



CONSENSUAL

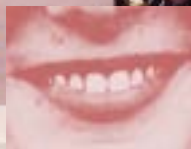
Young people's reflections
on affirmative consent



Wild
Feast
express yourself



FREE



Art. Writing. Facts

Explore what affirmative consent means

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land

The Taking ACtion project would like to acknowledge that this zine was created on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We would also like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the beautiful and varied Aboriginal lands where we have grown, played, lived and created throughout our lives. We recognise their ongoing connection to lands, waters, and skies, and thank them for their care of Country.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal sovereignty was never given up and that we stand on stolen land. We are committed to learning, practicing allyship and to supporting Treaty and truth-telling processes.

We recognise the leadership role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on gender equality and the health, safety and wellbeing of women and gender-diverse people.

We ask you to learn more about the Aboriginal land you stand on where you live, play, and learn.

Be curious.
Practice allyship.
Care collectively.



Contents

4	Letter from the editors
6	What is consent?
7	Beautiful People, by Lucia Amati
8	What is affirmative consent?
10	Age of consent
11	Consent is...
12	Baises-Moi Avec Ton Godemichet, by CJ Starc
13	Building a safe space together
14	For You, From Me, by Lauren
15	It's not consensual if...
17	Support services
18	Bound, by Breeanna Dodd and Riley Mills
20	Sexual rights
21	Consent, by Mackenzie
22	Communicating consent
24	Lancelot and Guinevere are Lesbians, by Maia Leallan and Ella Hunter
28	YAG favourites
30	A Woven Tapestry of Digital Consent, Informed User Experiences and Interconnected Systems, by Madeleen Francis
31	Wedded Bliss, by Maia Leallan
32	Golden Goddess, by Breeanna Dodd and Riley Mills
35	Crossword, by Rebecca Garth
36	What will you do next?



Hello and welcome!

Letter from the editors

We're the YAG (Youth ACTION Group) — a group of young people from Hume and the north metro region who came together to learn, advocate and share knowledge all about affirmative consent, sexual rights, pleasure and sexual violence prevention as part of the **Taking ACTION: Affirmative Consent in the North project**. Taking ACTION is a peer-led education and community engagement project that has given us the opportunity to build our skills and knowledge, and engage other young people in conversations about consent, respect and positive sexual experiences.

We are so excited for you to be here reading **ConSensual** and joining us in the conversation about affirmative consent.

We would like to acknowledge the victim survivors of sexual violence and all forms of gender-based violence. We are thankful to all the people who have shared their stories, and recognise those who haven't been able to, who inform our understanding of consent and our work preventing sexual violence and gender-based violence. We

wouldn't be able to create a zine like this without the tireless work of advocates and activists who have come before us. Their constant work to push the conversation about consent forward to where it is now has opened the door for us to produce this zine.



Knowing about consent and rights and pleasure and boundaries and communication is so important. It's knowledge we all deserve to have. But so often we don't get it, and we don't get it in a way that reflects our lives and experiences. **ConSensual** is a way of sharing important information in a fun, accessible way that can reach lots of people and continue after our project comes to an end. But it's also more than that.

ConSensual explores consent in inclusive, creative and authentic ways that we hope connects with people differently.

We really wanted to create something that connects people together and draws on community knowledge, creativity and voices. We've included art, writing and facts that relate to our lives, our identities and

Content warning

Sex, swearing, nudity, mentions of sexual assault and sexual violence.



our passion for **gender equity**. **ConSensual** is full of practical information we wish we had known earlier plus some amazing pieces from creative contributors exploring what consent means to them. **ConSensual** is an invitation to join us in continuous learning, reflection and commitment to taking action.

So many people have been involved in making this zine possible. From the speakers we had in our training to all of the incredible creatives who have supported and inspired us. Our deepest gratitude to the **GenZine** team (IG: @gen_zine_), our graphic designer **Ximena Jiménez** (IG: @kidotki) and Izzy and Dan from **Second Breakfast** (IG: @second.brekky). A massive thank you to Tash, Georgia and Megan for their support throughout the project, to **Banksia Gardens Community Services** and **Women's Health In the North** for creating this opportunity, the space and the support, and to the **Victorian Government** for the funding that made this project a reality.

