



**From Our
Table To
Yours**

**A Zine On
Consent & Boundaries**

**South Asian
SOAR**

From Our Table To Yours
A Zine on Consent & Boundaries
Written by SOAR's Reproductive Justice Pod
Published by South Asian SOAR in 2024



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Why we created a zine

We, the authors, are a collective of survivors and allies organizing with South Asian SOAR to create a future free from violence. We come from different backgrounds and are united by our motivation to support our culture in *promoting healthy relationships* and *reproductive justice*. We believe one way to achieve our vision is to resource and encourage our community to have difficult conversations.

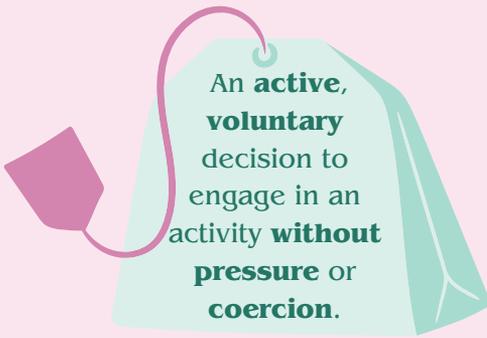
We've found that the hardest conversations are often the most foundational. For example, topics like consent and boundaries can feel abstract when consent education is not uniform and sometimes absent. If we make consent education accessible and engaging, we can begin other discussions related to sexual and reproductive wellness. Many of us are the ones who try to start these dialogues; sometimes they land, and sometimes they don't. But we stand in solidarity with all the other "pot-stirrers" and "boat-rockers" who create and hold spaces to compassionately challenge our loved ones to destigmatize important conversations.

This zine is our loving offering to our communities, based on our collective experiences of learning about consent, setting boundaries, and navigating tensions with loved ones. We invite you to explore this zine with us and hope it supports you in bringing the conversation home. All food puns are intended!

What is Consent?

We often hear about consent in the context of sex and romantic relationships. You might have also learned that consent must be given enthusiastically. However, emphasizing consent in only these ways limits how and where we practice it.

So how do we define consent?



True consent is given **freely** and can be **withdrawn at any time.** It's not about saying "yes" once but about open and **ongoing dialogue.**

Consent & Reproductive Justice

Reproductive justice ensures everyone has control over their bodies and reproductive decisions, including the right to nurture their children in safe, healthy environments. Consent is critical for safety and bodily autonomy.

We want to achieve
Reproductive Justice

“when all people have the social, political, and economic power, rights, access, and resources they need to make their own decisions about their bodies, genders, sexualities, families, and lives.” ([Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice](#))

But we are experiencing
Reproductive oppression

The control and exploitation of individuals “through our bodies, sexuality, labor, and reproduction (both biological and social) by families, communities, institutions and society.” ([Loretta Ross of SisterSong](#))

A key difference between our hopes and our reality is consent. Without consent, we face reproductive oppression; with consent, we move toward reproductive justice.

In this zine, we use consent as a lens to understand and address the root causes of harm and violence.

What are Boundaries ?

Boundaries are limits we set around our space, time, and relationships that empower us to define our needs, express our desires, and safeguard our autonomy. Navigating boundaries requires active listening, empathy, and ongoing communication to ensure the safety and respect of everyone involved. **So what are the types of boundaries?**

Emotional boundaries: Our feelings, thoughts, and emotions.

It's okay to limit what we share with others and assert our right to privacy. Protecting our emotional boundaries allows us to maintain our emotional well-being.

Physical boundaries: The space around our bodies.

It's important to communicate our comfort levels with touch and closeness. Respecting physical boundaries is crucial to foster trust and intimacy in relationships.

Time boundaries: How we spend our time.

Our time is precious, and setting boundaries around it is essential. Whether it's saying no to additional responsibilities or finding time for self-care, honoring our time boundaries is crucial for maintaining balance in our lives.

Consent and Boundaries in Different Contexts

We're serving up our musings on consent and boundaries in a four-course meal based on the nested "Social Ecological Model," which frames consent and boundaries at different levels. Many factors affect how and when consent is or is not practiced, and this model helps illustrate how everyone and everything, from our families to our government, play a role.



Societal Level:
Revealing how power dynamics undermine consent and lead to systemic inequities



Community Level: Shaping norms and values about consent and boundaries within communities



Interpersonal Level: Giving and receiving consent and boundaries with others



Individual Level: Identifying our needs and boundaries as individuals

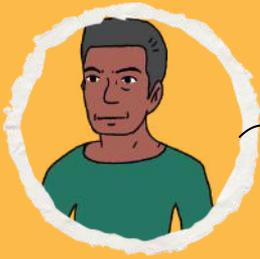
Together, we will explore what consent looks like, why boundaries are important, and how to communicate them in everyday life.

Whether in relationships, friendships, or everyday interactions, understanding and respecting consent and boundaries helps create a safer, more respectful world.



To support your use of the zine, we have included reflection questions, exercises, and frameworks of consent for you to engage with. Between each section, we share the story of one family's conversations about consent and boundaries. By including these stories, we hope to make this information more digestible! While they might not perfectly mirror your own family and community dynamics, we hope they challenge common assumptions about how people of different generations and perspectives engage in brave conversations.

Meet the Zine 's Family!



Shams (he/him)
aka Dada & Abbu
Loves: Dosas & hugs
Struggles with: Emotionally charged conversations



Meera (she/her)
aka Dadi & Amma
Loves: TV serials & family time
Struggles with: Living with chronic pain



Veer (he/they)
aka Appa
Loves: Cooking & parties
Struggles with: Overexplaining



Anu (they/them)
aka Mapa
Loves: Gossiping & Politics
Struggles with: Oversharing



Zehra (she/her)
Loves: Pink & School
Struggles with: Expectations from elders

Setting the table

Meera and Shams are visiting Veer, Anu, and Zehra for a family dinner. Just like many family gatherings, the table is set with delicious food, lively chatter, and a sprinkle of tension. Conversations flow freely, peppered with the usual nosy questions and well-meaning advice. But this time, the family dives into a topic that's as complex as it is important: consent and boundaries. Through a series of honest and heartfelt moments, they explore what consent and boundaries look like in everyday life. From planning parties to discussing military occupation, each interaction is a learning moment wrapped in love and respect. Join the family as they spice up their understanding of consent and boundaries, one candid conversation at a time.

This family's boundaries and perspectives are not inclusive of every South Asian person's experiences, and we know that these conversations can be harder in practice! Still, we hope our zine will inspire you to bring tough conversations to your dinner table.

Individual Level

In many South Asian cultures, consent and boundaries may feel individualized and at odds with cultural norms. Balancing familial expectations with our desire to care for our community can sometimes blur boundaries.

However, asserting boundaries is not a sign of disrespect: it is an act of **self-care** and **self-respect**. For each individual, finding a balance between cultural and personal values is a natural part of learning about consent and boundaries.

While these conversations may feel awkward, they are essential to creating healthy relationships with ourselves and others.



In this zine, we leverage our collectivist cultures by centering intergenerational conversations. But before we can do that, it's important to reflect on our own needs and understandings of consent and boundaries.

EXERCISE 1: Reflecting & Identifying Your Boundaries

These questions can help you understand and communicate your own boundaries and recognize when they are being crossed:

- * **What are your bodily sensations?** Does your chest tighten? How does it feel to take a deep breath? Do you feel hungry, tired, or low on energy?
- * **How are you feeling emotionally?** Are you frustrated, nervous, confused? Are you excited or on edge?
- * **Identifying your boundaries.** How many of your actions feel performative or obligatory? Do your responsibilities align with your true desires?
- * **Know your audience.** Who are you communicating your boundary to? What beliefs and values do you share with them? Where might you differ?

