

The background of the entire page is a vibrant, stylized illustration of tropical leaves, likely banana leaves, in various shades of green and blue. The leaves are layered and overlap, creating a dense, lush appearance. The entire composition is framed by a thin, textured gold border.

The ASKING FOR WHAT YOU WANT

*Field Guide to*  
**CONSENT**

by MARCIA BACZYNSKI

# HELLO AND WELCOME

Hi there! I'm Marcia B and this is the Field Guide to Consent. Thanks for taking the time to download this and check it out.

There's a lot of much-needed talk about consent out there right now, and a lot of it focuses on what *not* to do.

This is a quick-and-dirty guide on what *to do*, so you can start having sexy conversations that more gracefully build consent-based interactions in the bedroom — *while* keeping steamy and hot.

This is not a comprehensive guide to consent. I'm not going to address consent accidents and violations. There is certainly going to be much more I could say or add or clarify.

But, if you're newer to all this "consent" business, or simply wanting to have a clearer understanding of how you can "do" consent in the wild, as it were, you'll find loads of useful tips and concepts in here.

My goal is to get you clearer on what consent is all about, and give you some tips on how to make it sexy, steamy and hot. Plus we'll troubleshoot a handful of common issues, like:

- What it means to consent to something you haven't tried yet or don't know much about
- What to do you do when you or your partner isn't good at saying no
- How to incorporate space to change your mind
- How to "do" consent with partners who aren't talkers

I'm glad you're here. Let's get started, shall we?

xoxo,  
Marcia B.



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

If you're short on time, you can just read this workbook. I've distilled the most important points into the written version.

But I *strongly* recommend listening to the audio version, which includes much more detailed breakdowns of each point, and more examples. This is particularly helpful in the "how do you make it sexy" portion of the Guide, which uses voice and breath to pace things.

If somehow you've stumbled across this written guide without the audio file, you can find them both at <http://askingforwhatyouwant.com/consent>

Sound good?

Let's go!

(See what I did there? That was me checking in with you... More on that in a minute.)



# WHAT IS CONSENT?

Planned Parenthood gives a good definition of what consent is, using the acronym FRIES.

*(Be sure to listen to the audio recording to hear a more detailed breakdown of what each of these means, with examples.)*

- **Freely given.** Doing something sexual with someone is a decision that should be made without pressure, force, manipulation, or while drunk or high.
- **Reversible.** Anyone can change their mind about what they want to do, at any time. Even if you've done it before or are in the middle of having sex.
- **Informed.** Be honest. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and then they don't, that's not consent.
- **Enthusiastic.** If someone isn't excited, or really into it, that's not consent.
- **Specific.** Saying yes to one thing (like going to the bedroom to make out) doesn't mean they've said yes to others (like oral sex).

I'm a big fan of this model. It includes the details of what I think is important in consent, whether it's your first time having sex or your 1000th.



It's tempting to think that consent-based interactions are only for young people or for new partners. But putting these five elements in place in long-term relationships makes for better sex as well. When you know your partner is happy to be there, and getting what they want, you don't have to worry or guess.

Not to mention, as you become sexually adept, you may want to experiment with new, different or more complex kinds of sex. The more complex your sex is, the more important each one of these becomes, even if you are otherwise sexually experienced.

Here are some factors that make explicit consent practices even more important:

- Sex with a new partner or someone you are just getting to know
- Activities that one or both of you have never done before (or have never done with each other)
- Using toys that involve some kind of technical expertise (for example, a flogger or rope)
- Playing with power exchange, kink or group sex
- When you're wanting to deepen the intimacy in your long-term relationship
- When you're feeling nervous or anxious about something, even if you're also into it
- When one or more participants have a trauma history

For example, if you're trying something one of you has never done before, you'll want to mention that and perhaps explicitly set up agreements about how you'll handle it if something isn't working.



This model of consent is pretty excellent. But there is still something that can bite you in the ass: a SUPER COMMON myth about sex that we need to unpack, or else your attempts at building consent still might not work very well...

**MYTH: Women have “The Sex.” Men want “The Sex.”  
It’s a man’s job to “Get It From Her.”**



This is a pervasive myth about sex, and it’s one that even affects people who aren’t having straight sex.

There are so many things wrong with this “pursue her til she gives in” picture!

It sets up women, receptive partners, smaller people, feminine people, submissives and sexual bottoms to be permission granters with no sexual desires of their own. It assumes they don’t have sexual agency; they are just gatekeepers. They aren’t allowed to have desires, sexual interests or really anything other than a yes and a no.

