

## Sexual Rights

Certain things are so basic that you are entitled to them simply for being a human being. Some of these things are related to sexuality or sexual acts, and these are known as sexual rights.

If anyone questions your rights to these things, especially a sexual partner, they probably don't have your best interests in mind. Any sexual partner you have also has these rights and respecting them is part of having positive sexual experiences.

- A Positive Sexual Experience
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### A Positive Sexual Experience

Positive sexual experiences are those that are consensual, respectful, and protected. A sexual experience that violates someone's sexual rights is disrespectful and often non-consensual – it may also be unprotected.

### An Explanation of Sexual Rights

Sexual Rights	Explanations
The right to make your own decisions about being sexual (or not), regardless of your partner's wishes.	This means that you can choose not to be sexual, even if your partner would like you to be sexual. This includes deciding not to be sexual with someone you have been sexual with before.
The right to make your own decisions about birth control and protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs), regardless of your partner's wishes; the right to make free and responsible reproductive choices.	This means that you can choose whether to use birth control and decide how to protect yourself. Making responsible reproductive choices also involves deciding if or when you and your partner would like to have a child. This includes the right to tell a partner that you will not have sex without birth control or without protection from STIs. Pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections shouldn't "just happen."

<p>The right to stop sexual activity at any time, including during or just before intercourse.</p>	<p>This includes the right to make your own decisions about sexual activity, but it's important to remember that being sexual is not an all-or-nothing deal. There are several levels of sexual activity. You can decide what you are comfortable with and engage in only those activities you want to participate in.</p>
<p>The right to tell anyone that you are not comfortable being hugged or kissed in certain ways.</p>	<p>Even if someone is related to you, they cannot force you to experience affection the way that they would like. You have the right to tell your relatives and other acquaintances how you are comfortable expressing affection.</p>
<p>The right to ask a partner if she or he has been examined for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).</p>	<p>Asking a partner about STIs doesn't mean you're accusing them of anything. It means you're being a responsible, sexual person.</p>
<p>The right to tell a partner what you would like sexually or to tell a partner that you would like to be hugged, cuddled, or touched without sex.</p>	<p>This means you have the right to talk to your partner about your wants and needs. It includes the right to tell a partner she or he is being too rough, and the right to be sensual without being sexual.</p>
<p>The right to masturbate.</p>	<p>You have the right to give yourself sexual pleasure; it's not dirty, wrong, or shameful. Your partner does not have the right to tell you not to masturbate.</p>
<p>The right to sexual autonomy, sexual integrity, and safety of your sexual body.</p>	<p>This means you have the right to make decisions about your sexual life according to your own values. You have the right to be sexual without violence of any sort.</p>

<p>The right to sexual privacy.</p>	<p>This means you have the right to make your own decisions about sex as long as your decisions don't interfere with the sexual rights of others. This also includes the right to be examined by a doctor for sexual concerns without the doctor sharing that information with other people, except in extreme circumstances (like abuse).</p>
<p>The right to sexual equity.</p>	<p>This means you have the right not to be discriminated against based on gender, sexual orientation, age, race, social class, religion, or physical and emotional disability.</p> <p>However, the sexual decisions you can make may be limited by these factors if they influence your capability to consent. For instance, a small child cannot give informed consent to anything sexual because she or he does not understand what that means.</p>
<p>The right to sexual pleasure.</p>	<p>Sexual pleasure isn't shameful; it's a natural part of being human. You need to make responsible sexual choices, but these can definitely include having sexual pleasure in your life.</p>
<p>The right to emotional sexual expression.</p>	<p>This means you have the right to express your sexuality in any way you choose, including communication, touch, emotions, and love – not just through sexual acts.</p>
<p>The right to comprehensive sexuality education.</p>	<p>You have the right to be educated about sexuality. Education can help you make safer sexual decisions and know when to seek help should problems arise.</p>

The right to sexual information based upon scientific inquiry.	This means that ethical studies of sexuality should be conducted, and the information gained from these studies should be available.
The right to sexual health care.	You have the right to be treated for any sexual problems you might have and to get preventive care to keep you healthy. You shouldn't be prevented from receiving this care because of sexual orientation, disability status, race, class, age, or other factors. Every state has laws about who can receive confidential reproductive services. Find out what the laws are in your state.

It is important to remember that although you have all of these rights, your parents, siblings, doctor, and other trusted adults can still help you make good decisions about sexuality.

They can provide valuable information and perspectives to help you as you begin making sexual decisions. Sometimes you have to seek out information.

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## Ethical Sex

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Ethical sex sounds complicated and a bit difficult, but if you choose to be sexual, you should aim for ethical sex. It's actually not as complicated as it sounds. Ethical sex is consensual, respectful, and protected.

### What do you need in order to have Ethical Sex?

- You need to know and **be comfortable with your own body**. This helps you to determine what you are comfortable consenting to, and gives you an understanding of what you might like from your partner.
- You need to be comfortable with your own sexuality and **be able to experience sexual pleasure without guilt or shame**. If you're ashamed of being sexual, you might not plan ahead for sex or might be less respectful of your partner and her or his sexuality. This works against having both protected and respectful sex.

- You need to **be assertive about your sexuality**. If you aren't able to be assertive about what you would like to do and what you would not like to do, it's harder to have truly consensual sex.
- You need to **have respect for other's values**. Your partner may not share the same values or beliefs about sex as you do, and she or he may be more or less comfortable with different ways of expressing sexuality due to those values. To have respectful sex, you need to respect those values.
- You need to **understand your own needs and your partner's needs**. Understanding your own needs helps you express them to your partner, allowing her or him to be respectful of you, and understanding your partner's needs allows you to respect those needs and thus be respectful of her or him.
- You need to **understand what you're looking for in a sexual experience**. Are you having sex because you care about the other person, because you want sexual pleasure, because you want the other person to care about you, or for some other reasons? Part of respectful sex is being respectful to yourself by acknowledging what you want and honestly evaluating whether sex is the best method to obtain it. Depending on your goal, you might also need to think about whether acting on that goal through sex is respectful to your partner.
- You need to **be able to communicate with a sexual partner** in sexual terms. If you aren't comfortable talking to your partner about protection and other aspects of sexuality, it's harder for the sex to be well protected and also harder for it to be respectful.
- You need to **be able to express your sexuality without exploiting others** or being violent towards others. Being violent towards someone is never ethical sex. If you aren't able to listen to your partner and respect what she or he is comfortable with, then you can't have consensual or respectful sex.
- You need to **be able to protect yourself and your partner from sexually transmitted infections** (STIs). If you don't have both knowledge about STIs and ways to protect yourself from STIs (such as condoms or dental dams), you can't have protected sex.