Identifying and understanding your boundaries is one of the first steps in nurturing your well-being. This also applies to your sexual and reproductive boundaries. Knowing your desires and limits can help you make informed decisions that align with you.

EXERCISE 2: Exploring Your Sexual & Reproductive Wellness

* **Being mindful of activators.** This process may bring up strong emotions or memories, so be gentle and patient with yourself as you navigate these feelings.

- Take a break to engage in grounding exercises; reach out to a trusted friend, therapist, or support group; or [explore these healing resources](#).

* **Starting with self-reflection.**

- What does sexual wellness mean to you?
- What steps have you taken to identify and advocate for your sexual needs and desires?
- What are your reproductive health priorities?
- How do you navigate cultural expectations while honoring your sexual boundaries and desires?



* **Exploring your body.** In a safe and comfortable space, take time to explore and celebrate your unique desires, sensations, and pleasures.

Gentle reminder:

Pleasure is a *natural* and *essential* part of sexual wellness.

* **Prioritizing your reproductive health.** Schedule regular check-ups with your healthcare provider, discuss contraception that aligns with your goals, and stay informed about STI prevention and testing.

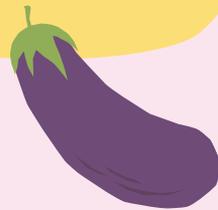
- If possible, find a trauma-informed provider who helps you feel safe, respected, and heard.

* **Practicing safer sex.** Safe sex isn't just about preventing infections but also about promoting trust, communication, and mutual respect.

Safer sex methods:

Using condoms or dental dams, getting regularly tested for STIs, openly discussing sexual health, comfort levels, consent, and sexual boundaries with your partner(s)

* **Seeking support & resources.** You are not alone. There are [trauma-informed resources](#) to support you. ❤️



Celebrating your journey.

Count all your wins, even if they seem small! Celebrate the beauty and resilience of your body and spirit. You deserve to feel *empowered and fulfilled* in every aspect of your life.

FRAMEWORK: Consent Chai

Like the perfect cup of chai, consent is about balance and warmth. Let's dive into the blend of consent and chai and brew up some insights together.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of Communication
- 2 teaspoons of Respect
- A pinch of Boundaries
- A dash of Active Listening
- A generous sprinkle of Empathy



Instructions:

- 1. Start with a base of Communication.** Just like brewing chai, clear communication lays the foundation for healthy relationships. Speak openly and honestly about your intentions, desires, and limits. It's okay if you are unsure. Stopping and asking is always appreciated!
- 2. Add Respect.** Respect is the sweetener that makes everything better. Treat people with kindness, honor their autonomy, and value their choices. Remember, respect is non-negotiable.
- 3. Sprinkle in some Boundaries.** Boundaries are like the spices in chai: they add flavor and depth. Respect people's boundaries and communicate your own. Consent thrives when boundaries are acknowledged and honored.



FRAMEWORK: Consent Chai

4. **Stir in Active Listening.** Just as you would patiently brew chai, listen attentively to people. Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, and be responsive to their needs.

5. **Finally, add a generous dose of Empathy.** Empathy is the secret ingredient that enhances each sip of chai. Put yourself in the other person's shoes, and strive to understand their perspective. Empathy fosters connection and builds trust—essential ingredients for consensual relationships.

Sip responsibly:

Consent is not a one-time event—it's an ongoing dialogue. Like drinking a cup of chai, consent requires mindfulness, presence, and mutual enjoyment. Take the time to check in with your partner.



Remember, consent should *never* be forced or assumed; it's okay to say no, and it's essential to respect your partner's decision. Everyone has the right to choose their own brew.





Hayo, my back isn't doing well today, and this tiger balm isn't helping. But dinner isn't ready, and Veer is so excited to eat my food.

I am sooooo excited to eat Amma's cooking

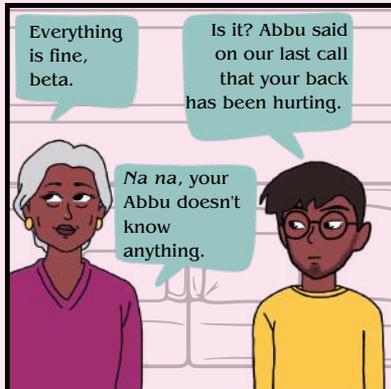
Oof, nobody can do this besides me, but my back won't let me stand for too long.



Oh no, maybe he thinks I can't do this. I need a break, but Veer will be disappointed.

Amma, let me help you with these bags. How are you feeling?

This pain is nothing I haven't dealt with before. He'll stop asking soon enough.



Everything is fine, beta.

Is it? Abbu said on our last call that your back has been hurting.

Na na, your Abbu doesn't know anything.

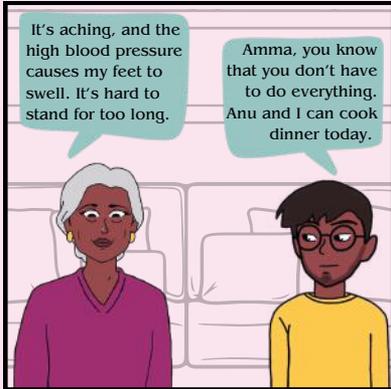


I feel so guilty. But he is right. It is so hard to walk. A break might be nice. And he's my son. Maybe I can tell him, and it will be ok.



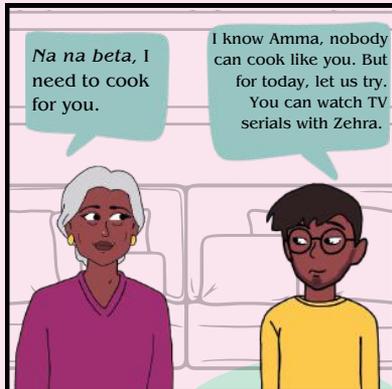
Oh beta, you know with this old age, my body is not the same anymore.

Amma, can you please tell me what's wrong? You're holding your back and limping.



It's aching, and the high blood pressure causes my feet to swell. It's hard to stand for too long.

Amma, you know that you don't have to do everything. Anu and I can cook dinner today.



Na na beta, I need to cook for you.

I know Amma, nobody can cook like you. But for today, let us try. You can watch TV serials with Zehra.



Are you sure beta?

Yes! Anyways, we need to learn some of your recipes. We can't live off pasta!

Thank you, beta.



Veer is a great son

But I don't like how cooking makes my body feel now.

But I am older ... maybe it doesn't need to be a duty?

But I wish I didn't need his help.

I feel ashamed that I can't make my family dinner.

Maybe I can just cook when I feel well and when it makes me happy..

It's nice to know that my family will help me through my pain

Interpersonal Level

Fostering a healthy relationship with yourself is an important step in building healthy relationships with others, and healthy relationships with others help sustain the relationship you keep with yourself.

We, as humans, are social creatures. The health and strength of our relationships play an important role in determining our quality of life. Our lives consist of many relationships—family, friends, colleagues and peers, and sexual and romantic partners. The social norms of your community may place more weight on a particular bond; in the South Asian diaspora, biological family may take precedence over other relationships. From the time we are born, the interactions we have with others influence how we set boundaries, advocate for ourselves, and resolve conflict.

We set boundaries all the time, even if we don't name them as such. The lines we draw and the ways we enforce them depend on the relationship. **Power** dynamics, **cultural context**, and the strength of the **connection** influence what boundaries we will set and how we will move forward if they are crossed.



Assumed Roles & Assumed Consent

We live in a system with many barriers between us and our autonomy, making it difficult to break and replace patterns that no longer serve us. Work and school are institutions that tie our livelihood to following certain rules, requiring us to sacrifice our time and labor in exchange for food, shelter, and other material needs.