To all the YAG members who have been a part of the project at different times, your contributions, friendship and support are

deeply appreciated. We are so thankful that you have been able to be part of the project for as long as you could. The zine wouldn't be the same without the conversations we've had along the way.

We are beyond grateful to all of the contributors. Your work has been so inspiring and has added so much meaning to the creation of the zine. We know that your work will connect with so many others in the way it has connected with us.

We've loved getting to work on this project. It's been such a fulfilling experience. We've had the opportunity to learn so much and be able to turn what we have learned into action. Being able to publish this zine and be involved in all of the other project activities really feels like we are making a difference.

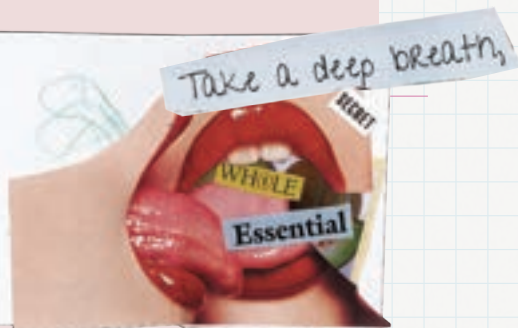
We hope you learn something from the zine and feel empowered to take action and change the conversation about consent.

What is consent?



Consent is important for all people, of all sexualities, in all kinds of relationships and situations. Consent is permission or agreement for something to happen. Consent isn't just for sex. Consent is about respect and understanding bodily autonomy and entitlement in all situations. From medical procedures to hugging a friend or family member; sharing personal information about someone or sharing photos online (sexual or not). Consent is fundamental.

Everyone has the right to safe, respectful, pleasurable, consensual experiences when, and if, they choose to have sex of any kind.



Sexual consent is a **free and voluntary** agreement to participate in a **specific** sexual activity. At its core, sexual consent is about communicating, understanding, and respecting boundaries. Consent is a vital part of sexual communication – it's the foundation for safe, respectful and pleasurable sexual experiences.



Beautiful People

Photograph and words by Lucia Amati (they/she)

“ Beautiful People is a photograph that depicts two people in a happy, joyful friendship. It illustrates the joy affirmative consent can bring and the importance of affirmative consent in all relationships, from sexual to platonic. ”

What is affirmative consent?



Consent is a conversation.

In Victoria there are new affirmative consent laws. Affirmative consent is a way of thinking about and understanding consent that moves away from “no means no” and towards an understanding that everyone is responsible for seeking sexual consent.

Affirmative consent is needed for all kinds of sexual activity including sharing sexual messages, photos, images or videos.

Affirmative consent means that each individual person participating in the sexual activity needs to actively take steps to say or do something to check that the other person(s) involved are consenting. Consent can only be given if clear words or actions are used to show that everyone understands and agrees to what is happening. It means sexual partners need to check in with each other. Consent can never be assumed. Consent means ongoing and mutual communication and decision-making.



“ Consent can only be given if clear words or actions are used to show that everyone understands and agrees to what is happening. It means sexual partners need to check in with each other. *Consent can never be assumed.* ”



Scan to learn more
about the affirmative consent
laws at sasvic.org.au/consent

Age of consent in Victoria



Did you know that the law sets out age limits for when you can legally consent to sex? The age of consent is the same for people of all genders and sexualities.



Scan to learn more about the age of consent at www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/age-consent

Under 12

Cannot legally consent to any type of sex

12 – 15

Can legally consent to sex with another person within 2 years of their age

16+

Can legally consent to sex but not with anyone in a position of power over them

18+

Can legally consent to sex with anyone 16+

Did you know that there are specific laws about age and sexting? Just like all other sexual activity, sexting must be consensual. Sexting can be against the law if it involves people under 18.



Scan to learn more about age, sexting and the law www.yla.org.au/vic/topics/health-love-and-sex/consent/

Consent is...

For all sexual activity, not just penetrative sex – kissing, touching, oral sex, sexting, watching or sharing pornography... Consent is needed before and throughout sexual activity. **Consent is an ongoing conversation.**



Free and voluntary – Without pressure, manipulation, coercion, threats, fear or harm. Making decisions because you want to.

