

## Valentine's Day: Consent

Valentine's Day. Love is in the air, chocolates and flowers are exchanged, and hearts flutter. The most romantic holiday! It is exciting, but it is also important to remember some key points about consent.

### Consent FRIES

'FRIES' is a great acronym to make sure you have full consent.

Consent is:

**F**reely Given- Consent is a choice without pressure, not under drug or alcohol influences, or any manipulation.

**R**eversible- Anyone can change their mind and withdraw consent at any point.

**I**nformed- Everyone knows all activities they consent to; there are no surprises. Clear, verbal communication is the easiest to understand.

**E**nthusiastic- Yes means yes! If there is not an excited yes, there is no consent.

**S**pecific- Each activity is discussed and detailed beforehand. Consent is given for *one* activity, and consent does not automatically apply to other activities.

The age of consent is a state law, not federal. This means different states may have different ages of consent. In Illinois, the age of consent is 17. Even if two people are close in age, they still must be at least 17 to legally consent. If the sexual partner is in a position of trust or authority, such as a teacher, coach, or minister, the age of consent is raised to 18. All 'FRIES' must be present for full consent! Clear communication and boundaries are essential in a healthy relationship. Not all love is romantic; Family, friends, and even pets can all show love and affection without romance. Platonic relationships are just as important to maintain, and consent and boundaries still apply.

Valentine's Day can be an enjoyable holiday. Remember that everyone has the right to say no, even if they are in a relationship. Love is about respect and understanding each other's boundaries. No sexual activities should be assumed or expected from a partner. Your boundaries are yours, and they should not be broken. A consensual environment helps keep everyone comfortable and safe. We hope everyone has a nice Valentine's Day this year! Our support line is always available at **847-872-7799** if you or someone you know experiences sexual abuse or assault- an advocate will be there to talk.

Image: Light pink square background with a white grid, labeled 'Valentine's Day Reminders' in a medium pink, swirly font inside of a heart with the ZCenter logo. A container of french fries is on the left side of the heart, and another, larger one is on the right. Hearts of varying sizes and shades of pink are scattered over the image.