

UNITED WISDOM

Consent as an ongoing conversation

Relationships and Intimacy

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

R-04-N02 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

Consent as an ongoing conversation

Epigraph

“liberty of reason”

Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Men, second edition, 1790, p. 2; original English microfragment.

What this article is about

Anna and Pavel have been together for years. They agreed on an evening together, and initially both wanted sexual intimacy. Later, Anna notices that she no longer wants to continue and asks to stop. Pavel is surprised: the decision was already made. That brief surprise reveals an important question: does consent concern a person choosing now, or a past answer that has supposedly gained separate authority over them?

An ongoing conversation means today’s answer remains significant after intimacy begins. It may confirm desire, clarify an activity, signal a pause, or end contact. Participants need not know beforehand everything they will feel later. They can recognise that intimacy happens between living people capable of choice rather than performers of a previously agreed scenario that must be completed to honour a promise.

Every example here concerns adults capable of free choice, sober and alert, without pressure, threats, or coercion. This is neither legal consultation, an account of different countries’ consent ages, nor medical diagnosis. RAINN provides the contemporary educational framework; selected WHO material supplies a broad conceptual one. Practical formulations are editorial and are not presented as a clinically tested method.

Wollstonecraft’s historical polemic helps us question how we relate to a rational, independent person. Aristotle and James’s religious verse add limited themes of goodwill and listening. We do not make these sources authors of a contemporary sexual-consent model or smooth away their contextual differences. Comparison prompts reflection on another’s voice; the particular conditions of voluntary intimacy must be stated directly.

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

I. An answer concerns a particular activity and moment

Consent can be heard as an answer to a particular offer. An answer to a hug concerns that hug. A different activity cannot silently be included in the original agreement. Precision preserves participation. Otherwise, a small positive answer expands into permission for whatever one participant later calls a natural continuation, although the other neither chose nor discussed that continuation.

RAINN stresses that consent is needed every time and for every kind of activity. Previous consent does not mean present consent; agreeing to one thing does not mean agreeing to everything. This is official educational information read in the organisation’s selected material. It does not replace a particular country’s law. In our scene, its meaning is clear: Anna’s answer early in the evening does not cancel her ability to answer differently later.

Relationship length also does not turn an assumption into an answer. People may know each other’s habits well, but acquaintance does not authorise directing today’s decision. Pavel may remember Anna enjoying a certain touch previously. That knowledge can inform an offer rather than eliminate a question. A past preference belongs to their history, but history need not speak for the person beside him now.

The conversation need not be long. A simple question or clear message may suffice for a particular activity if the decision is free and understood. Sentence length guarantees nothing by itself. A detailed explanation can also accompany fear or pressure. We consider not elegant wording but the real ability to choose, communicate a changed answer, and see that change accepted in subsequent action.

Consent should therefore not be understood as an object acquired once. It is not kept by a partner separately from whoever gave it. Its meaning rests on current interaction: we understand what is happening and can freely decide whether to continue this particular activity. This editorial explanation is no legal formula. It distinguishes living participation from invoking past permission after the present answer has changed.

II. Free choice needs conditions

RAINN’s selected material describes consent as clear, voluntary, and communicated without pressure, manipulation, or fear. It separately identifies capacity to consent, being sober and alert, and absence of coercion or threats. We apply this educational framework to the adults in our article. Uncertainty, intoxication, or inability to choose freely should not be bypassed by finding convenient wording that would allow a desired activity to continue.

The word “yes” cannot be separated from the conditions producing it. If someone agrees after a threat, our discussion does not convert that sound into free choice. The same applies to

threatened punishment for refusal. The aim is not to make a partner utter the required word but to preserve another answer. Habitual politeness or wanting to end an unpleasant argument cannot automatically settle consent.

Conditions include speaking without punishment. Pavel may explain beforehand that stopping is welcome. But his action after Anna’s request tests that message’s meaning. If he continues or demands a convincing explanation first, the words did not make choice freer. Our editorial boundary concerns action: stop what is happening before discussing hurt, surprise, or the reasons one would like to hear from the other person.

Anna should not be required to know her future sensations perfectly. Consent is no examination in predicting an entire evening. Someone can discover a boundary during contact and express it then. This does not permit inattentive promises, but sexual activity cannot continue as punishment for a changed answer. If accurate preliminary agreements matter to participants, they discuss them separately from stopping contact now.