Informed – Understanding what is happening and what is being agreed to.

Coherent – Sexual partners have capacity to understand what they are consenting to and are able to withdraw consent. This means being awake and sober.

Mutual – A shared process. Having an equal say and valuing yourself and your partner(s).

Reversible – Consent can be withdrawn at any time. It's okay to change your mind at any point.

Certain and clear – Paying attention to verbal and non-verbal communication. Sexual partners feeling good and genuinely wanting to be involved in the sexual activity.

Specific – Consent for one thing is not consent for everything. Consent for one time is not consent for every time.

“Being a good Lover means respecting a femme. It means listening to her body. And even if the sex gets a little rough, or whatever, that it's what she wants too, and inside you're still coming from a gentle place ”

Leslie Feinberg
Stone Butch Blues, 1993



“Baises-Moi Avec Ton Godemichet [fuck me with your dildo]”

Artwork and words by CJ Starc (he/they) @genrenonmerci

“ This artwork and quote express affirmative consent from a lesbian perspective. The quote is from a pivotal novel, written by transgender butch lesbian author and activist, Leslie Feinberg, where a femme Jaqueline, explains to our main butch character Jess what it means to be a good lover. Though this quote is about a particular dynamic, I feel that it represents lesbian sex as a whole, where there is tenderness in every moment regardless of the sex, no matter the act. ”

Building a safe space together



Sharing how you feel can make it easier for others to share how they feel. In sexual situations, creating a safe space together means creating a space where saying no is safe and respected. It means creating a space where communicating desires, boundaries and needs is free, safe and supported.

For You, From Me

Poem and words by Lauren (she/her)

You separate my fingers
To make space for yours in between
Soundlessly I scream, ripping my limb from yours
too brutally,
Outwardly, I shoot you a shy smile,
And you squeeze my hand in glee

You're cautious with your movements
Your vulnerability shimmers in the low light
Carved with the knife of your expectations,
I am a bloodless stone
You see reflected in my eyes, your own insecurity
and affection,
And you don't feel alone

I wish, not for the first time,
As you take me at my fucking word,
That I were not a liar at my very core
And I wish, with a far more bitter taste on my
tongue,
That you were not a believer of lies

When this is all over,
And oxygen enters my lungs again
It will be carried through my veins
To the parts of myself I wish you hadn't touched
To the parts of myself which still ache to be loved

“ This poem explores the experience of someone who is outwardly consenting to a situation that they are not comfortable with. It conveys the impact of only considering the needs and desires of one person in a relationship, and reveals the complexities of consent in certain situations. In this piece, I really wanted to grapple with the idea of self-sacrifice and how that can impact consent in sexual relationships. ”

It's not consensual if...



'Stop'
'I'm not sure'
'Can we slow down?'
Changing the subject
Not responding to touch
Silence
Turning away
Pushing a partner away
Crying
Freezing
Mixed signals = No

When it comes to consent, the absence of 'no' does not mean a 'yes'. Uncertainty, hesitation, umming and ahing are NOT signs of consent. There are lots of things that can make it difficult to say no – power dynamics, gendered expectations, pressure, concerns about what might happen if they say no, and many more. People communicate through their words and their body language. It's important to be aware of verbal and non-verbal signs from sexual partners. If you are not sure what your sexual partner wants, you need to stop and talk with them – and respect their decision.

It is not consent if someone does not freely and voluntarily agree.

There are some situations where a person cannot give consent or consent is not valid according to the law. This means that there are some times when just because a person says "Yes" or appears to consent, it does not mean that they have consented. Sexual consent is not given if:

- someone is unconscious or asleep or affected by alcohol or drugs to the point they are considered incapable of consenting
- there is force, fear, coercion, intimidation, threats, or harm of any kind
- there is abuse of a relationship, authority or trust
- a condom is not used when it is agreed it will be used or if a condom is removed or tampered with (sometimes called "stealthing")

Sexual activity without consent is against the law.

Image-based abuse is where someone shares or threatens to share a nude, sexual or intimate image or video of another person without their consent. This includes digitally created and altered images. Image-based abuse is against the law.

