CARNAL KNOWLEDGE · A TABLE TALK

Consent and Negotiation, *In Practice*

Everybody here can define consent. Tonight is about doing it out loud.

MINUTE 0 TO 5

How this table works

Names stay at this table

Say "a partner", never someone others could identify. Who was here tonight is nobody's to share.

Step away whenever

Parts of tonight mention sexual assault. Leave when you need to, no reason owed. [Name] is here for a quiet word.

Ask anything, anonymously

carnalife.org/ask. No name, no email. I read every question at the break and at the end.

Keep it coffee-shop safe

We are in a coffee shop. Words and ideas. Nothing graphic, no demonstrations.

THE NEXT NINETY MINUTES

Where we're going

MINUTES	SEGMENT
0 to 5	How this table works
5 to 11	Why the definition isn't enough
11 to 20	What consent means here, and where the frameworks came from
20 to 42	Before the scene: ask, listen, take the no, health, standing consent
42 to 52	Your turn, out loud
52 to 62	Break
62 to 75	During the scene, and after it
75 to 81	Consent in the community
81 to 90	Support, your questions, and a last word

ASK ANYTHING

Scan it. Type it. Nobody sees who sent it.

carnalife.org/ask

No name. No email. No account. Just the question.

I read them at the break and at the end. A question about a specific person or incident gets a private conversation, not a public answer.

MINUTE 5 TO 11 · CONTENT NOTE: SEXUAL ASSAULT

Knowing the words didn't protect them

1 in 4

of 2,888 kink practitioners surveyed reported a consent violation in a kink context: 767 people, 25.6%.

Bowling et al., Violence Against Women, 2024

1 in 3

of more than 4,000 respondents had pre-negotiated limits violated, a safeword ignored, or both.

National Coalition for Sexual Freedom consent survey, 2013

THE POINT

Experience doesn't prevent this. Process does.

Negotiation

makes the yes specific, so nobody is guessing what was agreed.

Signals

make the stop audible, even when words fail or the room is loud.

Aftercare and debrief

catch what the scene missed, while it can still be put right.

Tonight's refrain: ask like you want the answer.

MINUTE 11 TO 20 · WHAT CONSENT MEANS HERE

Five words, each doing a job

Enthusiastic

A clear, willing yes. Not a shrug, not "I guess."

Specific

Yes to this act, with this person, right now.

Sober

Able to decide. Impairment takes that away.

Freely given

No pressure, no debt, no social cost for saying no.

Continuous

Checked throughout, and can be withdrawn at any moment.

Withdrawal, by word, safeword or clear physical signal, ends the activity immediately. There is no negotiation period after a withdrawal.

ALSO WHAT CONSENT MEANS HERE

Six things that feel like a yes, and aren't

A ticket

Buying entry to an event is not agreement to anything with anyone.

Membership

Being vetted means you got in. It does not mean you said yes.

An earlier yes

A yes an hour ago, or last week, is not a yes now.

A partner's yes

A yes to one person is not a yes to their partner.

Silence or stillness

No answer is not an answer. Going still can be fear.

A yes after pressure

No means no the first time. Asking again is its own violation.

WHERE THE IDEAS CAME FROM

Every acronym fixed the last one's mistake

NAME	STANDS FOR	WHAT IT ADDED, AND WHAT IT MISSED
SSC, 1983	Safe, Sane, Consensual	A first public standard. But nothing is fully safe, and "sane" shuts people out.
RACK, 1999	Risk-Aware Consensual Kink	Honest that risk exists. Says little about care.
PRICK, c. 2009	Personal Responsibility, Informed Consensual Kink	You own your choices. Can be misused to blame the person hurt.
4Cs, 2014	Caring, Communication, Consent, Caution	Consent as an ethic of care, not a safety test.

Ours, the three arms of the seal: **Consensual. Considered. Cared For.**

MINUTE 20 TO 42 · BEFORE THE SCENE

Negotiate in, not out

Negotiating out

"Here's my list of things I won't do. What's yours?"

Starts from a blank page and fences it off. You learn the edges, never the middle.