When this side of the story is internalized, it’s really hard to know what your body, psyche, and heart want. You become focused on how you look on the outside, rather than your internal experience, because the only option you have is to be attractive to others. You may not be able to tell what you want, and you can only react to what others offer you.

This story also puts pressure on men, active partners, bigger people, masculine people, dominants and sexual tops to drive everything and guess what makes the other person happy. They are expected to be ever-ready fucking machines, to know what they want, and to lead the sex all or most of the time (and if they aren’t, “*there must be something wrong with them.*”)

When this side of the story is internalized, it makes it really hard to have discernment and boundaries, or to allow for uncertainty and experimentation. It becomes difficult to feel your desires, and instead you end up performing what you think the other person wants or what your desires “should” be.



When you’ve bought into these stories, you are likely to bring a lot of expectations to the table of your partner as well. That your sexual virtue is about how well you do the gatekeeping. That women/femmes/bottoms who don’t gate-keep well are somehow tainted, dirty or “slutty.” That your partner knows your body better than you do. That your partner should “just know” what you want, That it’s not okay to want sex. That it’s not okay to not want sex. And on, and on...

Consent becomes narrowed down to getting permission to act on another person’s body. Only some people are allowed to be actors, and only some people are allowed to be acted upon. One person acting on another person’s body can be *really hot* but that’s only *one* kind of interaction that’s available during sex.

Permission-based sex is a woefully narrow idea of what sex can be, and cuts just about everyone off from a *full* expression of sexuality.

Not to mention that this model assumes that everyone is straight. And that there are only two people involved. And that we’re living in 1950.

Meanwhile, *everybody* gets shamed for wanting sex.

We can do better....



## PLEASE HOLD WHILE I GET ON MY SOAPBOX

Before the “men pursuer/women gatekeeper” model of sex has been unpacked, a first pass attempt at consent results in this super-common scenario:

### **Do something or mention something and then ask “is that okay?”**

**This attempt at consent is better than nothing**, but it has some real flaws that can come back to bite you in the ass.

I *hate* the question “Is this okay?” in sex. Yes, it’s better than nothing, but as far as consent-building goes, it’s woefully inadequate, and likely to lead to more confusion, not less. Why?

- It’s permission-oriented (which is better than nothing but not as good as what we’ll talk about in a minute)
- It’s vague - ARE you asking for permission? Seeing if the other person can tolerate or endure it? Seeing if it’s acceptable? If YOU are acceptable? Seeing if your elbow is on their hair? Checking if you’re still wanted or loved? WTF does “okay” actually *mean?!?*
- It’s a sadly low standard for your own and your partners’ sex lives - if you aim for okay, you’ll get “okay”



When you hear the question “Is this okay?” take it as a moment to pause and get clear about what you’re really asking. Avoid fights that end in “but you SAID it was okay!!”

***(In my online course, [Bedroom Communication for Everyone](#), we go in-depth about alternatives to “okay.” See resources section for details.)***



# CONSENT IS AN AGREEMENT ABOUT HOW WE'RE GOING TO PLAY OR SHARE SPACE TOGETHER

It's not about permission, it's about agreement.

How do you get agreement? You propose stuff! Then you go back and forth until you know what the game is. Kids do this all the time on the playground, but we seem to have lost the skill as adults.

"Let's play tag! You be it!"

"No I don't wanna be It!"

"Okay I'll be It!"

And they're off!

This is an example of a game where the rules are pretty well understood. But if you watch kids, they build elaborate worlds with rules and desires that change constantly that are inscrutable to outsiders. They improvise and they throw stuff out there and they keep talking and they fight and then they sort it out and they keep going til they're done or bored or it's time for dinner.



This is consent in action. It's ongoing. You can opt in or out at any time. You may not totally know what you're getting into, but things are being built as you go and check ins are happening. Everyone is being both selfish and generous at the same time in service of keeping the play going.

There are 6 key skills at play here:

1. Saying what you want
2. Saying Yes
3. Saying No
4. Changing your mind
5. Listening to the other person as they do the same
6. Incorporating and proposing things

When you play, you are inviting the other person in. Sharing your enthusiasm for them and the ideas you both have for play. Giving room to say yes or no. Allowing both you and your partner a voice about what's on the table.

When you're first starting out with someone, or when you're trying something new, even with a partner you've been with for a while, it's a good idea to avoid pushing for the most/best/peak experience. Find out what the lowest common denominator of comfort/safety is and stick with it.

