

DUOS FOR CONSENT

The Yes and No activities were developed by La Xixa Teatre.
The verbal and non-verbal sequences were developed by Élan Interculturel and In Touch.



OVERVIEW

How to say “yes” or “no” are key skills for building healthy and fulfilling relationships. These words allow us to welcome what we like and make us happy, or to refuse what goes beyond our limits and boundaries. Yet saying “yes” or “no” is much more complex than it sounds. Are we really aware of our own desires? Do we really know when we want to say “yes” or “no”? And when we do, do we allow ourselves to do so?

This activity invites us to be more attentive to our own feelings, in order to better understand what we want. It also offers training to get rid of our own conditioning and to learn how to say “yes” or “no” when that is what we want.



LEARNING CONTEXT

This activity is designed for a face-to-face setting

DURATION

45 minutes



PARTICIPANTS

6 to 16 participants



MATERIALS

A room wide enough to allow movement

Papers and pens



OBJECTIVES

- Help gain awareness about our emotions concerning different behaviour or requests that we receive
- Build confidence in expressing whether we wish to say yes or no – verbally and non-verbally



DUOS FOR CONSENT



PREPARATION

For the “boundary” exercises create a list of instructions that you can read for participants, including items such as:

- Shaking hands
- Kiss on the cheek
- Giving a hug
- Caressing the cheek
- Kissing the shoulder
- Kissing the neck
- Touching the nose
- Putting your weight on the other person
- Smelling the neck
- Touching someone’s bottom
- Touching someone’s breast

INSTRUCTIONS STEP BY STEP



YES AND NO / 6 min

Divide the group into two parts. One group will have to say always “yes”, while the other group always has to say “no”. First invite people to just “greet” each other with the words “yes” and “no”. Encourage them to move along at a brisk pace. Using other words is not allowed. After three minutes, switch groups.

YES AND NO IN PAIRS / 4 min

Invite participants to pair up. One person, “A”, should only repeat the word “yes”. Person “B” will only say only the word “no”. A and B should play together and say these words in a dramatic way. Allow participants to experiment for two minutes and then reverse the roles. After the second two-minute interval, ask them to let their roles go.

EXPERIMENTING WITH YES AND NO THROUGH VERBAL COMMUNICATION /5 min

1. Ask participants to pair up. Pairs are placed face to face and designate one person as “A” and the other person as “B”.
2. Read an instruction from your list, such as “Shaking hands”.
3. After each instruction, first A should decide if they want to shake hands with B. If their answer is “yes”, they ask B: “May I shake your hand?” If not, they remain silent.
4. If A asks B, then it is B’s turn to decide if they also consent to shaking hands. They say either yes or no.
5. If B answers “yes”, A and B have the proposed interaction (here, they shake hands).
6. Read the full list of instructions.
7. When you have read all the items, ask A and B to change roles.

DUOS FOR CONSENT



EXPERIMENTING WITH YES AND NO THROUGH NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION /20 to 25 minutes

8. Invite participants find a new partner to pair up with and to choose which one is “A” and which is “B”.
9. A should now try to make physical contact with B without talking. B must make it clear non-verbally whether they agree with this physical contact or not. A must pay attention and adjust. Check if participants have really understood these instructions. It is probably useful if you demonstrate the activity with a co-facilitator or with one of the participants.
10. Allow two minutes for participants to explore this non-verbal mode of communication.
11. Inverse the roles for two more minutes.
12. Once the activity is complete, ask each participant to take a sheet of paper and draw two columns. In the left-hand column, they note the nonverbal signs that showed that their partner was consenting. In the right column, they note the non-verbal signs that showed that their partner did not agree to the proposed physical interaction. Give them 3-5 minutes to reflect.
13. Offer them the opportunity to pair up with the same people and check with their partner to see if the signs they interpreted as “agreeing” or “disagreeing” were correct. Let them discuss for 5-10 minutes.
14. Come back together, sit in a circle. Ask participants to share their feelings about the different experiences they have just had. To conclude, you can explain that if long-term sexual partners wish to use non-verbal sexual communication, it is important to make sure that the interpretations of “yes” and “no” are the right ones. So this is an exercise they can do with their partner to ensure that there is a good mutual understanding. They can also make up a “safety word” or “signal” to use when they feel uncomfortable or want to stop.



DUOS FOR CONSENT



DISCUSSIONS AND DEBRIEFING



Debriefing and discussion are important for two reasons: first, it may be important for participants to reflect on their experience with words, giving importance to the moments of awareness. Sharing can also help participants accept their own preferences. Plenary discussion is useful to realize that other people may have similar experiences and some also may have had quite different reactions to the activities. Plenary debriefing is also useful for the trainer to understand how participants experienced the sequence.

If you decide to do these activities one after the other, we suggest offering a bit of time for small-group debriefing followed by a short plenary discussion.

The small-group debriefing can be conducted in groups of 2 or 3. Each person has 2 minutes to share their experience, while the others give them their full attention. Participants take turns in telling their experience. This is particularly relevant if you feel that participants would be reluctant to share their feeling openly with the big group.

- In plenary, you can invite the participants to share their feelings in turn:
- Was it easy for you to say “yes” and “no”? Which were you more comfortable with?
- What physical sensations did you experience when you said “yes” and “no”?
- Were you more comfortable during the non-verbal communication exercise or the verbal communication exercise?
- Was it easier to express “yes” and “no” with words or with your body? What was most reassuring to you?

TIPS AND HINTS



“EXPERIMENTING WITH YES AND NO” SEQUENCES IN TIMES OF COVID-19 WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING:

We have tested these sequences in a workshop we held during the 2020 pandemic. We have changed some of the instructions to make them “Covid safe”, using items such as: “touch each other with your knees”, “stand back to back”, “scratch the other’s back”, etc. If you work with participants who are old enough to understand what is safe, you can invite them to take responsibility for themselves, but for younger participants, we suggest changing all items to “safe” items.

LEVEL OF TRUST REQUIRED:

This sequence works best if the items are adjusted to the level of trust in the group, so that all items are not too easy or too difficult for them. Check who your participants are, to what extent they know each other and how comfortable they are with each other, and adjust your list of instructions accordingly.

“There’s the synchronization of dance partners, the sudden identification between strangers on a plane, the solidarity of witnesses to a catastrophe, the mutual recognition of survivors of breast cancer, alcoholism, terrorism, divorce.”
Family therapist Kaethe Weingarten