Negotiating in

"If we had twenty minutes, what three things would you most want to feel?"

Starts from what both people want, then draws the limits around that shared yes.

BEFORE THE SCENE · WHAT TO ASK

Eight questions, word for word

1. What are you hoping to feel?
2. What is a hard no for you?
3. What are you curious about, but unsure of?
4. Anything about your body I should know: injuries, health, medication, sexual health?
5. Have you had anything to drink or taken anything tonight?
6. How will I know you are okay, and how will you tell me to stop?
7. How long do we have, and who calls time?
8. What will you need afterwards, and can I check in tomorrow?

Ask open questions, and ask them both ways. If only one of you answers, that's not a negotiation. That's an interview.

ALSO AT CARNALIFE.ORG/TAKE-HOME

The same eight, as a checklist

1
Who and where
Who plays, who watches, which space.

2
What
Activities, intensity, and what each word means to each of you.

3
How long
A start, an end, and who calls time.

4
Bodies
Injuries, health, medication, triggers, sexual health and testing.

5
Substances
What has anyone had tonight? Impairment ends it.

6
Signals
The house traffic light and three taps, plus your own.

7
Check-ins
How and how often: a word, a squeeze, a number.

8
After
Aftercare tonight, and contact in the days after.

ONE MORE QUESTION

Ask: who is this for?

	I AM DOING IT	IT IS DONE TO ME
FOR YOU	**Serve** I act, as a gift to you, within my limits.	**Allow** You act on me, for you, within my limits.
FOR ME	**Take** I act, for me, with your permission.	**Accept** You act on me, for me, as your gift.

Trouble starts when two people are in different squares and don't know it. After Betty Martin, the Wheel of Consent.

BEFORE THE SCENE

The maybe is where people get hurt

Yes

What you want. Bring examples, not just labels: the same word means different things to different people.

Maybe, a soft limit

Curious, nervous, or yes only under conditions: a certain partner, a lower intensity, a check-in first. Say the conditions out loud.

No, a hard limit

Not tonight, not for a good argument, not in the moment. A hard limit is not reopened during a scene.

Yes, no, maybe lists are living documents. A yes from last year is not a yes today.

BEFORE THE SCENE · HOW TO LISTEN

A real yes has content

A real yes usually sounds like

- Specific: they name what they want
- Offered, not pulled out of them
- Comes with detail or conditions
- Asks questions back
- Their words and their body agree

Slow down when you hear

- "I guess" or "whatever you want"
- A long pause, then yes
- A glance at someone else first
- Yes to everything on the list
- A yes that followed a hesitation

Not sure it was a yes? Treat it as a no for tonight, and make the way out easy: "Let's leave that off. Nothing's lost."

BEFORE THE SCENE · WHEN THE ANSWER IS NO

How you take a no tells them if red is safe

When you hear no

- Say: "Thank you for telling me."
- Don't ask why, bargain, or offer "just a little"
- Don't ask again later: that is its own violation
- Don't sulk or go cold
- Build the scene around it, or don't play. Both are fine.

When you are saying no

- "No, thank you" is a complete answer
- You do not owe a reason
- You can say no to one thing or the whole scene
- Before it starts, or at any point during it
- If someone won't take it, tell a monitor

TWO MINUTES · RIGHT HERE AT THE TABLE

Practice hearing a no

Turn to the person beside you. Ask for something small: to swap seats, or borrow a pen. They say no. You say, "Thank you for telling me." Then swap roles.

Notice the urge to explain, persuade, or laugh it off. That urge is the thing we're practicing past.

BEFORE THE SCENE · SEXUAL HEALTH

Nobody can agree to a risk they weren't told about

When, and for what

When each of you last tested, and what was tested. A date beats "I'm clean", a word worth retiring anyway.

Barriers and choices

What you'll use, and for what. Agreed before the scene, never negotiated in the middle of it.

What's changed since

New partners or new risks since that test. The result was true on the day. Say what's happened after.

Disclosure isn't a health lecture. It's part of consent: an informed yes needs the information.

BEFORE THE SCENE · LONG-TERM DYNAMICS

Standing consent is renewed, not assumed

Put it on a calendar

A regular check-in on the dynamic itself, not just the scenes inside it.