A hidden debt also interferes with choice. Dinner, preparation, travel, or help create no obligation to finish a sexual scenario. Gratitude and recognition of invested time are possible without agreement to an activity. Mixing them means answering different questions simultaneously: do I value you, and do I want to continue? Distinguishing subjects prevents refusal of particular contact being declared a rejection of all care or relationship history.

III. Stopping does not await a complete explanation

RAINN explicitly states that consent may be withdrawn at any time, including during activity. The selected material also addresses nonverbal signals: pulling away, freezing, or silence; partners should notice and stop if something appears unclear or wrong. We do not turn this description into diagnosis. Its practical boundary is simple: the absence of lengthy, clear speech is no convenient permission to continue without clarification.

Anna may want to stop without yet knowing exactly why. Ending the activity needs no finished account. Explanation may come later if she wants to offer it. Pavel may be surprised, but surprise creates no exception to stopping. When someone must first convince a partner that their reason is serious, their decision effectively goes for approval to the person wanting continuation, and the conversation loses equal participation.

Uncertainty should not be assigned its most convenient meaning. If Anna becomes still or silent, Pavel can stop and ask whether she wants a pause. This is an editorial application of the selected RAINN information. It sets no universal meaning for every silence and infers no inner state from a single signal. What matters is room for an answer rather than declaring uncertainty evidence of desired consent.

Stopping need not immediately launch further discussion of sex. One can ask whether conversation, space, or other help is wanted without imposing an option. Declining discussion now also matters. A participant need not immediately restore their partner’s good mood, describe every sensation, or confirm tomorrow will be different. Ending activity becomes clearer when it is not followed by a new queue of demands to manage the partner’s emotions.

If both later want discussion, facts and assumptions can be distinguished. What was offered? Which answer changed? Did the activity stop? Which expectations remain? These editorial questions are no clinical protocol and may be skipped. Conversation must not become another trial of refusal’s adequacy or an attempt to obtain a promise that the person will never change a decision after intimacy begins again.

IV. Persuasion does not equal free participation

In A Vindication of the Rights of Men, Wollstonecraft addresses a political opponent in a polemic about liberty, reason, and dignity. The selected opening and conclusion reveal opposition to subordination and attention to rational persuasion. This second-edition text of 1790 addresses Edmund Burke; it is no contemporary guide to sexual relationships. Its historical voice prompts a question: do our arguments preserve the independence of their recipient?

Even this comparison needs care. Arguments about political organisation do not establish intimate-consent conditions. Wollstonecraft employs strong polemical rhetoric and speaks from her historical context. We do not treat her dispute as proof that rational speech is always safe. A well-constructed argument can remain pressure if its aim is to undo refusal and make one’s desired outcome the only permissible end to the conversation.

Pavel may explain his desire, but Anna need not want intimacy after that explanation. A persuasive reason creates no sexual obligation. This distinguishes shared understanding from overcoming resistance. In the first, another position may remain. In the second, every answer except agreement is treated as a temporary mistake to correct through another argument, repeated question, or more insistent appeal to love and care.

A repeated offer also depends on meaning and conditions. If an answer is already clear, insistently returning to it can become pressure even without harsh words. We set no numerical threshold and diagnose nobody by question count. We suggest considering whether a negative answer is genuinely accepted. If conversation continues only to secure another result, calling it open discussion is insufficient: refusal exists only verbally.

Our editorial conclusion is limited: an independent person cannot be replaced by a more convenient version of their answer. The historical theme of reason helps us notice participant dignity, while the contemporary consent framework requires voluntariness and stopping. They

are compared rather than merged. We need no philosophical contest over whose desire is better justified to stop after a request. That request need not win a debate before it matters.

V. Listening to the person here today

James 1:19 connects listening with restraint in speech and anger. One complete KJV verse is read here: religious counsel rather than communication research. Our comparison concerns attention: do we hear the present message or immediately defend a past agreement? Anna's current voice must not disappear behind Pavel's memory that she looked willing and had taken the most initiative early in the evening.

