

# Knowing your Yeses and your Nos AHEAD OF TIME

Now that you've identified what's most important to you in your sexual projects ([bit.ly/SexualProjectsQuiz](https://bit.ly/SexualProjectsQuiz) – *case sensitive*), it's time to define what's essential, what's acceptable, what's bonus, and what's a dealbreaker for you in sexual and relationship interactions. These can serve as a guide as you navigate relationships and communicate with another person about what's important to each of you. Take some time to reflect on the following questions and update them as you learn more about yourself, sexuality, intimacy, and relationships.

## ESSENTIAL

What do you need in a relationship or sexual interaction?  
What's important to you?  
What will support you to grow and flourish?  
(e.g., I like who I am when I'm with them; I feel safe to be vulnerable)

## ACCEPTABLE

What is acceptable to you? (perhaps it's not your preference, or it even bothers you, but you are willing to let it go or address it later)  
(e.g., annoying habits; not meeting my aesthetic ideal)

## BONUS

What would be simply fantastic?  
(e.g., they love to cook and I love to eat)

## DEALBREAKER

What are you absolutely not willing to put up with?  
(perhaps you need to address this immediately)  
(e.g., pushing or violating my boundaries; starting to compromise my values)

# Knowing your Yeses and your Nos IN THE MOMENT

Some yeses and nos you can determine ahead of time; other yeses and nos you need to discern in the moment. This is the skill of attunement: moment to moment awareness of what's going on inside you and what's going on inside the other person, and responding accordingly. Notice where there's dissonance. Communicate to create consonance.

It's a 3-step process:

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- 1) **Attune to you. Pay attention** to what you feel in your body. Do you feel an opening, excitement, interest, ease, moving closer? (that may be a yes!) Or do you feel a closing, dread, discomfort, shutting down, pulling away? (that may be a no!)

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  - 2) **Attune to the other person. Pay attention** to what the other person is experiencing. Are they opening, excited, interested, at ease, moving closer? (that may be a yes!) Or are they closing, reluctant, uncomfortable, shutting down, pulling away? (that may be a no!)

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  - 3) **Communicate and clarify.** Once you become aware of what feels true inside of you, the next step is to express it. Keep it simple: say what you're thinking and feeling. Then, share what you observe about them and ask a clarifying question, such as, "I notice \_\_\_\_\_. Are you feeling \_\_\_\_\_?" Some yeses and nos are straightforward; some you will need to explore in conversation with each person sharing how they feel and what they each want. There's always more to the story! If the other person can't have an open conversation—or doesn't try—that may be a sign that this relationship lacks the potential for growth.

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## Tips

*Slow down.* Maybe even stop. Slowing down gives us space to discern what we're feeling.

Ask, "What am I feeling?" Fill in the blank:

- My head is saying ...
- My heart is saying ...
- My gut is saying ...
- My genitals are saying ...

Where is there dissonance among these "voices"? Where is there consonance?

Which of these voices do you need to honor right now?