

NASCO Consent Workshop Fall 2014

Workshop Description:

Sexualized Violence is an inescapable issue, both on college campuses and other communities. Join us as we share strategies for compiling workshops and facilitating conversations around consent, survivor support, and community accountability that are tailored to your co-op. We will walk through activities and conversation starters we use in our own workshops at Oberlin College, as well as troubleshooting techniques for when discussions do not go as planned. We hope that participants will leave feeling empowered to start conversations about sexualized violence with their own communities.

Name, PGP's, check in question

Preamble (we will just read through this!)

- Hi! We are Oberlin College Cooperative Association's (OSCA) Sexual Offense Policy Advocates. We are peer advocates. We also provide educational workshops about issues surrounding sexualized violence such as consent, support skills, etc.
- Before anything, we like to say that: Although we've tried to design this workshop to be accessible, some language in the workshop may be *triggering*. We feel strongly that self-care is crucial in any situation. Please feel free to leave the room, get a drink, use the bathroom, get some space, dance, etc.
- We encourage any and all forms of participation so feel free to ask us any questions, interrupt us, give comments, etc.
- Our Framework: We believe sexualized violence is inclusive of all acts of gender/or sex-based harassment, stalking, all forms of sexual assault, and domestic violence. Anyone can experience sexualized violence, but it doesn't happen in a vacuum. Systems of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism and other forms of oppression are connected to our conversation around sexualized violence. People with marginalized identities are at the highest risk of experiencing violence, and have the least access to support resources.

Workshop objective: We are going to talk about how to teach consent. We have experience teaching these workshops to members of our own cooperative, and within the past few months have worked with our administration to create similar programming to for all incoming first years on our campus to meet SaVE Act Requirements. You all know your communities' needs best, so what we talk about today should be adapted and expanded upon. We want this workshop to be as collaborative as possible and know that there is expertise in the room so please share your thoughts and insights, push back, etc.

No one knows everything but together know a lot! (-Aorta)

Agenda:

In the first few minutes, we'll be talking about facilitation skills. Afterwards we'll be sharing specific tools for talking about consent in your communities.

PART I

Activity:

Facilitation

- Give small overview of what facilitation is, refer to handout for more info
- Break up into groups to discuss. - *What makes a good facilitator?*
 - Use this as an opportunity for facilitation practice! Elect someone to “facilitate” this discussion in your small group.
 - The elected “facilitator” should lead the discussion: Think about being from the participant point of view as well as the facilitator/leader point of view. Share experiences you've had; think about what strategies did and didn't work, and what you can do differently. Share tips on how to handle difficult facilitation scenarios.
- Come back as a whole group.
 - Share highlights from small group discussions.
 - Share tips for handling difficult situations: ex. people who are disruptive, people who take up too much space, participants are too quiet/how to get people to speak up, etc.

Possible answers for trainers:

-clarify arguments being made, repeat and summarize thoughts (“so you are saying...?”), stop someone if they are repeating themselves or not adding new things to the conversation, know when it's time to move on, be aware if some voices are talking more than others, weighted stack acknowledging power dynamics based on race, gender, etc.

Work together with your co-facilitator! Support each other and talk about what your expectations are for each other. What are my facilitation strengths and weaknesses? What do I feel comfortable leading and not leading? Below, you can brainstorm ideas, plans, strategies, etc. that you and your co-facilitator will do/use in your workshop(s)...

Things to keep in mind as Trainers:

- using language that is inclusive to all genders, sexual orientations, and sexual preferences
 - acknowledge that some people don't have interest in sex and never will.
- sexualized violence and IPV can happen to anyone (though we acknowledge that trans women of color face the highest incidence of sexualized violence)
- assume there are survivors in the room

- be willing to think in a caring way about the complexities of the topic
- Be able to graciously admit when you are wrong, accept that you will learn through facilitating as well.

Some tips to encourage engagement:

- use active listening during the meeting e.g. nodding, minimal encouragers (“mhmm”, “sure”), using reflective language, making eye contact
- e-mail friends in the co-op beforehand and ask them to participate if they are comfortable doing so
- read your crowd, their response or lack thereof might guide you toward how to approach different subjects BUT never sacrifice the information no matter how hard it is
- make them as comfortable as you are able with statements like: *It's alright if you aren't sure, We welcome all dialogue, These things can be really hard to talk about, etc.*
- when you are going over things that people MUST ABSORB, use cues like: *This is really important information to have, This is really important to listen to, etc.*
- use examples that are not related to sex or sexual offense to help people understand concepts and feel more comfortable in the space.
- Workshops can go any direction from totally stagnant lecture to very dynamic conversation. Don't be discouraged and believe what you are saying: These *are* really hard things to talk about and it is your job to encourage people to be more comfortable. Lead by example! However it goes, you are a badass for engaging with these topics and talking with your community about them.

Suggested outline for a workshop:

- Start with your framework and assumptions (oppression exists etc.) so people know where you're coming from.
- Acknowledge that these things can be hard to talk about, and encourage people to take care of themselves (you can call this a trigger or content warning if you like, or not - unfortunately those can be loaded terms.)
 - Make it clear that people can come and go freely, whether the subject matter is too difficult or because they need to eat, go to the bathroom, walk around etc. Self-care!
 - Ex. make sure the room is arranged so everyone is able to leave easily without feeling trapped or disruptive.
 - If you can, consider having a tap-out person with some support skills who can help people process outside if they need to leave.
 - Tap out people shouldn't follow people if they want to be alone.
- community agreements (can be useful for tough conversations)
- check-in question (to help engage people, “favorites” are a good thing to ask about).