Making sure that no laws are broken is the bare minimum when it comes to sex and consent. Sexual consent is about making sure sexual experiences are positive and pleasurable for everyone.



Knowing about the law can help you make informed choices. **Scan to learn more** about the law at www.yla.org.au/vic/topics/health-love-and-sex/consent/

Support services



1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732 | 1800respect.org.au

Sexual Assault Crisis Line

1800 806 292 | Find your local sexual assault service at peak.sasvic.org.au/servicemap

Lifeline

13 11 14 | lifeline.org.au



Scan to find more support services at www.consent.gov.au/support-services



Bound

Photography by Riley Mills (he/him) @stimulant_studios_
 Makeup and concept by Breeanna Dodd (she/her) @bumblesfx
 Words by Breeanna and Riley

“ This concept was very personal and delicate to navigate. This shoot invites viewers to interpret and feel what they will. The feeling of being bound, with the close-up images evoking a sense of claustrophobia, was intended to reflect the internal emotional turmoil one may feel after an experience of sexual violence. However, if it speaks to you on a different level, then that becomes the truth behind the photographs. ”

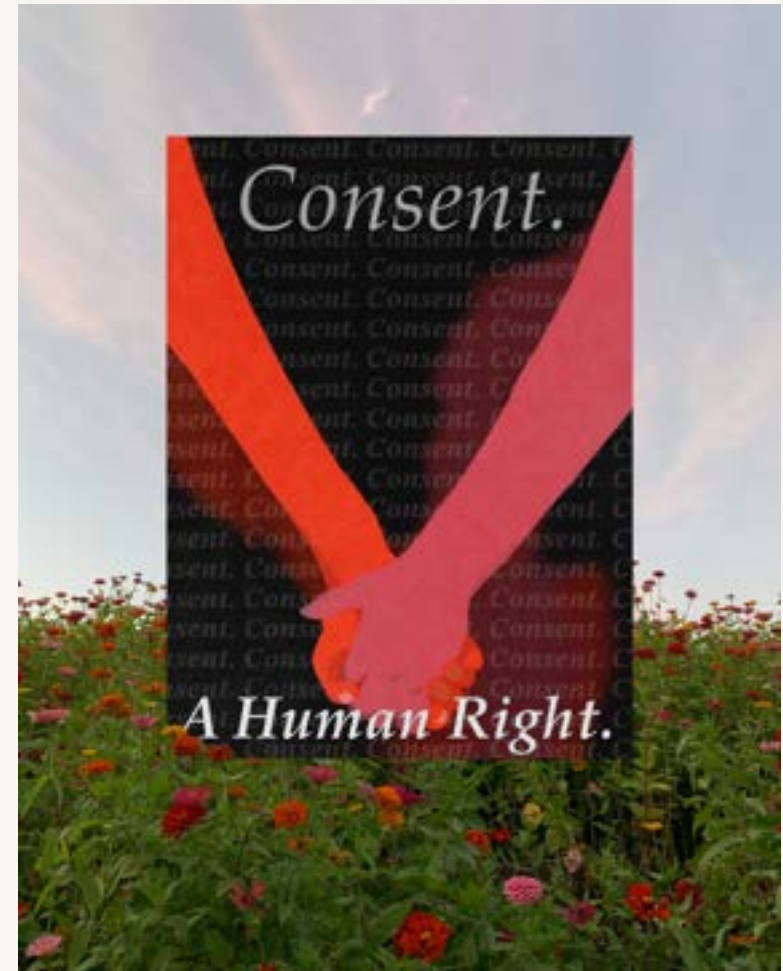


Sexual rights



Everyone has sexual rights and responsibilities in all relationships and in all situations. These are part of the foundation of all respectful relationships.

- Everybody has the right to make decisions about their own body.
- Everybody has the right to safety and respect.
- Everybody has the right to have their boundaries respected.
- Everybody has the right to privacy.
- Everyone has the right to fulfil and express their sexuality.
- Everybody has the responsibility to respect and uphold the rights of others.
- Everybody has the responsibility to respect boundaries put in place by others.



