

Lesson 3

Consent

Activity 3

Can a person change his or her mind during sex?

In circumstances where consent is given, can a person change his or her mind in the middle of a sex act? Some who believe that boys have more powerful sexual urges than girls might say this is unfair to a boy who has the potential of developing a case of “blue balls.” Although “blue balls” is rarer than jokes about it might indicate, it describes the uncomfortable feeling a boy can get if he is messing around for a long time with no release/ejaculation. Does the fact that it might be momentarily painful for a boy make it less right for a girl to change her mind?

There are plenty of other reasons for changing one’s mind: if a partner won’t wear a condom, if you don’t have a condom, if sex begins and it’s painful, or if either partner feels uncomfortable once sex begins. But there are two kinds of questions with regard to this change in thinking that are important to ask:

1. What kind of behavior is needed to show a change of mind? Once intercourse has begun, is it all over?
2. What can a person do or say that indicates a change of mind. Is doing something enough? E.g. pulling away? Why or why not?

For those who might have argued that it is unfair to change one’s mind in the middle of intercourse, answer the following questions.

1. What does that say about autonomy or free choices if a person can’t change one’s mind and follow that change through?
2. Why is intercourse different from other sex acts? Once you start to kiss someone can you never pull away? Once a person has a shirt off, is it unfair to put it back on? What’s different about intercourse?