Listening requires no guess at an entire inner world. Accepting what was said about a particular activity suffices. Anna does not want continuation now; that message already permits stopping. Her feelings for Pavel, reasons for change, and further expectations can be separate subjects. Combining them makes a simple boundary an overwhelming explanation of the entire person and relationship. Someone must prove love instead of freely communicating a current intimate decision.

Pavel can also speak about himself. He feels lost, expected another evening, and is unsure how to communicate now. These feelings can be named without claiming Anna has incurred a sexual debt. A helpful distinction concerns the message's destination: I want to understand my expectations and our future agreements, rather than make you reverse the stop so I no longer feel confused by what is happening now.

Attentive listening cannot require an immediate shared conclusion. Sometimes both need time and can later describe differing experiences of one scene. Different accounts can remain without cancelling the stop. How each understood the evening differs from whether activity can continue after an answer changes. Discussing the first must not retrospectively turn the second into permission absent at the relevant moment.

There is also the option not to discuss details. Free conversation permits that boundary. Someone can discuss how to stop without sharing personal memories or reasons. This promises no complete mutual understanding; it identifies the actual scope of participation. If every boundary becomes an obstacle to remove as proof of trust, consent expands again into a demand to disclose everything, although the original subject was much narrower.

VI. Bodily response does not answer for a person

RAINN's selected material states that arousal, lubrication, and orgasm are involuntary bodily responses and do not equal consent. We use this official clarification without explaining mechanisms or diagnosing anyone. Bodily response cannot refute a spoken refusal. A decision about continuation must not be taken from a person on the basis of an observation another has assigned a convenient meaning.

Nor should every smile count as separate permanent permission. RAINN describes active participation and a clear positive response within enthusiastic consent, while also stressing attention and ongoing checking. An example of comfort does not become a mechanical signal table. In our editorial scene, hearing Anna's request to stop matters more than finding an earlier gesture that would permit ignoring her current boundary.

Words and nonverbal communication need not compete. Someone struggling to speak may pull away; the other should notice uncertainty and stop. If words and circumstances prompt doubt, stopping and clarifying is preferable to continuing on a favourable guess. This suggestion promises no complete recognition of inner states. It preserves choice when free desire to continue is uncertain rather than forcibly assigning meaning to a gesture.

No positive answer needs theatrical brightness. People may express desire differently. We establish no compulsory emotional style or test based on how much a partner smiles. What matters is clear free consent and attention to changed decisions. This boundary permits a calm manner without confusing it with absence of choice, while also preventing reserve from becoming a reason to stop clarifying uncertainty.

After an unwanted experience, bodily response cannot be made responsible. RAINN explicitly rejects that confusion and survivor blame for sexual violence. We assess no individual cases or legal status here. If this concerns a reader personally, appropriate help matters more than our conversation practice. An article can mark an explanatory boundary but cannot replace safe contact and attentive support chosen with regard to their circumstances.

VII. Goodwill after an answer changes

In the read sections VIII.2–3 of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle considers mutually known goodwill and acquaintance time. This is historical friendship philosophy. Our editorial question for intimacy is: do I wish the other well after their current decision changes my plan? The question proves no friendship and creates no contemporary norm from an ancient text; it directs attention to actions after mismatch.

Accepting a stop needs no ceremonial speech. Stop the activity and avoid turning subsequent treatment into punishment. Perfect calm cannot be required, but one can answer for

behaviour. Surprise, frustration, and sadness do not authorise humiliation. Feelings may be discussed later if participants want. Preserving freedom to answer matters more than outwardly demonstrating a flawless adult supposedly never upset.

Pavel’s needs do not disappear. He can consider compatibility, communication, and relationship expectations. But that conversation must not become an immediate threat to restore contact. Assessing one’s participation and demanding a sexual result differ. Honesty sometimes produces a difficult future decision; it does not authorise using that future as an instrument to make present refusal too dangerous to express freely.

Anna need not promise that change will never recur either. People cannot agree never to discover a new boundary. They can discuss communication, preliminary expectations, and handling pauses. Their subject remains interaction supporting participation. An agreement requiring advance surrender of withdrawal contradicts the continuing framework considered here, even if it sounds like a mutual pursuit of predictability and care.