Consent

Artwork and words by Mackenzie (she/her)

“ The people holding hands is related to how consent goes both ways and just because you want to, doesn't mean everyone else wants to. ”

Communicating consent



Boundaries
Respect
Wellbeing
Pleasure
Safety
Equal say
Sexual rights and responsibilities
Valuing and caring for self and partners

Communicating consent and responding to boundaries are skills. They are important skills that can be practised, which means we can get better at them!

Talking about sex, safety, respect and boundaries can become easier as we do it more.

Communication and boundary setting are a vital part of caring for ourselves and others. Practising in situations where you are more comfortable can help build your confidence.

It's your turn!

Think about what communicating consent means to you. Here are some ideas. **Fill in your own.**



For me, consent sounds like...

Yes! _____
Asking _____
Checking in _____



looks like...

Smiles _____
Talking things through _____
Relaxed body language _____



feels like...

Safe _____
Respected _____
Being heard _____

Lancelot and Guinevere are Lesbians

Words by Maia Leallan (she/her)

Collage by Ella Hunter (she/her)

As an LGBT+ person raised on the internet, I have gotten used to sifting through media for any scrap of representation I can find. This was a favourite pastime for many kids on Tumblr and other popular social media I used as a young teen, we got very good at it! At the time there wasn't much to find but there were a lot of queer-coded characters or queerbaiting storylines to cling to. As time goes on, there seems to be more representation to find but the amount of characters that I feel a connection to and represented by hasn't really increased. Coming into my identity as a femme-for-butch lesbian has taken twists and turns, and I have met many other LGBT+ people on the way, but I still struggle to find any of us on the big screen. When you add in fatness and disability it is almost impossible to find fleshed out characters that are treated with respect by the writers of a movie or TV show.

The way my butch and I have come to combat this – utilising our skills finely

honed through long hours on the internet as young teens and our innate gifts to sense other butch/femme couples and lesbians – is to create the representation we want with straight relationships. This can be hard to think of at first but with a little gumption it gets easier!

The first time we spoke about doing this was while watching *The Secret Life of*

“When you add in fatness and disability it is almost impossible to find fleshed out characters that are treated with respect by the writers of a movie or TV show.”

Us, a show that ran on Channel Ten from 2001 to 2006. The main characters of the show share a block of flats in St Kilda. One of the show's focal characters, Evan, is a writer working on his first book and dealing with his feelings for his housemate, Alex, a doctor. Evan is a compelling character



and together with Alex, my girlfriend and I picked up on an interesting dynamic that somewhat breaks through the usual patriarchal heterosexual relationships that women on TV or in film – and in the audience – are usually put through. Until the later seasons there are no explicitly lesbian or bisexual women on the show so we had to make our own! Evan and Alex became our ‘headcanoned’ lesbian lead couple going through a series of ‘will they, won’t they’ scenarios and, a common experience for lesbian and bi women, going from being close friends to lovers and back again.

After we came to the conclusion that Evan was a butch lesbian and he and Alex our new favourite butch/femme couple to agonise over, we couldn’t stop seeing opportunities for this everywhere. We were using it to make space for ourselves in media we loved, without having to sit through the characters experiencing unnecessary transphobia

and homophobia from writers and creators. None of the other characters treated them any differently or batted an eye at these beautiful butch/femme lesbian couples. Having this escape from the usual status quo of TV shows and movies having LGBT+ characters that we don’t see ourselves in at all has been very fun and has helped both of us enjoy media that we would usually have to watch with little interest. This is, of course, only a supplement to much needed, well rounded representation that we want more of in the media landscape. This isn’t unique to us, we all carve out spaces for ourselves whether through fan fiction, zines, self publishing, fan videos or even day dreaming and reading between the lines. These can be stepping stones for misrepresented people to imagine media with them in it, then to create more mainstream representations. Some of the other characters from TV and movies that we have now seen the light about are: Miss Piggy and Kermit (The Muppets); Jesse and Céline (Before film



“..we all carve out spaces for ourselves whether through fan fiction, zines, self publishing, fan videos or even day dreaming and reading between the lines.”

series); Charles and Carrie (Four Weddings and a Funeral); Audrey I and Seymour (Little Shop of Horrors); Gromit and Fluffles (Wallace and Gromit); Betty and Jughead (Riverdale); Columbia and Eddie (The Rocky Horror Picture Show); Jackson and Sookie & Jess and Paris (Gilmore Girls); Weevil and Veronica (Veronica Mars); Miranda and Steve (Sex and the City); Morticia and Gomez (The Addams Family)

YAG favourites...