Write it down

A shared agreement you can both reread beats two memories of one conversation.

A pause for the whole thing

A word that pauses the dynamic, not just a scene. Nobody needs a reason to use it.

Renegotiate when life changes

New partner, new job, new diagnosis, a hard month. The old yes was given by a different week.

No dynamic switches off red.

MINUTE 42 TO 52 · YOUR TURN

Out loud, quietly

Pair up with the person beside you. Pick a scenario. Five minutes to negotiate it with the eight questions, then we debrief together.

Include at least one no, and take it well. Coffee-shop safe: name categories, not details. Anyone can sit this one out and listen.

THE SCENARIOS

Pick one

A. New partner

You met at a munch a month ago. You've both said you'd like a twenty-minute scene at a party. You've never played together.

B. Long-term partners

You've played together for years. One of you wants to try something the other marked as a maybe.

C. Three people

Two of you play together often. The third is new to you both, and one of you is hosting.

DEBRIEF · FOUR MINUTES

What did you notice?

- Which of the eight questions did nobody ask?
- Was every yes a real yes?
- How did the no feel, to say and to hear?
- Who decided when it ends?

MINUTE 52 TO 62

Ten minutes. Refill. Breathe. Ask.

carnalife.org/ask

Anonymous questions

carnalife.org/take-home

Everything from tonight, and the PDF

MINUTE 62 TO 75 · THE HOUSE SAFEWORD

One system, so a word means the same thing everywhere

Red

Stop. The activity ends now. No debrief owed. A monitor who hears red will step in.

Yellow

Yield. Slow down and check in before anything continues.

Green

Yes. Consent is expressed; carry on.

Three taps

Red without words, on a partner or any surface. For anyone gagged, non-verbal, or unheard.

Add your own signals if you like. They never replace the house standard. Red, and three taps, always work.

DURING THE SCENE · THE NECK AND BREATH

A safeword needs a voice

57%

of Australians aged 18 to 35 surveyed had been strangled during sex.

Conte, Sharman and Douglas, Archives of Sexual Behavior, 2025

37.6%

of US students who had been choked said there were times they couldn't speak.

Herbenick et al., Archives of Sexual Behavior, 2022

10 sec

can be enough for someone being strangled to lose consciousness.

Conte et al., 2025

Anything to the neck or breath is negotiated out loud, every time, before the scene. Never a surprise. Never by reading the vibe.

DURING THE SCENE · A TREND TO NAME

CNC needs more negotiation, not less

What it is

Consensual non-consent: a scene played as if consent were absent, built on detailed agreement made beforehand, usually between people with long-established trust.

What it's being twisted into

Online, "CNC" is being sold as meaning you can't change your mind. That isn't a kink. It's a trap with a kink's name on it.

In a CARNALIFE room, no agreement switches off red. Red, and three taps, always work.

DURING THE SCENE

Make yes the thing that has to be said

INSTEAD OF	TRY	WHY
"You okay?"	"Give me a number out of ten."	A number is easier to give than a judgment.
"Want me to stop?"	"Say green to keep going."	Asks for an active yes, not a passive no.
Asking only at the end	A check-in at every change of intensity	A scene that changed needs a new answer.
Words only	A squeeze or a hand signal, agreed beforehand	Some people lose words before they lose limits.

DURING THE SCENE

When a yes can't count

Alcohol and substances

Impairment takes away the ability to decide. Negotiate sober, and play sober enough to still choose.

Altered states

Subspace and topspace change judgment. Never renegotiate mid-scene: what was agreed beforehand is the ceiling.

Freeze and fawn

Going still, going quiet, or agreeing to everything can be a stress response, not a yes.

Stop when someone can't answer simple questions clearly, can't use the agreed signal, or goes unusually quiet.

AFTER THE SCENE

Consent doesn't end when the scene does

Aftercare

What each of you needs right after: water, a blanket, quiet, talk, space. Agreed in advance, not guessed.

Drop

Low mood can arrive hours or days later, for tops and bottoms alike. Agree who checks on whom.

