

When sex is like tea

MADELINE NEWTON DRISCOLL

There's been a lot of discussion about sexual assault on this campus, which I fully support. We have made progress over the past year with various programs, initiatives and a lot of hard work, but there's something missing: a common-sense, everyday, all-the-time working definition of consent.



Having a conversation about sex can be really awkward and there are a lot of people who will tell you that "if you can't talk about it, you shouldn't be doing it." Sure, those are somewhat tied together, but there are a lot of reasons besides mere awkwardness people are uncomfortable discussing sex: many women feel like they're not "supposed" to talk about what they want from any sexual encounter and many men might feel pressure to only want one outcome from sexual encounters. So why even have the conversation? Or we're just young, inexperienced people who are practicing this whole sex thing.

These are the reasons that the conversation about what's comfortable or wanted is hard to have, but there's a reason you should have it anyway. Would you rather be awkward for a few minutes or wake up the next morning worried that you might have date-raped someone last night? That's not me trying to shock you into agreeing with me—that's literally the outcome of that scenario and the framework through which many people outside of that moment will be thinking. That's also not me trying to scare you away from sex, it's me encouraging you to push through the weirdness of "hey, what were you thinking about doing tonight...like what are you comfortable with?" and "Um, I don't know, I'd be down to get laid, honestly." Add some cute giggles, a flirtatious smile, and embrace the awkward together. It's better than the ambiguity of the alternative.

Who's responsible for bringing this conversation up though? I have found that typically the person who wants the sex is the one who will "initiate it," to use technical terms. I do NOT mean they force it and I do NOT mean they pressure anyone into it... I just mean that this is the person who starts the whole process of the evening (or afternoon, or whenever!). I'm

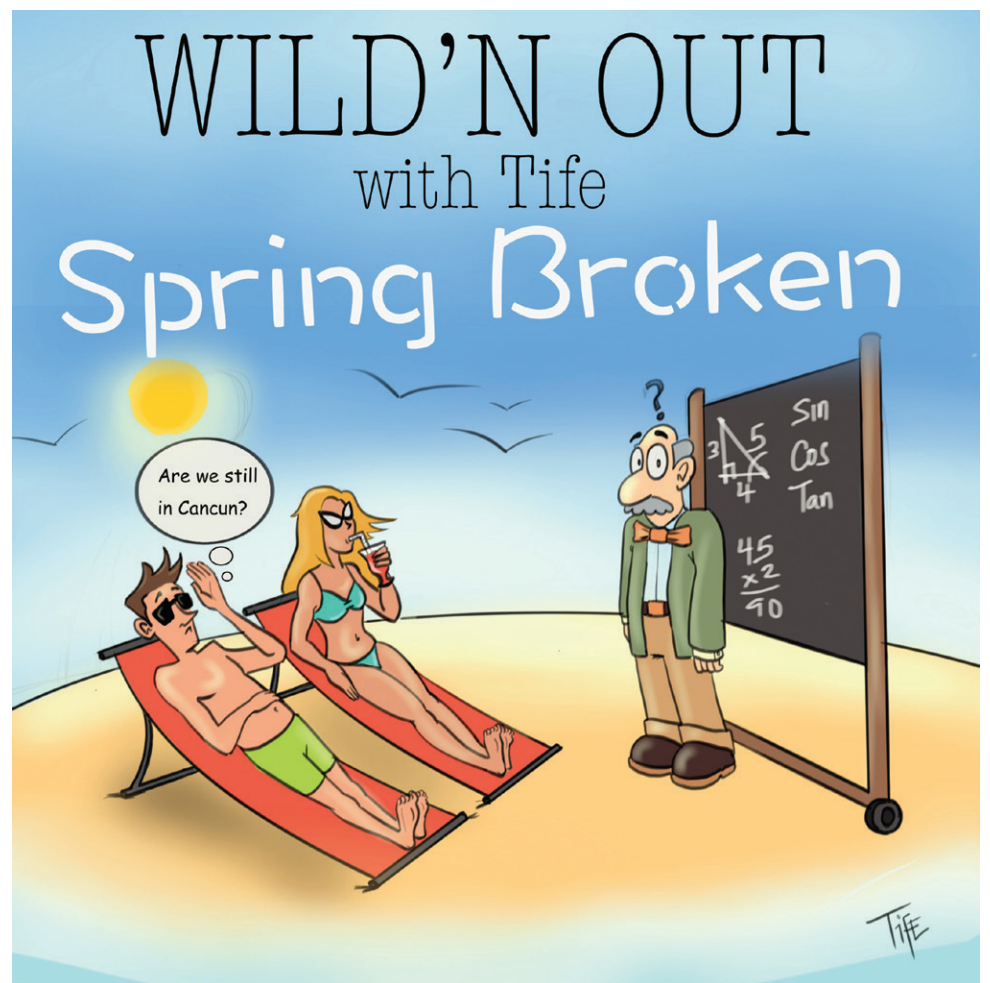
going to bold this because it's important: **It is the initiator's responsibility to ASK FOR and RECEIVE consent from the other person.** It is not enough to "think they want it" or to "read the signals" or to note the absence of any serious "No." **Yes means yes.** And yes means yes until no. And both parties are responsible to ask and to answer these questions. It doesn't have to be a contract, or come out in weird legal jargon. "Hey baby, you like that?" and "mmmm yes, I want you in me" are sexy, and count as consent.

