Unsafe about consent? Just ask

SAM CAMPBELL
Opinions editor

A couple weeks ago I read an article in the Los Angeles Times written by Carol Tarvis titled, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Rape.” “Our challenge is to accept what is valid in both perspectives,” she wrote. “We can vigorously pursue the goals of justice for rape victims and fairness for accused perpetrators.” Which is true; we should not automatically assume the accused is guilty. However, what this article went on to discuss bothered me immensely.

The article discussed what is called “the dance of ambiguity,” and this is what I am called “the dance of ambiguity.” Which is true; we should not automatically assume the accused is guilty. However, what this article went on to discuss bothered me immensely.

Here are the basics of consent: Did your partner say yes? Then you have consent. That’s it. Maybe does not count as consent. Last year, Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law the “Yes Means Yes” law, which affects any college campus that receives federal financial aid.

This is one of the first laws to outline what consent is, and it says that one can not give consent to sexual activity if they are unconscious or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In her article, Travis says, “The culture today, they say, encourages women to avoid taking responsibility for their part in sexual encounters. Look at the language we use when we blame men for ‘getting a woman drunk.’ Get- ting? What is she, an empty vessel with no ability to say she’s had enough?”

This in and of itself is a problem. If a woman is drinking, she technically is not in a state where she can consent to sexual activity. “But that defeats the purpose of the bar scene!” That’s kind of the point. Most of these attacks happen when women and men are drunk. As we all know, alcohol impairs our ability to make cognitive decisions, and we are more likely to do things that we normally wouldn’t. This opens a door that should not be walked through. People scour the bars and clubs looking for a hookup and an easy score, taking advantage of people in a state in which they can not think straight is assault. People should be able to go out with friends without having to think about who may try to hook up with them. If you want to find someone, talk to people and get to know them; talk about sex when you are both sober and in a better state of mind.

Ambiguity shouldn’t exist, and getting consent doesn’t have to be “unsexy.” If the only way you know how to ask for consent is a simple “Do you want to have sex with me?” then you need to work on your dirty talk. If someone says maybe, then wait until they are ready. “Maybe” or “no” does not mean “convince me”! Talking someone into sex who isn’t ready is assault. People are allowed to change their mind in the middle of the action. People are allowed to say yes one day, and no another day. People are allowed to consent to one form of sex, and not another. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Please just keep these simple things in mind next time you’re trying to “score.” Consent is not a hard concept to grasp. If you feel like ambiguity is floating around in the air or if you’re unsure if you have consent, just ask.

Still have questions? @ SamCamp08

AMBIGUITY SHOULDN’T EXIST, AND GETTING CONSENT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE “UNSEXY”

CAMPUS COMMENT

Have you ever had a supernatural experience?

ALEXANDRIA DIZIKES
Respiratory Therapy

“My aunt and uncle own a home that is haunted. A young boy was murdered in a second-floor bedroom in the early 1900s. Anytime someone goes in the room, the door slams shut and cannot be opened. Once, when they were younger, my aunt and her cousins went into that room to play. Once inside, they couldn’t get out so they ended up having to climb out of the window.”

BREANNA PIMENTEL
Communication Studies

“I was at my best friend’s house when I was 14. She told me about her neighbors and how when they leave the house and come back, all of their picture frames are on the floor and all of their stuff is displaced. So I put my ear against the wall just to mess with her. But I ended up feeling air, like someone blew it into me but my ear was all the way against the wall. That night things in her room began moving, but not like an earthquake; there was a strange knocking coming from the wall, but we were on the second story. I called my boyfriend because I was scared, then the knocking got louder and the bed started shaking like someone was pulling it back and forth. So we ran downstairs.”