Care after stopping should be an offer rather than another assignment. Is water, space, conversation, or separate time wanted? No option is compulsory. Sometimes none is wanted, which is also an answer. Proper restoration of the evening should not become a controlled scenario. Participants can remain with unfinished feelings without a reconciliation ceremony whose price is again surrendering their own free choice.

VIII. A respectful approach exceeds one question

WHO’s working definition addresses well-being and a respectful approach to sexuality and relationships, including experiences free from coercion, discrimination, and violence. The page identifies expert-consultation context and the WHO 2006a formulation. This is a broad conceptual framework rather than an experiment about our conversation’s outcome. It highlights interaction conditions without asserting that one well-asked question guarantees the safety of all subsequent contact.

Asking is insufficient if the answer then changes nothing. Precise wording cannot compensate for ignoring refusal. Consent should not become a formality freeing someone from subsequent attention. Its continuing meaning concerns what participants can actually change and communicate during contact. Our question therefore connects words and actions: did what happened change after another’s message, or did the chosen scenario continue regardless of their voice?

This approach also exceeds the couple’s past experience. A habit of assuming continuation after hugging can be corrected. An apology may recognise a specific action and inattentiveness, but obliges nobody to restore previous access or immediately trust change. Further participation is chosen freely. A good apology cannot become a new argument to

restore sexual consent; otherwise, admitting error becomes another route to the same desired result.

Respect requires no explanation of every boundary's cause. Choice matters rather than reporting completeness. Additional explanation sometimes helps both, but is offered voluntarily. If a partner demands explanation until approving the answer, conversation itself can become pressure. The rational independence recalled by Wollstonecraft's historical polemic is compared editorially here with a person's ability to avoid submitting a current answer for mandatory examination.

Consent remains specific after a good conversation too. Understanding someone you love creates no permanent permission. A revised agreement on asking questions also does not replace today's answer. People can create clearer communication and still hear refusal. This need not mean conversation failed. Its honest result may be precisely that a boundary became visible and affected events without punishment.

IX. When safety matters more than further conversation

The National Domestic Violence Hotline lists threats, humiliation, and constant monitoring among emotional-abuse forms. We read the selected definition and examples without using statistics or clinical causes. This material cannot diagnose a participant remotely from one sentence. It distinguishes subjects: if threats follow refusal, the task is not merely finding more elegant boundary language to finally earn respect.

If conversation increases danger, the article's practice may be skipped or ended. Suitable local help and safe contact, chosen for particular circumstances, are more appropriate. There is no universal exit plan, advice to confront immediately, or guaranteed outcome here. Inability to refuse freely need not be repaired by further concession. Safety is no reward for sufficiently gentle, patient, or detailed explanations of refusal.

Someone cannot be required to prove a threat serious by themselves before seeking support. At the same time, this text determines no legal status and selects no country-specific measures. Local law and immediate danger require appropriate resources. Our limited task is to avoid disguising pressure as mismatched expectations or imposing on the ignored person a duty to restore free communication through their own perfection.

Someone worried about a particular experience may seek help without the partner agreeing to discuss everything together. Joint conversation is one possible format rather than a compulsory stage. This article prescribes no treatment or intimate disclosure. An accessible safe resource may matter more than explaining an event to someone involved in it. Real circumstances determine help conditions rather than elegant performance of our proposed conversational order.

Even without threats, discussion may be stopped. People may be unready now, unwilling to try a practice, or unable to find a shared solution. This boundary alone does not permit ignoring consent to activity. We must distinguish discussing the relationship from participating in sexual contact. Each has its own subject, current answer, and option to decline without first winning a dispute about personal dignity.

X. Continuation belongs to two people

These texts form no single doctrine. Wollstonecraft writes eighteenth-century political polemic; Aristotle, historical friendship philosophy; James, religious counsel. RAINN offers contemporary consent information; WHO, a working sexual-health framework; the Hotline, examples of threats and control. Comparison preserves their roles. No historical author is used to cancel contemporary free consent or establish demonstrated effectiveness for our voluntary practice.

Ongoing conversation requires attention to the person here today. Its meaning appears not in question count but in freedom to answer and whether an answer changes activity. A previous “yes” matters as history but does not govern the present. Nobody must complete a scenario for predictability, gratitude, or our convenient image of what intimacy between loving people should look like.