If it's a maybe, it's a no, especially at first, until more trust is built. It's never a bad idea to leave someone wanting more! Don't let scarcity or fear of not having sex drive your interactions.



*(These skills about saying No and changing your mind are about boundaries and they are super-important. If you need help developing your boundary skills, check out my downloadable class, [The Better Boundary Crash Course](#). See resource section for details.)*

## Actually, Literally What To Say

Because creating agreements in the moment involves listening and improvisation, it's hard to give specific scripts for building consent. That being said, here are some ideas of things you can say to help build out your consent-based interactions.

Remember, consent-building is ongoing, and you want to give room for the other person to say yes, no, change their mind or offer something they would like as well.

- **What does it look like / sound like when it's good for you?** What does it look like / sound like when it's not good for you? (Two especially good questions to ask of a newer partner)
- **What do you think would happen if...?** [If I kissed you, if I went down on you, if you went down on me, we moved to the bedroom, we tried it this way...?]
- **Should I...?** [get a condom, grab some rope, get some massage oil, get the toy box out, put the kettle on...?]
- **Three options** including a ridiculous one that is an obvious no. This is useful to check to see if they can say no to you, and/or to signal that it's okay to say no.
- **Ongoing questions:** "Is this good for you? Is this working for you? Is this fun for you? Are you comfortable?" Ask from a place of gathering information to have a better time, not from a place of worry or concern.
- **How does that sound?** Both in and out the bedroom, I like to work in questions like this after making a proposal.
- **Hand signals:** For people who are less verbal during sex, you can check to see how they're doing with a thumbs up/



thumbs down dial. Model that thumbs up, thumbs down and everything in between is acceptable as an answer to “how are you doing?”

- **If you’re in a dominant power role** and want to check on consent without breaking the mode, one option is to say what you want to do, and tell them to repeat it if you want them to do it. This is hot if you can nail the delivery. “I’m gonna do xyz to you... if you want me to do that, repeat it, and say you want it.” or “If you want me to keep going, you have to say so.”



Questions can be overwhelming to people who aren’t verbal during sex, but you can still gauge enthusiasm with number scales (“On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best, how are you doing?”) or hand signals.

You can agree to signals ahead of time. For example, that you or can bail on an activity by dropping an item in your hand, or tapping out with three taps to the leg or chest.

## NOW HOW DO YOU MAKE IT SEXY??

It's not just about the words you say. *How* you say it makes a difference.

***(You definitely want to listen to the audio for this section.)***

Making consent sexy is about voice and body language. How you lean over and whisper in your partner's ear. How you coyly poke your head out from under a sheet and ask for something vulnerable. The way you s-l-o-w things down as you talk about what you want to do to them.

When you're nervous / insecure:

- Breathing gets faster
- Voice gets higher
- Inflection goes up
- Unconscious smiling



When you're grounded / present:

- Modulate your breathing
- Slow and/or lower your voice
- Inflection goes down
- Intentional smiling

Building consent conversations into your interactions can be an incredibly hot form of foreplay as well. What do I mean by foreplay? As my friend and colleague Midori puts it...

**“Foreplay is anything that gets the squirrels in your head to be quiet for a little while, and gets you into your body.”**

Creating agreements about how you're going to play can include whatever you need to quiet the squirrels.

For example, turning off your cell phones, putting on some music, making sure the safer sex supplies are nearby and reachable, finding out how much time your partner has before they have to go, or creating some short-hand for checking in as you go.

All of these kinds of things can make you and your partner feel more grounded, present and held in the experience, which is very sexy.

## WHEN IS SEX OVER?

A question many people don't think much about is when sex is over. Often, people assume sex is over when one or both people have an orgasm. But some people don't have orgasms every time they have sex. For others, the first orgasm might just be the warm up. For others, sex may need to be over when there is pain, or when they start to check out or disassociate. Or when the babysitter needs to go home.

Simply asking "When is sex over for you?" might be a radical question your partner has never been asked before, but it can open up a whole world of useful information, including their relationship to orgasm, reasons they might need to stop, or things they might have never told anyone before.

Absent a conversation about when sex is over, **it's a good idea to slow down and check in or to stop altogether when you (or your partner) freeze or check out.** It doesn't necessarily mean you did something wrong — triggers happen and they don't always make sense. But if your partner is suddenly still, or quiet, or seems to be "not there," it's a clue that something isn't right.

One question you can ask is "Are you with me?" — silence or hesitation may indicate a problem.