The debrief

Next day: what worked, what didn't, what you'd change. It's where an unnoticed problem comes out.

MINUTE 75 TO 81 · IN THE COMMUNITY

Consent starts at this table

Ask before touch

A hug, a hand on a shoulder, someone's collar or gear. Ask first, every time.

Your dynamic is yours

Nobody else is part of your D/s by standing near it. Don't direct or test other people's partners.

Discretion in public

Scene names stay quiet. Recognize someone elsewhere? Let them greet you first.

Meeting someone new

Meet in public, tell a friend where you are, arrange a check-in call.

Status changes nothing

A no to a host, a presenter or a well-known top counts exactly the same.

Photos, chats, AI images

Never share what was shared with you. Publishing intimate images without consent, real or AI-made, can be a federal crime.

IN THE COMMUNITY · IF YOU SEE SOMETHING

Five ways to step in

Distract

Interrupt with something ordinary: a question, a drink, a wrong-room excuse.

Delegate

Get a monitor, a host or a friend. You don't have to do it alone.

Direct

Say it plainly: "Are you okay? Do you want to stop?"

Delay

Check in afterwards: "I saw that. Are you alright?"

Remember

Note what you saw and when. Never film it: the no-photo rule still applies.

In a play space, intense isn't the same as wrong. Unsure? Delegate: monitors can check without breaking a scene. Adapted from Right To Be's 5Ds.

WHEN IT GOES WRONG

If something goes wrong

1 **Stop**
A withdrawal ends the activity. Everything else comes after.

2 **Tell a monitor**
At CARNALIFE events, monitors wear illuminated armbands. You don't need to be certain or composed.

3 **The person who reports is looked after first**
Support comes before any process about anyone else, whatever the outcome.

4 **Every report counts the same**
A guest's report carries the same weight as a member's. Nobody under review is named publicly.

If you crossed a line: stop, make sure they have support, don't argue it in the moment, and take part in the process.

MINUTE 81 TO 90 · SUPPORT

If tonight brought something up

Here, tonight

[Name] is here for a quiet word, during or after the talk. You don't need to explain why.

At CARNALIFE events

Any monitor, in an illuminated armband. A guest's report carries the same weight as a member's.

Any time, free and confidential

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800.656.HOPE (4673), or online.rainn.org. Around the clock.

Kink-aware help

NCSF Incident Reporting and Response: confidential reporting, and referrals to kink-aware professionals. ncsfreedom.org

YOUR QUESTIONS

Your questions, then one last thing

From 1 November, CARNALIFE is members only. Every event after launch night is for vetted members, and vetting starts with a membership application. If you are on the early interest list, you will meet us in person first, at our social events.

Consent policy: **carnalife.org/consent** · Everything from tonight: **carnalife.org/take-home**

THE LAST WORD

Protecting this community is everyone's duty

Being part of a community should mean something. If you see someone violating consent, it is your duty to protect one another.

I am not asking anyone to become violent, or to do anything that puts you or anyone else in harm's way. I am asking everyone who sees something going wrong to say something.

If you don't feel comfortable speaking to the person yourself, tell someone who can: the host, a floor monitor, or security, so we can address it immediately.

The Founder

WHAT SAYING SOMETHING LOOKS LIKE

You don't need to be certain. Just tell someone.

IF YOU SEE	SAY SOMETHING BY
A scene keeps going after red or three taps	Telling the nearest floor monitor, now. Monitors act on red.
Someone won't take no for an answer, at the bar or on the floor	Interrupting: "Hey, can you help me with something?" Then tell the host.
Someone too drunk to answer, being led towards a play area	Telling security or a monitor straight away. Don't wait to be sure.
A phone out in a play space	Telling a monitor. Don't film it yourself, even as evidence.
Someone boasting that they ignored a safeword	Telling the host privately, afterwards. Let us decide what happens next.

SOURCES

Where tonight came from

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Life Beyond Vanilla, negotiation checklist; Shibari Study, consent and negotiations; Safe + Sound, CNC.

CARNALIFE Code of Conduct, sections 3, 8 and 9. carnalife.org/consent