The community we live in has its own hierarchy. Elders, teachers, and religious leaders are often held in high esteem, sometimes making it uncomfortable to assert yourself in their presence. The freedom with which we can give consent and set boundaries is limited in these spaces, especially with folks higher in the power structure.

Finally, let's look at the loved ones who hold us through our low points and celebrate our triumphs. Because these relationships carry more weight in our lives, the process of setting new boundaries and incorporating consent practices can be frustrating. One party may find it difficult to understand why changes are necessary, especially when some of these patterns are deeply ingrained. **Of course, these are also the relationships where this work will have the most profound impact.**

Despite the barriers, incorporating consent practices into our lives might be easier if we practice them with people who treat us with patience and kindness. In general, we tend to give more grace and respect towards other people's boundaries than we do to our own.

Consent and Boundaries for Sexual Health

All of us are different - our bodies work in similar, but unique ways. Our wants and needs may overlap, but our methods of meeting them often vary. Practicing consent is about ongoing communication, making sure you and your partner are on the same page. This is important in all aspects of our lives, and especially important when it comes to sex!

Reflection Question

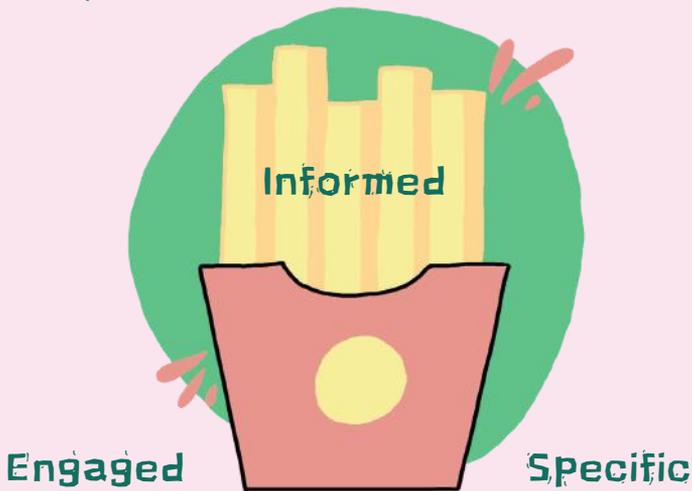
Identify a time when you communicated a physical or emotional boundary to someone. How did you feel before and after setting a boundary? What helped you it?



CONSENT MODEL: FRIES* (MASALA STYLE)

Freely Given

Reversible



Consent is more than 'yes' or 'no'. Certain ingredients should be used to make an interaction truly consensual.

The **Masala FRIES** framework provides a guide for evaluating our interactions and making changes to continue practicing consent.

*Masala FRIES is an adapted version of [Planned Parenthood's FRIES model](#).

FRIES (MASALA STYLE)

* **Freely Given:** In order to consent to something, you must be able to answer free from coercion, such as the **threat of retaliation** or **repetitive insistence**. Otherwise, the agreement is non-consensual:

→ An employee agrees to work late for fear of getting fired.

A young girl agrees to an arranged marriage due to constant pressure from her elders.



There is a difference between abuse of power and negotiating conditions:

Agreeing to buy your child a new phone if they ace their exams is a nice way to **motivate** them.

Telling your child they won't be allowed to see their friends unless they sign up for AP Biology leaves little room for negotiation and is **coercive**.

FRIES (MASALA STYLE)

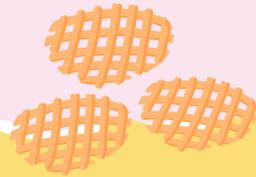
* **Reversible:** We are all fluid beings: our wants, needs, and desires can shift over minutes, days, and years. Giving someone the space to change their mind respects their **agency**. We all have the right to **change our minds**, and it's important to foster an environment where people feel comfortable doing so:

Your boyfriend told you he's ready to have sex, but the day comes, and he's feeling anxious.

Your daughter promised she would attend a function with you, but she's exhausted from school or just having a bad day.



Remaining flexible when possible creates a safer space for people to communicate shifts in mood and capacity. Of course, honoring your word is important too, which is why everyone involved should be **informed** and **engaged** when making a decision. Give time to consider whether a request is something they **desire** and within their **capacity**.



FRIES (MASALA STYLE)

* **Informed:** The medical field uses the term ‘informed consent’—the idea that a patient must understand the treatment being offered to them before they can agree to it. This same guideline applies to the rest of us:

Your child should understand the academic rigor that will come with taking advanced level classes, and the potential setbacks of not taking them.

Your girlfriend should know what to expect when she is going to your family’s house for the first time.



Invite **curiosity!** Give each other space to ask questions. You might find that you made an assumption or that you define something differently.

For example, when you ask your partner if they want to have sex, what physical acts are you including in that term?

FRIES (MASALA STYLE)

* **Engaged:** Some decisions can be made in a moment, and others demand our full attention. Everyone is responsible for making sure that all parties are **mentally present** for a discussion:

When you're preparing food for 50 guests who are due to arrive in an hour, you probably aren't in the right headspace to make a large financial decision.

If you've just failed your exams and are feeling numb, you might not be fully present when your partner initiates intimacy.



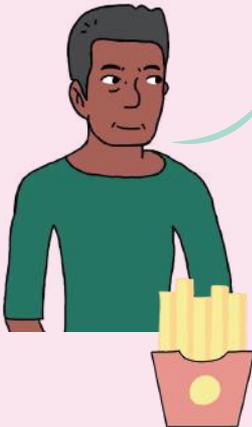
Let's be honest, life is distracting and overwhelming at times, so Veer and I like to schedule important discussions. Even though my instinct is to bring my thoughts up in the moment, I've learned to give him a heads up about what I want to talk about without diving into a big talk.

FRIES (MASALA STYLE)

* **Specific:** The decision is in the details. We may speak the same language, but words carry different weight and **implications** for each of us.

What do you have in mind when you ask your friend to hang out for a couple hours?

What **expectations** do you have from someone you call your girlfriend/boyfriend/partner?



If Meera asks me to go for a walk, I will usually say yes! If she forgets to mention that the walk is 3 hours long, I will be quite upset halfway through. BUT if Meera tells me it's 3 hours and there is a delicious dosa spot at the 2 hour mark, I will have something to look forward to. These details can sweeten the decision making process.



* **Masala:** Just like we have our own flavor preferences, we have our own ways of showing love and care for one another. Invite yourself to consider how you can use the ingredients above in your own way.

Keep in mind your Masala won't always sit well with others! You may have to adjust from time to time and discover ways to do so without compromising your own needs.

It ain't desi if it ain't spicy!

Don't forget to take a pepto, Appa!



The idea of trying to include all of these ingredients in your interactions may seem overwhelming—understandably so. Pick one or two that speak to you and start there. As you practice, they will become an organic part of your communication, and incorporating the rest will come more naturally.

Nonverbal Indicators of Consent



Body language:

Is your friend hunching their shoulders with their head down, when they usually stand tall and relaxed? They might not be in the best headspace to make important decisions or give consent.



Prosody:

Prosody is how someone says something. Is your friend's voice pitched higher than normal? Are they mumbling? What words or syllables did they put more emphasis on? They might not be in agreement with what you're discussing and feel awkward about sharing this directly.



Eye contact: Does your friend have a steady gaze when you're conversing? If their eyes are glazed over, looking down, or wandering, they might be uncomfortable or not present at the moment.



All these behaviors mean something, but what they mean differs from person to person. Your brother may make steady eye contact when actively listening, but your friend may choose to close their eyes to focus on your voice. Oftentimes, shifts in behavior can indicate more than the behavior itself.