These are some of our favourites because they have good representations of consent and diversity. Some are informative, others centre the voices we don't often hear from, and some are really funny and a bit silly. Check out some of our favourites and think about your own.

Film and TV

- **Before Sunrise (Film)**
- **Dead Poets Society (Film)**...Watch for the characters Todd and Neil.
- **Arcane: League of Legends (TV series)**...Animated series with well-written women.

Books

- **S/he - Minnie Bruce Pratt**...This is a really beautiful memoir. It gives a really beautiful, and sometimes heartbreaking, insight to butch/femme lesbian and trans identity and relationships.
- **Heartstopper - Alice Oseman**
- **Loveless - Alice Oseman**
- **The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo - Taylor Jenkins Reid**

Podcasts and digital media

- **It's A Lot - Abbie Chatfield (Podcast)**...Great, mostly easy to listen to podcast about sex, relationships and politics.
- **Khadija Mbowe (Content creator)**...Social commentary and discourse analyst YouTuber who creates academically informed videos in a conversational and accessible manner.
- **Ologies - Alie Ward (Podcast)**



Music

- **Pussy Is God - King Princess (Song)**
- **I Like That - Janelle Monáe (Song)**
- **Dreamcatcher (Artist)**...Korean fantasy concept girl group that combines rock and metal genres.
- **Little Simz (Artist)**

A Woven Tapestry of Digital Consent, Informed User Experiences, and Interconnected Internet Systems

Essay by Madeleen Francis (she/her & they/them)



Scan to read the [full essay](#)

Consent in most regards is an ‘active’ process that is positioned to be a conclusion derived from careful thought and consideration. However, in a modern, digital life, consent is not only often given passively – it might be taken for granted by digital users, or such a choice may have an answer decided before the question is even posed. When speaking on digital consent, most users think of long and windy ‘TERMS & CONDITIONS’ text boxes that they must scroll through in order to access a website or download a program. While a great example, it doesn’t account for the dozens of other, more passive examples of digital consent that occur in day-to-day life – such as pressing ‘I accept’ or ‘Proceed’ whenever a website asks one to accept the usage of digital cookies, meaning one has agreed to have data gathered from themselves when the person consenting simply wanted the tiresome pop-up to escape them. More or less, the discussion around consent is an invitation to discuss what is not consent. General digital consent is not the sole focus of this essay. The aim is to show how the internet has become a space for consent to be uplifted but also the ways in which people use online systems to revoke or pre-determine consent of other individuals. **Consent can be a tool of empowering people to understand their boundaries better, or a deliberate illegal violation of them.**



Wedded Bliss

Artwork and words by Maia Leallan (she/her)

“ This is a collage piece that I created at a friend’s art exhibition using old magazine clippings. The piece expresses the excitement, connection and fulfilment I feel in my relationship and with the lesbian and wider LGBT+ community. ”

