see it. Inform them they will be given a series of statements. If they agree with the statements, they are to



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show their pointer finger. If they do not agree, they can keep their hand as is.

- 4 Say, “Point your pointer finger if...
  - You have ever felt bad about saying no but knew it was the right thing for you to do (for yourself).
  - You have ever been pressured to do something you did not want to do.
  - You think culture and society play a role in the decisions we make to consent or not consent to something?
  - Culture and society influence us to “take it”, “go after what we want”, or “go get it” no matter the cost.
  - You have said no to something and the person receiving the no did not agree with you.
  - The person you said no to came at you with frustration, name calling, or aggression.
  - You have ever been in a situation where you had to say no to something you did not want to do.”
- 5 Instruct Circle members to open their eyes. Ask everyone to turn their chairs back in towards the center of the Circle.
- 6 Explain that everyone has the choice to say yes or no. It may feel awkward saying no to someone, but you have the right to protect yourself, which in turn, protects others.
- 7 In the open Circle setting, ask the Circle the following question while the volunteer scribe writes the suggestions down on the easel paper:
  - What are ways that we can protect ourselves when a no is not received graciously?  
*E.g. Say to the person the no is being directed to:*
    - › “This is my boundary, and I would appreciate it if you respected it.”
    - › “I’m sorry you feel that way, but the answer is still no.”



### SHARING OF ACTIVITY

- 1 After every member has contributed, read over the list of suggestions.
- 2 Discussion Questions
  - Which one of these suggestions would be easy for you to say/do?
  - Which one would be difficult, and why?
- 3 Thank the Circle for participating in the activity, acknowledging that it may have not been an easy activity to do. Let them know that as individuals, they have the right to advocate for themselves without shame or fear.



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*Note to facilitator: Save the easel paper with the listed suggestions and have it posted for future sessions. Inform the participants that the list will be posted for future sessions in case participants need a reminder of how to advocate for themselves.*

4 **Application Question:** Using the talking piece, go around the Circle, make the following statement, and invite each member to answer the following question:

- Today we discussed feelings regarding consent vs. coercion, discussed ways to say yes and no, and listed ways to protect ourselves when our no is not received positively. **Based on this week's activities, what is one way you will say yes when you mean yes and no when there is something you don't want to do the next time a situation arises?**

*Note to facilitator: Record responses from group members and check in with them at the next session.*



### CLOSING RITUAL

Thank everyone for participating and bring them together for the closing ritual.

#### **Sources:**

*Consent (Columbia Health) (2024)*

Retrieved from: [https://www.health.columbia.edu/content/consent#:~:text=Consent%20is%20permission%20for%20something,than%20%E2%80%9Cno%20means%20no.%E2%80%9D&text=Consent%20is%20an%20active%20process,with%20another%20person\(s\).](https://www.health.columbia.edu/content/consent#:~:text=Consent%20is%20permission%20for%20something,than%20%E2%80%9Cno%20means%20no.%E2%80%9D&text=Consent%20is%20an%20active%20process,with%20another%20person(s).)

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Retrieved from: <https://www.loveisrespect.org/everyone-deserves-a-healthy-relationship/understand-consent/>

*What is Sexual Coercion (Love is Respect) (2024)*

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