I know we've been talking about having sex for a while. Right now, I'm getting the sense that you're not fully comfortable with what we're doing. How are you feeling?



Sometimes, a person's nonverbal indicators of consent may not match what they are telling you with their words. This is a good time to pause and check in. Initiate a conversation by naming what you've observed.



Discussing Boundaries, Sex, and Relationships



Most of us are conditioned to avoid discussing these topics, which makes talking about them tricky to navigate. Here are a few ways to facilitate a smoother, more fruitful conversation!



Assess your needs

Get in touch with how you are feeling, it may be a bodily sensation. Does your chest tighten? Are you low on energy? What are your needs? Do you need emotional support?



Practice open communication

Talk to your partners about your desires, boundaries, and concerns. Take a moment to reflect on what that looks like for you.



*What are some of your communication preferences?
What, if any, communication expectations do you have of the people in your life?*

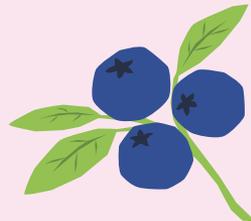
* **"I" statements**

This is one of those moments when centering yourself is not only ok, it is essential. You are talking about YOUR boundaries, YOUR needs, YOUR desires. Frame it as such.

*centering your experience
instead of being accusatory*



*voicing your own desires instead of
pointing to the behaviors of others*



 **Acknowledge the discomfort**

These conversations can be awkward. **That is okay.** Release the tension in the room by acknowledging that it is present. It allows the other person to relax a bit more as well, creating a shared experience of navigating something new together.

 **Express your appreciation**

Show sincere gratitude to and recognize their efforts of the other person. Our loved ones often feel they are coming from a place of care, (even if it is unsolicited) and acknowledging this can strengthen your connection and can make your boundary sound better. Let them know how much you value their support and help create a positive atmosphere that allows you to steer the conversation.

 **Invite grace and compassion**

People tend to misspeak when discussing uncomfortable or taboo topics. Assume positive intent; give yourself and others the space to gather their thoughts before speaking. Be forgiving of verbal blunders (not to be confused with intentionally hurtful or bad-faith statements).

 **Say no when necessary**

We have to learn to say no rather than spreading ourselves too thin and feeling overwhelmed. This can be done gently by stating you want to do certain tasks or be there for someone, but you do not have the bandwidth right now.

RESPECTING OTHERS' BOUNDARIES



Just as we expect others to respect our boundaries, it's important to honor the boundaries of those around us. Listen actively, ask for consent, and refrain from pressuring others to violate their boundaries.

Respecting others' boundaries is a cornerstone of healthy relationships and mutual respect.



EXERCISE 1:

Consent & Boundaries in the Home

Defining your boundaries within your living space is a good introduction to communicating your needs and being cognizant of other people's preferences.

Instructions:

1. On a piece of paper, sketch a quick floorplan of your home.
2. Inside the home, include lines/boxes that represent the different rooms and spaces in the home.
3. Label all of the rooms and spaces.
 - Example: Bedroom 1, Bedroom 2, Kitchen, Bathroom, Living room
4. Next, get 3 different colored pens or markers. Choose one color for **your personal areas** in the home, a second color for **others' personal areas** in the home, and a third color for any **shared living areas** in the home.
5. Use these colors to color code the different parts of your home's drawing.
6. Lastly, in each space write 2-3 rules you have for interacting with others in your home.
 - Example: knock before entering, ask before borrowing anything, clean up after cooking.

Zehra 's Visual Example



Family Room

Ask Appa or Mapa
to watch TV

Kitchen

Ask to use
knives

Put dishes in the
sink after eating

Close snack
bags when
we're done

Share blankets

Put away toys
after playing

Bathroom

Don't leave the
seat up, Appa!

Wash my
hands

My (Zehra's) Room

Make my bed

Ask to come in

Appa & Mapa's Room

Ask to sleep
over

Put away
laundry

EXERCISE 2:

Saying ‘ No ’ Role-Play

Asking for consent, giving consent, and setting boundaries may feel uncomfortable at times. Practicing these skills can help you build healthier relationships with yourself and others. As you practice this exercise, remember that “No.” is a complete sentence.

Ingredients:

A partner to role-play with

- Alternatively, you can try this with a mirror or phone camera

A timer

Instructions:

1. In this exercise, you and your partner will take turns asking each other for permission or making requests. For this exercise, assume that any request you make will **not** be fulfilled. Still, these should be lighter requests.

- Example: “Will you go for a walk with me?” or “Can I make you dinner?”

2. To the person being asked: After hearing the question, take a breath as you process the request, and respond with a simple “No”

- You can tailor your ‘no’ however it feels good, but keep it direct and resist the urge to explain your answer.

3. To the person asking the question: After hearing 'no', take a breath and respond with an expression of gratitude.

◦ Here's a sample:

Person A: Can I show you a picture of my cat?

Person B: No.

Person A: Thank you for telling me.

4. Set a timer for 1 minute. One person will ask the questions, and the other will respond to them. After 1 minute, switch roles.

Things to remember:

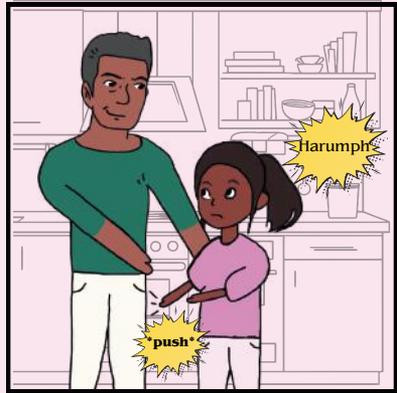
There will be requests you want to say 'yes' to. Notice if it feels different in your body when denying the requests you want to agree to vs. ones you don't.

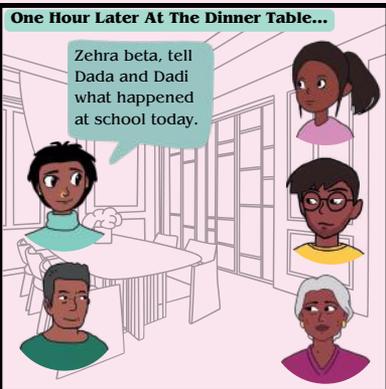


After a few rounds of role-playing, take time to debrief:

How does it feel to say 'no'? To hear 'no'?

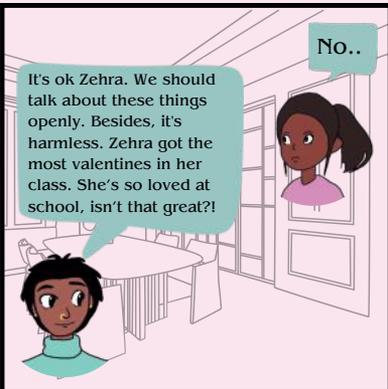
How does it feel to acknowledge and express gratitude for someone's 'no'? To receive gratitude for your 'no'?





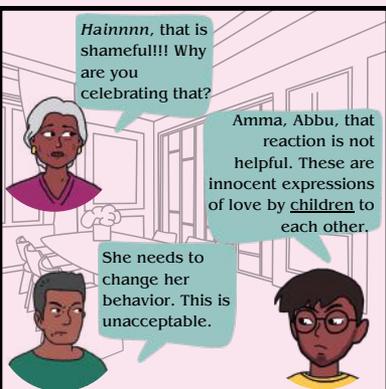
One Hour Later At The Dinner Table...

Zehra beta, tell Dada and Dadi what happened at school today.



It's ok Zehra. We should talk about these things openly. Besides, it's harmless. Zehra got the most valentines in her class. She's so loved at school, isn't that great?!

No..