Golden Goddess

Makeup by Breeanna Dodd (she/her) @bumblesfx

Photography and concept by Riley Mills (he/him)
@stimulant_studios_

Words by Breeanna and Riley

Model: Jessie Eilers (she/her) @jessie_eilers

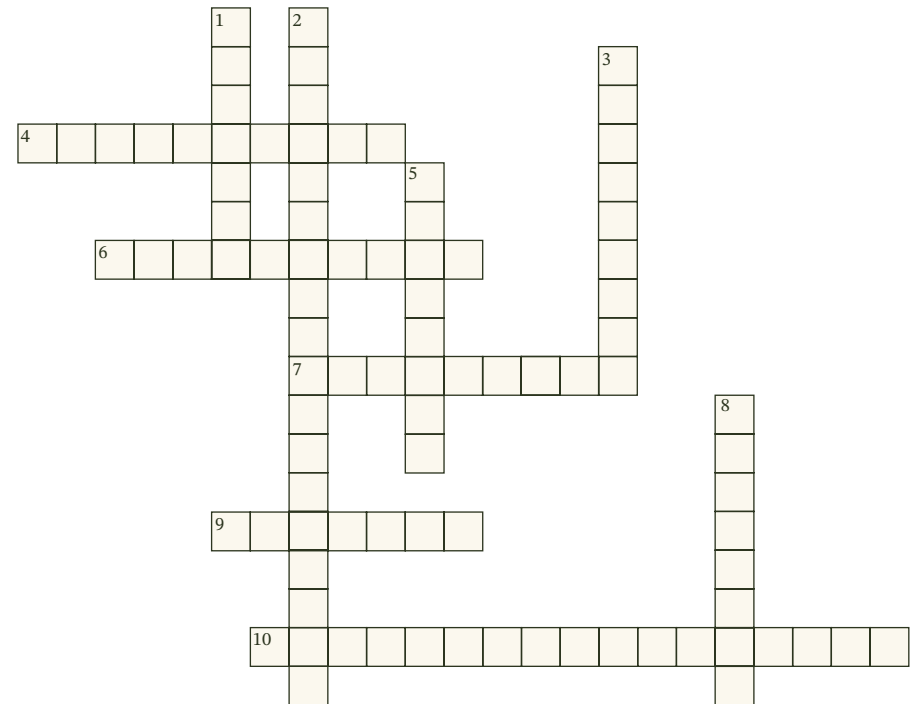
“ The intent with this photoshoot was to highlight beauty through femininity, anatomy and confidence. Brought to life by her skin of gold, the goddesses muscles shimmer in the warm orange light. Her poses are soft to show the comfort that comes from feeling beautiful in your own skin, but still strong to highlight her feminine power. ”





Crossword

Puzzle by Rebecca Garth (she/her)



Across

- 4. A word sometimes used to describe intentional non-use, removal or tampering of a condom without consent. A sexual offence. (10)
- 6. Rules we set for ourselves to maintain healthy relationships. (10)
- 7. Affirmative consent is free and _____. (9)
- 9. Permission for something to happen or agreement to do something. (7)
- 10. Refers to the ways different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination. (17)

Head to the back cover for answers.

Down

- 1. The age a person can legally consent to sex but not with anyone in a position of power over them. (7)
- 2. A way of understanding consent that means there are ongoing efforts taken by sexual partners to check if consent is being actively communicated by everyone involved. (11, 7)
- 3. A personal idea of a person's own sexual experiences and identity. (9)
- 5. A sensation and / or emotion of pure enjoyment. (8)
- 8. A person can _____ consent at any time. (8)

What will you do next?

It's easy to feel like you don't have control or influence when it comes to big issues like consent and sexual violence prevention. BUT there are ways you can make change in your community. **Your voice and your story are important.**

All of our actions, together, can create change.

- Talk to the people in your life about affirmative consent.
- Share this zine with your friends.
- Respect people's boundaries.
- Challenge sexist jokes and comments.
- Learn more about the areas that interest you.
- Educate others when you hear consent myths and misunderstandings.
- Think about how your words can fight for or against a culture of consent and respect.
- Ask yourself questions like:

“How can I practise consent in my life every day?”

“How do I look after myself and practise self-care?”

We took action and created this zine!

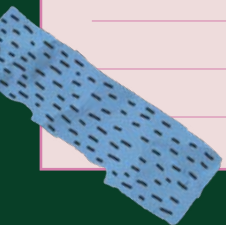
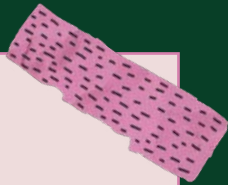
ConSensual Zine



It's your turn!

Think about what actions you can take in your life to create change. **Fill in your own.**

I will...



“ Consent: it’s nuanced, it’s complicated, but that doesn’t mean it should be avoided. *Let’s normalise talking about consent.* ”

AUGUST 2024

Answers:

1. sixteen
2. affirmative consent
3. sexuality
4. stealthing
5. pleasure
6. boundaries
7. voluntary
8. withdraw
9. consent
10. intersectionality



The Taking ACTION: Affirmative consent in the North project is a partnership between Women's Health In the North and Banksia Gardens Community Services.

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