I hope it's obvious, but other times when sex is over is when someone says they want to stop, when a safe word is used, or when they otherwise indicate they'd like to not be doing this.

Pauses, hesitation, "Maybe," "I guess," "Okay" etc are clues that consent is not enthusiastic, and you should dial things back significantly, or stop altogether.



# R-E-S-P-E-C-T

All the consent theory in the world doesn't help if fundamentally you don't respect your partners, or they don't respect you. You don't have to be madly in love, or in a committed relationship for good sex to happen, but basic respect for one another as people is necessary.



What does respect look like in practice?

A disrespectful partner is focused on how you make them feel and what you can do for them. They don't care much about whether you're getting off or having a good time.

A partner who respects you is curious about your desires, interests and boundaries. They listen and are interested in your pleasure in addition to their own.

## Check in with yourself:

- Do I respect this person I'm about to fuck?
- Does this person seem to respect me?

## How to Tell:



- How do they talk about other people they've dated or slept with?
- Are you trying to get with them to get status, points, resources, just to get off, etc?
- How do they treat the waitstaff?
- Do you actually like this person? What specifically do you like about them?
- Do they listen to you? Show curiosity about your experience?
- If something went sideways in this encounter (condom broke, you got a rough phone call, your car got broken into), do you feel like they'd be helpful in a basically decent way? (Or do you just hope they would be?)

## A Simple Boundary Test:

- Set an inconsequential boundary. Do they push against it? Try to convince you it's no big deal? Act like they know what you need better than you do? Or do they go with it? How someone handles your small boundaries is a clue about how they will handle it when it's a bigger deal.

## EMBRACE THE AWKWARD

Sometimes, no matter what you do, talking about what you and your partner want to do can be awkward. Limits and boundaries may need to be set. You may need to change your mind. You may get the sense that you're not on the same page and need to stop what's happening. Your bodies may not cooperate with what you had in mind. Sometimes a trigger happens and one of you may disassociate. You might have a disagreement. Things don't always flow like a movie.

This doesn't have to be the end of the world. One of the best ways to keep a connection alive, even if the action has to stop, is to simply name what's going on, and embrace it (rather than fight it).



It can look like this:

- “Oh hey, we should talk about safer sex practices.”
- “Something’s not working for me. Let’s take a break for a minute and just lie together.”
- “Hang on, I need a minute.”
- “Hey, where did you go?” (when someone seems to be checking out)
- “Are you still with me?”
- “This might get awkward for a second, but I need to talk about some limitations I have.”
- “I don’t know if this is on the table, but if it is, here’s some stuff you need to know.”
- “Um, before we get our pants off, let’s talk a little about what we’re doing.”

It’s okay for things to be awkward for a minute. It might “ruin the moment” but that’s nowhere near as bad as not being able to get into the moment in the first place, because you’re worried about all the things that haven’t been said, or finding out later that your partner was not okay with what was happening in the first place.

When you embrace the awkward, you make it acceptable for both of you to speak up about what you need and want. You make it possible for both of you to change your mind. And you create a platform for more honesty about sex going forward. These are all things that will improve your sex life in the long run, whether it’s with this partner or others.

So embrace the awkward.

## RESOURCES

We are collectively still in the process of learning what a truly consent-based culture looks like, and how to make it fun and sexy.

Building your own skills around asking for what you want, saying yes and no, and changing your mind are all useful for making your own sex life better and helping your partners to feel more comfortable doing the same.

Here are some resources that can help you on your journey:



### **The Better Boundaries Crash Course**

My downloadable class that will help you figure out your boundaries, your limits and how to be close to people without being run over.



### **Bedroom Communication For Everyone**

Bedroom communication is about more than just consent. Learn how to ask for what you want, make adjustments, find out what's on the sexual menu, clue into hidden desires and much more:

**Download your classes at**  
**<http://learn.askingforwhatyouwant.com>**



# THANK YOU FOR READING AND LISTENING TO THE FIELD GUIDE TO CONSENT

It's my hope that you've learned some tools you can use to build more clear and consensual interactions in the bedroom and out.

Please share with me how this works for you at [info@askingforwhatyouwant.com](mailto:info@askingforwhatyouwant.com).

You can find me on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at [@AskMarciaB](#)



If you would like to learn more about in-depth coaching with me about figuring out what you want and how to talk about it, visit <http://askingforwhatyouwant.com/coaching>

**I wish you the best!**  
**xoxo,**  
**Marcia B**

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