Hainnnn, that is shameful!!! Why are you celebrating that?

Amma, Abbu, that reaction is not helpful. These are innocent expressions of love by children to each other.

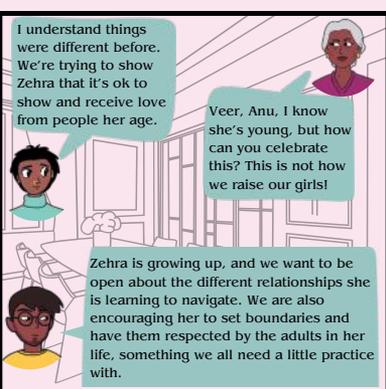
She needs to change her behavior. This is unacceptable.



Wait, we're still eating!

I don't want to talk about this! Ugh, nobody listens to me. I'm going to my room!

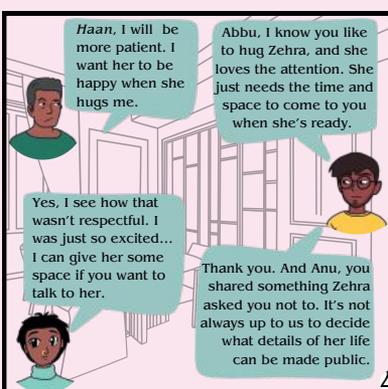
It's ok beta, go ahead.



I understand things were different before. We're trying to show Zehra that it's ok to show and receive love from people her age.

Veer, Anu, I know she's young, but how can you celebrate this? This is not how we raise our girls!

Zehra is growing up, and we want to be open about the different relationships she is learning to navigate. We are also encouraging her to set boundaries and have them respected by the adults in her life, something we all need a little practice with.

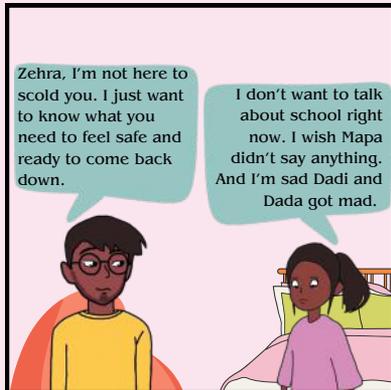


Haan, I will be more patient. I want her to be happy when she hugs me.

Abbu, I know you like to hug Zehra, and she loves the attention. She just needs the time and space to come to you when she's ready.

Yes, I see how that wasn't respectful. I was just so excited... I can give her some space if you want to talk to her.

Thank you. And Anu, you shared something Zehra asked you not to. It's not always up to us to decide what details of her life can be made public.



Community Level

Now that we've explored how consent and boundaries can strengthen your relationship with yourself and others, let's think about the role our communities play.

As a part of the South Asian diaspora, community values often shape our interactions.

It's important to think about consent not just on a personal level but also in the context of our shared beliefs and social dynamics. By normalizing consent in our communities, we can continue to build a culture where respect, consent, and mutual understanding are the foundations of healthy relationships.



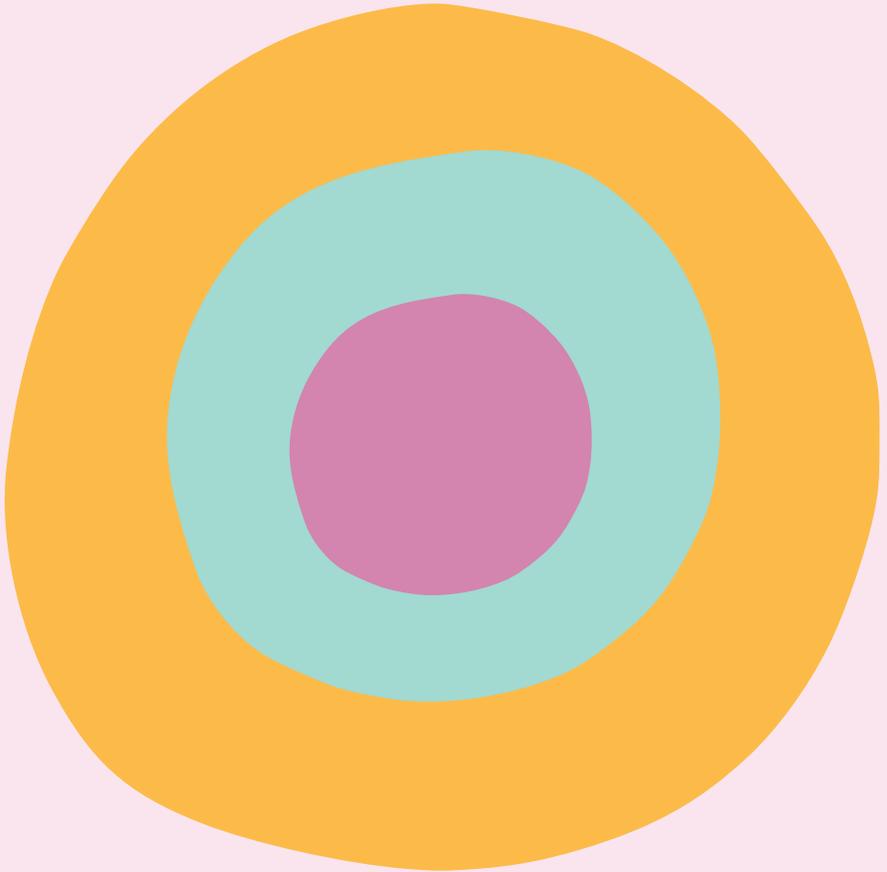
EXERCISE 1: Community Mapping



Think about the different spaces and groups that are a part of your life. This could be a religious space, a student club, a classroom, or a dance group. Then, use the following prompts to fill out the circle on the next page.

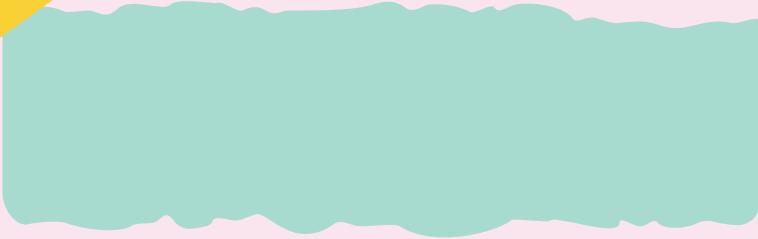
- * In the **pink** circle, write the names of the people that you are closest to—this could be biological or chosen family, best friends, or a mentor.
- * In the **blue** circle, write the groups or communities you are closest to. These might be the ones you feel the most safe in or the ones you have been a part of for a long time.
- * In the **yellow** circle, write the names of groups or spaces that you are a part of but may not be the closest to.

Community Mapping Worksheet



EXERCISE 2: Reflection Questions

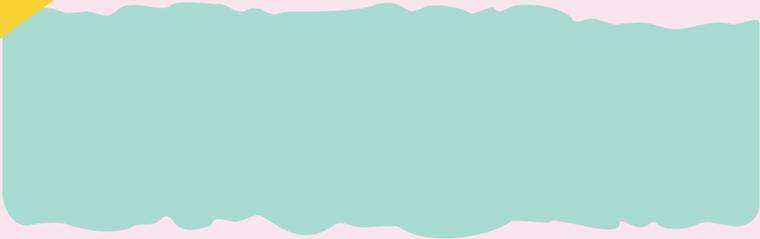
What messages about consent, boundaries, and bodily autonomy have you grown up with, if any? This could be messages from family, friends, school, or media. What was emphasized, and what was missing from these messages?



