



Consent and communication are fundamental pillars of a fulfilling and respectful sexuality, particularly for LGBTQ+ individuals who may have faced situations of non-consent or sexual violence. It is crucial to have a clear and shared understanding of what consent is, how it is given and withdrawn, and how to communicate assertively in sexual interactions.

Consent is a clear, freely given, and enthusiastic agreement to participate in a sexual activity. It must be given explicitly, by words or affirmative gestures, and can not be assumed by default or inferred from the absence of refusal. Silence, passivity or lack of resistance do not equate to consent. Likewise, consent given under coercion, manipulation or influence of drugs is not valid.

Consent is specific to each sexual act and each partner. Having consented to a practice in the past does not mean consenting to that practice in the future. Having consented to a practice with one partner does not mean consenting to that practice with another. Consent must be renegotiated each time and can be withdrawn at any moment, even during the act. If a person expresses discomfort, hesitation or refusal, even non-verbally, it is imperative to stop immediately.

To ensure consent, there is nothing like clear and direct communication. Asking "Would you like to...?", "Would it please you if...?", "How do you feel about...?" allows to check that the partner is comfortable with what is happening. This may seem less spontaneous than going with the flow, but in reality, it reinforces trust and complicity. It shows that one cares about the other's well-being and pleasure, not just their own.

Assertive communication is essential to express desires, boundaries, and needs in sexuality. This involves being honest with oneself and the other, using "I" messages that talk about

one's own feelings, rather than blame or accusations. For instance, instead of saying "You never touch me as I like", one can say "I would like you to stroke me more gently, like this. This is what gives me pleasure." Instead of enduring an unpleasant practice in silence, one can say "I don't really like this position, my back hurts. How about trying it this way instead?"

Communicating about sexuality is not always easy, especially when one received a modest or repressive education. Many LGBTQ+ individuals have internalized negative messages about their sexuality, causing them to doubt the legitimacy of their desires. They may fear judgment, rejection or disappointing their partner if they express their needs. That's why it's important to create a trustful and caring atmosphere, where everyone feels safe to talk about sex without taboos.

A few tips to promote positive sexual communication:

- Choose a suitable moment, when one is relaxed and available for discussion. Avoid times of stress, fatigue or conflict.
- Use a gentle and warm tone, steer clear of blame or criticism. Value what works well, express appreciation and gratitude.
- Be specific in requests, give concrete examples of what one likes or dislikes. Guide with sentences like "More", "Faster", "To the right", "Less strong", etc.
- Welcome with open-mindedness and respect what the other expresses, even if it's different from one's desires. Look for compromises and alternatives that suit both.
- Practice positive feedback during the act: say when something is pleasant, moan, sigh, move one's body in sign of appreciation. This encourages the partner and gives them confidence.

As coaches, we can support LGBTQ+ individuals to develop their ability to communicate about sexuality and enforce their consent. This includes working on self-esteem, asserting one's needs, managing emotions like fear of rejection. We can propose exercises in non-violent communication, role plays to practice setting boundaries assertively. We can also debunk misconceptions about consent, such as the myth of the "no that means yes" or the injunction to always say yes to please.

The goal is for each person to feel legitimate and safe to live a sexuality in alignment with their values, desires, and boundaries. By making consent and communication priorities, we contribute to creating a healthier, more respectful and more fulfilling sexual culture for all, in all the diversity of LGBTQ+ identities and practices.

Key takeaways:

- Consent and communication are essential for a fulfilling and respectful sexuality, particularly for LGBTQ+ individuals who may have experienced situations of non-consent or violence.

- Consent is a clear, free and enthusiastic agreement, given explicitly. It is specific to each act and partner, and can be withdrawn at any time. Absence of refusal does not imply consent.
- Directly asking if the partner is comfortable ensures their consent. This strengthens trust and shows caring for their well-being.
- Assertive communication is necessary to express desires, boundaries, and needs honestly, using "I" statements. This can be difficult due to fear of judgment, hence the importance of a supportive atmosphere.
- To promote positive sexual communication: choose a good time, use a warm tone, be specific in requests, respect the other, give positive feedback.
- Coaching can help LGBTQ+ individuals assert themselves, manage their emotions, debunk misconceptions about consent, to live a sexuality in harmony with their values and desires.
- Prioritizing consent and communication contributes to a healthier and more fulfilling sexual culture for everyone, in the diversity of LGBTQ+ identities.