If the initiator doesn't ask for consent, if they do not feel the need to check in with their partner, than they effectively begin seeing their partner as a means to an orgasmic end. They are not a human being because you do not consider their wants, desires and emotions important enough. It is also the responsibility of both parties to know when sloppy is too sloppy. If someone is incapacitated, they cannot give, NOR can they RECEIVE consent. Both partners are responsible for being aware of their own levels of intoxication and the other person's as well. Sorry, you don't get to have sex tonight... I promise there is always tomorrow—even tomorrow morning!

Just think about consent like this: if you're speeding and when the officer pulls you over and asks "do you know how fast you were going," you say, honestly "I don't know!" you are STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR SPEEDING. You are still fined, and you still get a ticket. Or think about it like a cup of tea: If you ask your friend if they want tea and they say "mmm, I'm alright, thanks," don't make them tea. Or if they say "yes please!" and then change their minds and leave the tea untouched, "don't force/guilt/cajole them into drinking it."

Even though it took me an entire article to explain it: consent is simple when you have the right framework. Sex shouldn't be the end-goal, sexual pleasure can be.

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The next Reformation

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Christianity pisses me off.

In 33 A.D., a carpenter living in a backwater province of the Roman Empire was crucified. Reports of his subsequent resurrection as well as his teachings inspired a new understanding of God that much of the world adheres to today. But this did not happen on a uniform track. According to the historian Phyllis Tickle, each of the subsequent 500 years saw a new period of upheaval and reform within Christianity.

Do the math. Now I'm not saying we're in the midst of a reformation right now. In fact, the reason I'm writing this today is because we *aren't* in the middle of such a reformation. The reason for this is that, in a world where people are increasingly turning away from Jesus, Christians are losing sight of Him. Christians are failing Jesus and failing the world as a result.

We live in one of the wealthiest, most powerful nations in the history of the world. We also live in a country where racism runs rampant, where women often feel unsafe going out alone at night, where LGBTQ individuals are told that 'God hates fags'—as if God could hate anyone—where poverty, homelessness, and hunger afflict every community in America. And what are Christians doing about it?

What is being done about the fact that so many Christians treat the world as an "Us versus them" battle between Christians and The Wicked Other? Who is addressing the fact that so many believe that church is the only place where God is present? Why is it that for many of us, Christianity only dictates which side to take in a political



debate?

I became a Christian on April 17, 2012. I became a Christian because I had lost my way in life and was searching for direction. I stay a Christian because I have come to experience a God that loves me more deeply than anything I can imagine and a universe knitted with precision and care by divine hands into a tapestry of subliminal beauty, endless wonder, bountiful joys, and unyielding hope for redemption in the face of hardship. Today, I want to be a pastor because

I believe that—if others want to listen—the message of true Christianity is one worth sharing.

It is that message that motivates me to write this. Jesus says the words "Follow me" 87 times in the Gospels. How can Christians follow the man who drove merchants out of the Temple in Jerusalem and not challenge a status quo built on oppression? How can Christians follow the man who told us to love our enemies while simultaneously putting up barriers that vilify the rest of the world? How can Christians love God completely and treat worship as an obligation and not a joy?

It's time that Christians work to ensure that people start seeing Christianity as less about gay marriage and more about the living God, start fighting for the down-trodden and the oppressed, and start holding each other accountable when we don't. It's time for Christians to take the status quo

and turn it upside down. It's time for a new Reformation.

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