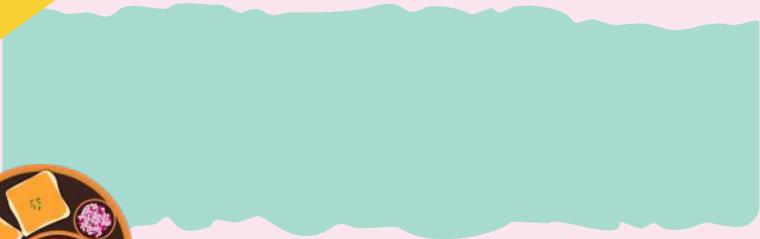
How have cultural values or institutions, such as schools or places of worship, helped or hindered your understanding of these concepts? How have they impacted your ability to seek help when boundaries are broken?



What do consent and boundaries look like currently in your communities? How can you introduce consent and your boundaries into your conversations with others?



What type of support do you need from your community to feel more motivated to discuss consent, boundaries, and seeking help?



FRAMEWORK: Thali of Accountability

Now that we've reflected on messages we've learned and practiced about consent and boundaries in our communities, let's think about our communities' roles in upholding a culture of consent.

We all have a role in upholding consent, boundaries, and safety, and we are all accountable when those aren't upheld. We call this community accountability—a strategy for engaging a community to be responsible for each other instead of relying on police and prisons, which often causes more harm.

Specifically for survivors of violence, such as gender-based violence, there is often a binary choice of doing nothing or reporting harm to the police. We have the opportunity to **imagine** an **alternative** path to healing and justice.

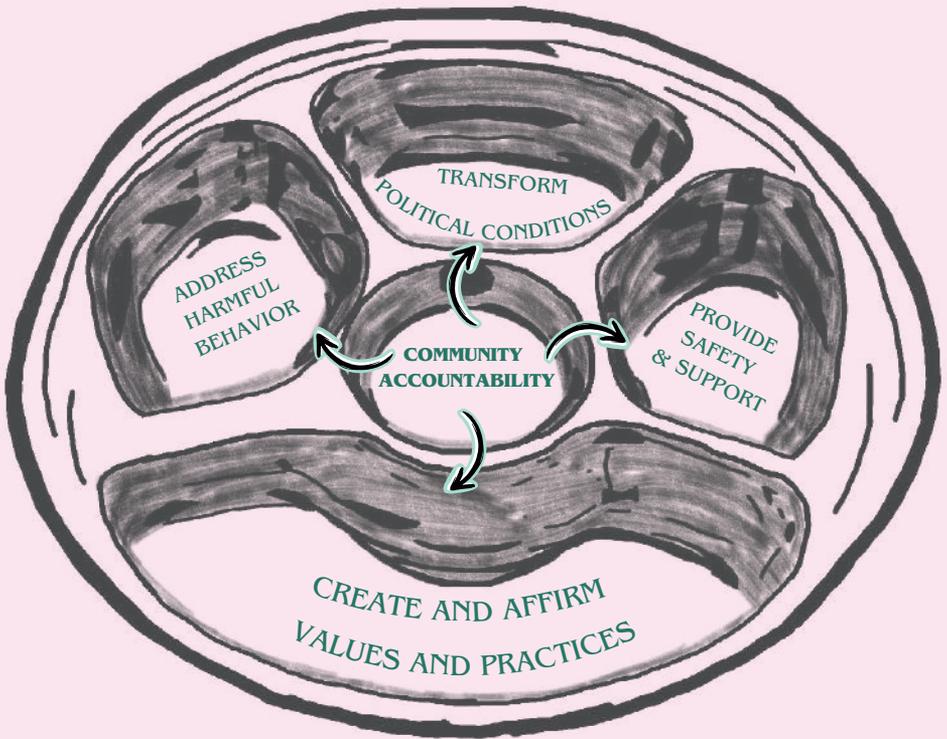


Survivors of violence in our communities are not required to begin accountability processes.

Anyone can start holding others and themselves accountable to prevent and address harm. To read more about alternative forms of justice, check out [SOAR's Transformative Justice Workbook](#).

Thali of Accountability

The Thali of Accountability* is a model to both prevent and address violence within our communities.



*Adapted from [INCITE!: Critical Intersection of Gender Violence & State Violence](#)

* **Create and affirm values and practices:** The foundation of how we form systems of accountability.

- We need to create and affirm values and practices that address harm and encourage safety, support, and accountability.



Reflect: Does your community have shared understandings of consent and boundaries? What is needed to create those?

* **Address harmful behavior:** Working with those who cause harm.

- We need to develop sustainable strategies for community members to acknowledge their actions and transform their behavior.



Reflect: What are some rules or guidelines you follow? What happens when they are broken by you or others?

* **Provide safety and support:** Learning from those impacted by harm.

- We also need to develop strategies to provide community members who have been violently targeted with safety and support in a way that respects their self-determination.



Reflect: Who or what makes you feel like you belong and are supported in a space? Who or what makes it difficult to feel belonging or support?

* **Transforming political conditions:** Identifying the root causes of harm.

- We can commit to the ongoing development of the community and its members by thinking about the systems of oppression and pathways toward liberation (see more in the societal level).



Reflect: Who holds the power? Who does not? How does this impact how you show up in these spaces?

Amma, I heard you're having a New Year's Eve party. Do you need help with the setup?



Oh yes, beta. It's a kitty party, but I'd love your help setting up. I asked the guests if you could come, and they all said yes! Would you like to stay for the party?



We'll have a table of bindis at the entrance. As each person walks in, I'll ask their comfort with distance and touch. Guests will wear a red bindi if they want to socially distance and avoid physical greetings. Or they can wear a yellow bindi if they're comfortable with standing closer and elbow bump greetings. And for guests okay with being close and hugging, they wear a green bindi.



A kitty party is a social gathering popular among South Asian women that dates back to the mid-20th century. It began as a way for women to connect outside the home and gain some financial independence by pooling savings.

Thanks for asking the guests if they're okay with me coming. I know Kitty parties are typically for women-aligned people, so I appreciate their consent! I'd love to come, but only if we can have some COVID safety precautions. What do you think about asking people to mask up and use a "traffic light bindi system"?



Masking is a good idea, but what's a "traffic light bindi system"?



That's a wonderful idea! I've been careful because of my health but nervous about the party because Shilpa Aunty is a hugger. This is perfect to make sure everyone feels safe. Can you buy the bindis and create a sign to explain this to the guests?



Absolutely!



Traffic Light Bindi System



No touch
Social distance



Light touch (elbow bumps)
Closer distance



Comfortable with any touch
and distance





Societal Level

Where there is an imbalance of power, true consent & autonomy cannot exist

At the societal level, consent goes beyond personal interactions and involves how entire communities and populations are treated. Power imbalances manifest as harm rooted in exploitation - *for example, resource extraction, economic control, forced labor, cultural erasure, state sanctioned violence*

Forced occupation and colonization

When we consider consent on a societal level, we might initially think about cultural narratives, like those often seen in Bollywood, where consent is rarely discussed or shown. In this section, we, instead, want to focus on issues that are urgent for our community to confront—specifically, global violence that arises from a lack of consent. We will do a deep dive into consent as it relates to the occupations of Kashmir and Palestine.

When autonomy is taken away on a larger scale, it manifests as systemic oppression, including violence, occupation, and the exploitation of lands, resources, and people. Examining global issues through the lens of consent helps us better understand them and have meaningful conversations in our communities.

Societal Level

Land Back movements around the world, including in the U.S., are about restoring consent and autonomy to Indigenous peoples. We the authors, as South Asian immigrants living on the stolen land of Turtle Island known as the U.S., must recognize our place as **settlers*** within an imperialist nation. While our own ancestors also faced colonization, we now live in a country built on the occupation of Native lands and the enslaved labor of Black people.