- visible agenda/outline of plans and objective
- make it clear that feedback is welcome and maybe make a way to encourage like notes or feedback forms to collect at the end. (Bikerack!)

Brainstorm Ground Rules/Community Agreements. Some suggestions:

Community Guidelines: Explain that it's important to create a space that feels good and safe for the conversations we're going to have, that the vibe of the space affects how the conversation goes. It's nearly impossible to create a space that is 100% safe for everyone, but we can and should try to work towards it. As a group, brainstorm ideas and write them on the board/big paper to be visible and followed for the duration of the workshop. Here are some suggestions:

- 1 diva, 1 mic
- We're not always articulate all the time / intent vs. impact
- What's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here (confidentiality)
- Move up, move up
- "I" statements
- Oops/ouch
- Green/Yellow/Red light + self care (adapted from the MRC)
- Bike rack

PART II- Consent Specific

Consent

Break up into groups to discuss. - *What does consent mean to you? What does it look like?*

- Again, elect a new person to "facilitate" this discussion in your small group.
- Come back as a whole group.
 - Share highlights from small group discussions.
 - "we find this to be a particularly useful tool for teaching consent in a co-op setting because it's almost like "consensing" on a definition--if everyone agrees on a definition, the community can hold itself to that standard.

Some possible answers:

- Informed: Being aware of what is actually going to happen. This may necessitate a discussion about safer sex (STI and/or pregnancy prevention) or what each partner wants to get out of the experience.
- Freely and actively given: Consent is given of someone's own free will.
- Mutually understandable: Consent is given clearly and unambiguously, so that all partners understand each other, without any doubts or uncertainty.

- Specific to a given situation: Consenting to something in the past doesn't imply that you're consenting to it now.
- Ongoing

Discuss: what are some things that complicate consent?

This is where things can get tricky. It can help to think and talk about these things before trying to facilitate a workshop so that you can troubleshoot effectively.

- Power dynamics:
 - Relationship status (it can be hard to say “no” to a partner)
 - For a really long time, US law didn't acknowledge that rape could happen between a married couple.
 - Age difference
 - hierarchical work relationships
 - Social isolation
 - If someone is new to an area and doesn't have an established support system, it's more likely that unhealthy dependencies will develop. ex: first years in college
 - Who holds marginalized identities within the the relationship (sometimes this can be complex!)
 - Man in a relationship with a woman, cis people in relationships with trans people.
 - Survivorship- sometimes it's difficult to say “no” if your “no” has been disrespected in the past.
 - *Facilitator should make it clear that the ownness to make sure that power dynamics aren't affecting consent **has to be the responsibility of the person with more power.***
 - Ex: My current partner and I started dating when she was a senior and I was a freshmen. She had also been my TA. I sure as heck wasn't thinking about the power dynamics that might create, but she was. I was thinking about the power dynamics inherent in being a cis woman dating a trans woman. Both of us thought the other was silly for worrying about those things, but it was ultimately what made the relationship work.
 - Consent and alcohol/drugs:
 - This is a HUGE area for troubleshooting. People have all kinds of effed up ideas about drunkenness being a “grey area”. Here's how we break it down:
 - Intoxication vs. Incapacitation
 - The use of alcohol or drugs does not, in and of itself, negate a person's ability to give consent; it's when someone's judgement is so impaired by intoxication that they become incapacitated.

- Incapacitation: Lacking the capacity to understand the nature of the sexual interaction--the who, what, when, where, why, or how. This includes being asleep, unconscious, extremely drunk or extremely high.
- The impact of alcohol and drugs varies from person to person, but signs of incapacitation may include stumbling, slurring words, vomiting, being unable to appreciate space and time, etc.
- Intoxication and incapacitation look different for everyone, and some people may be incapacitated before they're showing recognizable signs. Since you don't always know someone else's limits, your best bet is to **always err on the side of caution. If you're not sure, DON'T DO IT!**

****Consent is important even in nonsexual settings****

- One way to work towards a space in which everyone feels comfortable is to check our own assumptions about what is okay. Often these things can be remedied just by creating a norm of asking for consent for a myriad of different things. Why not ask before you bring beer into the lounge/ or hug someone? Or start a snowball fight? If your co-op thinks it's a good idea, why not have the default policy be "ask first" instead of/in addition to "speak up when you're uncomfortable"

We made a co-op themed list of things that people have varying levels of comfort with:

- Nudity
- Physical familiarity (being touched, cuddling, etc.)
- Alcohol (noisy drunken folks, crowds, etc)
- loud music
- PDA

-also consent for intense conversations/getting support (ask people if they feel like they can support you (in general) and if now is a good time (before you start!))

Tips for not alienating men:

- if you're discussing rape culture and the effed up scripts we have for sex, be sure to talk about how they hurt men, too
 - ex: it sucks to have to be the one who always has to initiate things, and to constantly have to face rejection. Sex can be better for everyone if all parties are actively participating.
- Acknowledge that men can be survivors as well, and the stigma around being a male survivor

Check-out