Anna and Pavel may retain sadness, confusion, and a need for further conversation. This does not cancel a simple present decision: the activity stopped after an answer changed. From that clarity, they can discuss the future, seek support, or recognise incompatibility without collecting sexual concession for an inconvenient evening. Continuation belongs to both while each can choose. Consent therefore does not end when intimacy begins or become an obligation after desire’s first confirmation.

What this means in practice

If conversation suits both, choose one subject: the offered activity, what a pause means, or how to express changed answers. Starting is optional. This editorial suggestion is no clinical exercise with established effects and may be skipped, changed, or stopped. The subject is clear present participation, rather than elegant wording that avoids every later question and guarantees sexual continuation beforehand.

Each can identify participation boundaries: I can talk now but do not want touching; I want to stop; I need a pause without discussing reasons. These editorial examples are no source quotations. Stopping needs no lengthy explanation. If an answer or situation is unclear, stop and clarify first rather than continue on a guess selected because it better matches the initial plan and the partner’s desire.

Later, if both want, expectations, feelings, and communication agreements can be discussed separately. Ask whether action actually heard the answer. Nobody can be required to promise never to change a decision again. Agreeing to talk creates no sexual access. With threats or inability to refuse freely, suitable safe help and contact matter more than practice or jointly determining why someone expressed a boundary insufficiently confidently.

A result may be clarification, a new voluntary arrangement, an unfinished subject, or a relationship decision. This practice has no compulsory positive ending or score. Mismatch can be recognised while preserving both people’s dignity. Ongoing consent connects each particular activity with present free choice rather than debt to a past answer, invested time, partner expectations, or a promise always to feel identically after intimacy begins.

Key quotation

“convince or persuade”

Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Men, second edition, 1790, pp. 150–151; original English microfragment. It concerns political polemic rather than sexual consent.

Connections between traditions

Source or line	Editorial intersection	Limit
Wollstonecraft, political polemic	An independent rational person’s voice	No contemporary sexual-consent guide
Aristotle, friendship philosophy	Goodwill after mismatch	Historical context, no clinical model
James 1:19	Attention to listening and speech	One religious verse
RAINN	Continuing free consent and withdrawal	Education, not every country’s law
WHO	Respect without coercion	Working definition, no experiment
United Wisdom	Distinguish activity, answer, feeling, and agreement	Voluntary proposal without promised results

Primary sources

1. Mary Wollstonecraft. A Vindication of the Rights of Men. Second edition, London: J. Johnson, 1790. Project Gutenberg, no. 62757. Title information, selected opening, p. 2, web lines 48–62, and concluding paragraphs, pp. 150–151, lines 381–387 read. Not the complete work. Two microfragments occur at lines 50 and 382. International conditions UNKNOWN; Gutenberg's territorial notice accounted for. This work differs from A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, from which no new quotations are used here.

2. Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics, VIII.2–3, translated by W. D. Ross. MIT Classics. Selected discussion of mutually known goodwill and acquaintance read, neither the complete book nor original. No direct quotations; international rights UNKNOWN.

3. James 1:19, King James Version. Bible Gateway. One complete verse and page's Public Domain label read, not the chapter. No direct quotations; territorial completeness of rights not established.

4. RAINN. Consent 101: Respect, Boundaries, and Building Trust. Selected definitions, conditions, withdrawal, and bodily-response information read, web lines 89–127; checked 6 October 2026. Neither legislation nor a clinical study. No direct quotations; rights UNKNOWN.

5. World Health Organization. Sexual health. Selected overview and working definitions read with the 2002 consultation and WHO 2006a context, web lines 84–95 and 99–117; checked 6 October 2026. Neither experiment nor individual consultation. No direct quotations; rights UNKNOWN.

6. The National Domestic Violence Hotline. What is emotional abuse?. Definition and examples of threats, humiliation, and monitoring read, web lines 158–190; checked 6 October 2026. Statistics and remote diagnoses not used. No direct quotations; rights UNKNOWN.

Tags

consent, ongoing consent, adult relationships, voluntariness, intimacy, boundaries, stopping, pause, free choice, listening, respect, conversation, Wollstonecraft, Aristotle, James, RAINN, WHO, sexual health, agreement, request, pressure, safety, goodwill, expectations, dignity, bodily response, support, independence, reciprocity, United Wisdom

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a coauthor of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.