Many of the resources we have access to in the U.S. comes from the continued exploitation of lands in Africa, South America, and Asia. **By reflecting on our own power and privilege, we can practice consent in our daily lives by supporting movements that seek justice for these communities.**



Image from 2024 pro-Palestine student encampment at UBC

While immigrants and refugees are not settler-colonialists, they still have settler privilege as they are often migrating to already settled land (i.e. an established state).

Societal Level

- * **Occupation** Occupation occurs when a state exercising control over an area is **not the legitimate sovereign authority** over that territory. There are three elements to occupation:
 1. The military of a different state is physically present **without the consent** of the people or government of the land being invaded.
 2. Foreign occupying forces prevent local communities from **exercising their autonomy**.
 3. The occupying forces **impose their own authority** over the people and land

- * **Colonization** is the **extraction** and **exploitation** (sexual, knowledge-based, labor) of indigenous land, natural resources, and people to build and preserve the wealth and privilege of the colonizer.

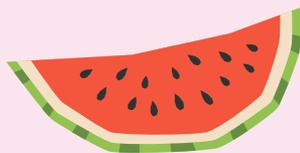
- * **Settler-Colonialism** occurs when unwelcome settlers pursue the land of Indigenous peoples with the intention of colonization and depriving Indigenous communities of their rights (example: manifest destiny). Settler-colonialism is a systemic form of oppression based on the **genocide** of Indigenous peoples and their culture through erasure and replacement.

The Intersections of Occupation and Resistance in South Asia and Palestine

The solidarity between Kashmir and Palestine urgently calls our attention, inviting us to understand how we can contribute to the fight for justice. Whether these conversations are already happening in your community or need to begin, they are vital to exploring what it means to stand against ongoing injustices. By leaning on the concept of consent, we hope to encourage you to bring this discussion home.

South Asia and Palestine are deeply connected by a history of colonialism, occupation and resistance. These regions have a **shared experience of violence and displacement due to borders drawn by colonial powers and cultural erasure at the hands of occupying forces.** It is important to highlight that the people in pre-partition India, Kashmir, and Palestine were denied their autonomy as part of a mission to loot the land of its resources. The Partition of India in 1947 and the ongoing occupations of Kashmir and Palestine are not just isolated incidents, they are part of a larger story of resistance against oppression.

This visual journey explores how culture, religion, and politics come together to shape our understanding of **identity, belonging, and justice.** While governments frequently misrepresent their citizens, people still have an identity tied to the “state”. The shared identity between people and their elected officials provides some pathways to resistance. By connecting these struggles, we can see the bigger picture of global occupation and shared resistance and **understand the central role that consent—or the lack of it—plays in ongoing oppressions.**



Cultural Narratives and Occupation

- Culture and religion have been weaponized by occupying powers to justify control and suppress resistance.
- In India and Israel, ethno-nationalism, a political ideology that conflates nationality with ethnicity, is used to dominate occupied territories, excluding and marginalizing Indigenous populations.

Religious Justifications for Land Grabbing and Power

- Zionism and Hindu nationalism both draw on religious texts and historical narratives to justify territorial claims and the displacement of communities deemed 'other'.
- The manipulation of religion and politics complicates the quest for justice, as peoples' faiths are weaponized to sustain occupations.

Impact on Indigenous Populations

- The cultural and religious frameworks imposed by occupiers deprive Indigenous populations of their lands and seek to erase their cultural identities.
- Kashmiri and Palestinian resistance are not just fights to reclaim physical land, they are also sociopolitical battles to preserve and honor the cultures Indigenous to the land.



PALESTINE AND KASHMIR

Occupation Tactics

- Both India and Israel use military force, legal frameworks, and internal media control to maintain occupations in Kashmir and Palestine.
- Displacement of native populations, settlement expansions, and surveillance are common strategies used to assert control.

Resistance Movements

- Resistance in both regions is marked by protests, armed struggle, and international advocacy.
- The resistance in Kashmir and Palestine are often labeled as "terrorism."

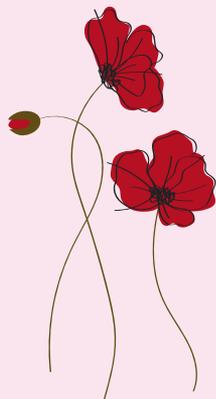
Leveraging Power in the Diaspora

- India and Israel have effectively mobilized their global diasporas, particularly in the U.S. and Europe, to influence external media narratives and public opinion.
- By controlling major media outlets, lobbying political leaders, and using social media campaigns, both states have successfully crafted a narrative that aligns global perception with their interests, marginalizing dissenting voices.

Moving Beyond Borders: A Call for Global Solidarity

These struggles are not just about land or borders—they are about **the right to self-determination**. Much of these intertwined histories are not known because colonial powers have shaped how we understand occupation and resistance. Imperialist conquests are often misrepresented as “wars” or “conflicts,” shifting blame onto resistance movements and ignoring clear power imbalances. **The creation of the ethno-religious states of India and Israel relies on false claims of “indigeneity.” It is important for the South Asian community, especially those in the diaspora, to confront these uncomfortable truths.** We need to challenge the way occupation is normalized and stand in solidarity with those who are resisting oppression.

There is a growing movement within South Asian diasporas to build solidarity with both Kashmiri and Palestinian struggles. Now is the time to start community dialogues that challenge the dominant narratives we’ve been told.



EXERCISE 1: Reflection Questions

How are our autonomy and our right to consent compromised when we live in a system which relies on the occupation and exploitation of others?



What narratives do you hear from your community about Palestine? About Kashmir? What institutions, states, or communities of people do these narratives serve?



Reflection Questions

What is one action you can take to support Kashmiri and Palestinian liberation struggles (e.g. participate in the [BDS movement](#), [call/write to your reps](#), etc.)?

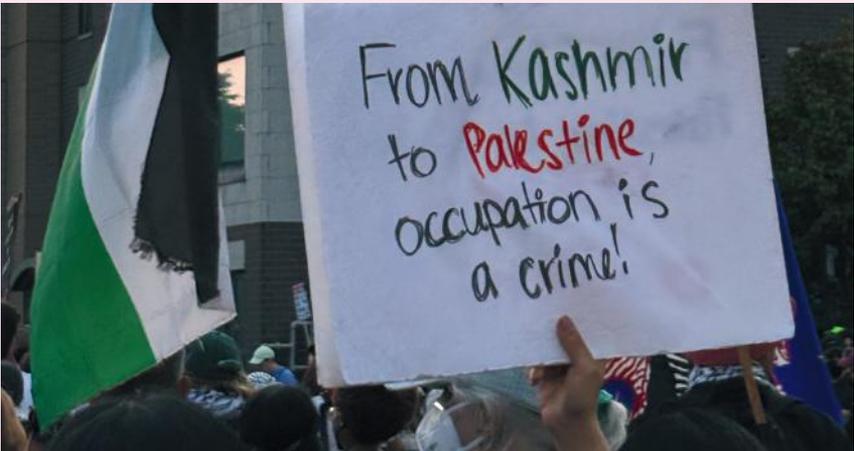


Image from 2024 pro-Palestine protest in Chicago

Framework: Wheel of Consent

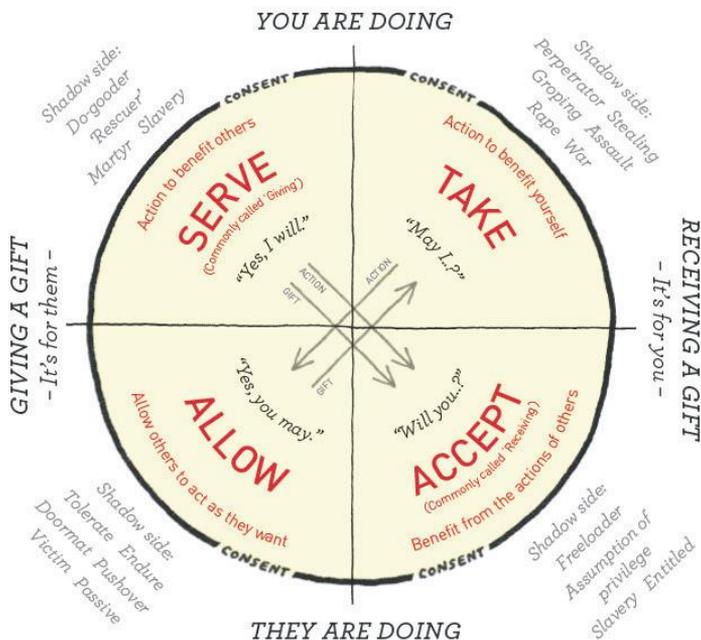
The Wheel of Consent, developed by Dr. Betty Martin, is a tool for understanding the dynamics of giving and receiving in consensual interactions.

The wheel is divided into four quadrants, each representing a type of interaction:



The wheel is useful in identifying both the intention behind an action and the material effect of that action. This is especially helpful when examining societal issues, where intentions and effects are easily muddled. The wheel of consent illustrates the underlying dynamics of violations of consent.

THE WHEEL OF CONSENT



In any instance of touch, there are two factors: who is doing and who it's for. Those two factors combine in four ways (quadrants). Each quadrant presents its own challenges, lessons and joys.

The circle represents consent (your agreement). Inside the circle there is a gift given and a gift received. Outside the circle (without consent) the same action becomes stealing, abusing, etc.

© Dr. Betty Martin / www.bettymartin.org

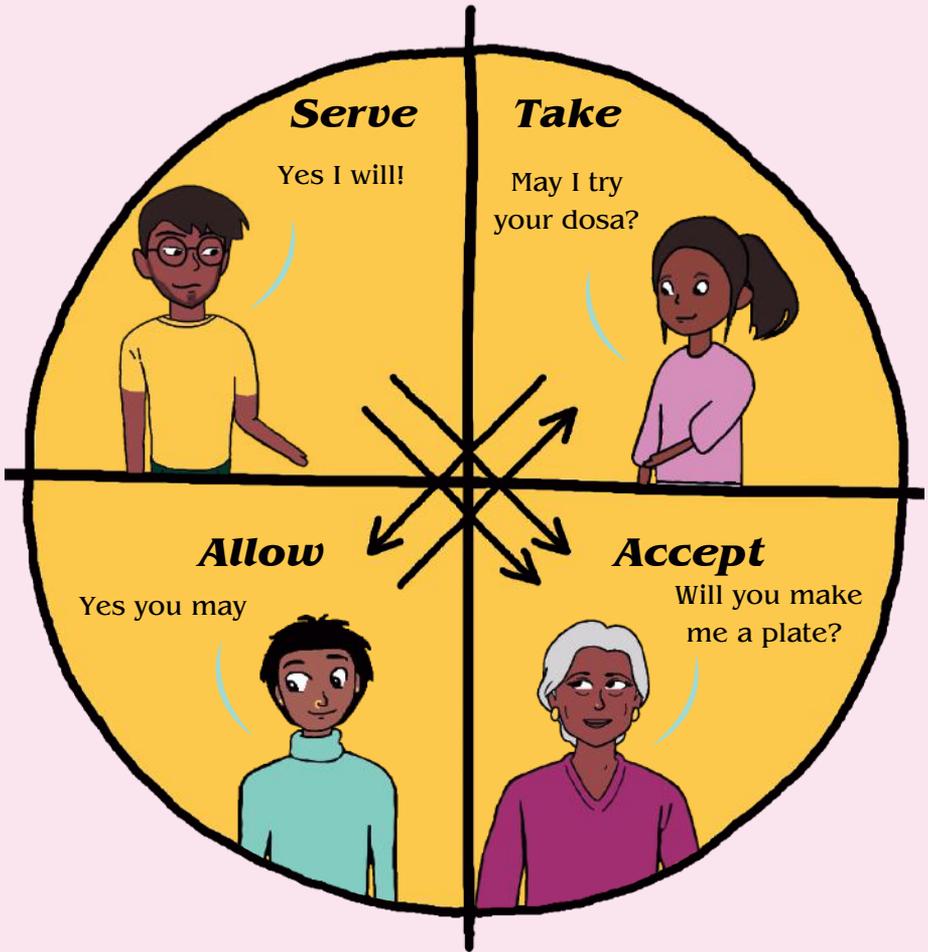
You are welcome to share, including this diagram, with attribution (leave this paragraph in).

Before zooming out to the societal level, let's zoom in!
Conversations about consent typically begin at an interpersonal level. We can see these dynamics within the wheel.

Let's see the roles contextualized at the family dinner!



Wheel of Consent



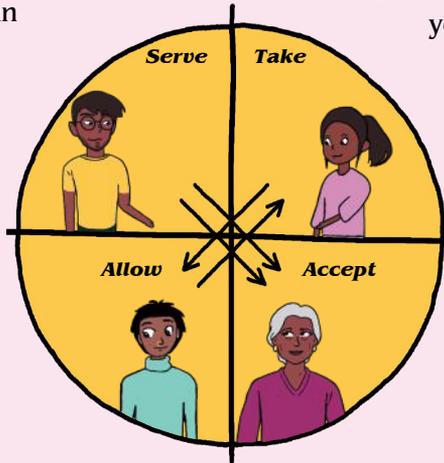
The wheel of consent can be applied to the societal level, where it identifies the harms that happen when power imbalances are exploited. These interactions take place in the "shadow region" outside of the wheel.

Wheel of Consent: The Shadow Regions

This is an area where the action of the quadrant is happening or demanded, but consent is compromised or not present. It highlights the darker aspects of human interactions, often involving coercion, manipulation, and abuse. When individuals or groups step into these shadow regions, it indicates a significant imbalance of power. This imbalance can lead to situations where true consent is impossible because one party is unable to exercise autonomy.

Serve (action to benefit others) **Martyr**
(sacrificing oneself to defy serving an oppressor)

Take (action to benefit yourself) **Invader**
(taking by force for your own gain)



Allow (allow others to act as they want)
Bystander (allowing others to cause harm)

Accept (benefit from the actions of others)
Enslaver (benefit disproportionately from others' forced labor)

Societal Oppressions

Systems of oppression, such as gender-based violence, genocide, martyrdom, and enslavement, are founded on severe power imbalances. In these contexts, consent cannot be genuinely given because the conditions are inherently coercive.

In Palestine and Kashmir, and various Land Back movements globally, we see these imbalances manifest as colonialism, occupation, and systemic violence. These are clear instances where power is used oppressively, denying communities their autonomy and rights.



Using the Wheel of Consent to clarify the importance of balancing of power

The Wheel of Consent is used to identify whether actions are truly consensual or a result of a power imbalance. It can also clarify the intentions of parties involved, as well as identify shifts in power which result from conflicts.

Resource Library



The resistance movements and history of Palestine and Kashmir are far more extensive than we can capture in this zine. We encourage you to explore these resources to continue your learning and educate your community.

Content warning: gender-based violence, military violence, islamophobia, casteism, genocide, graphic images



*Find the whole
resource library here!*

Interested in history and data? Read these articles and research papers

1. [Reproductive Justice in Palestine](#)
2. [Israel skinbanks/organ harvesting](#)
3. [A Guide to Hindutva and Zionism](#)

Resource Library



Want to spread awareness? Share these Instagram posts

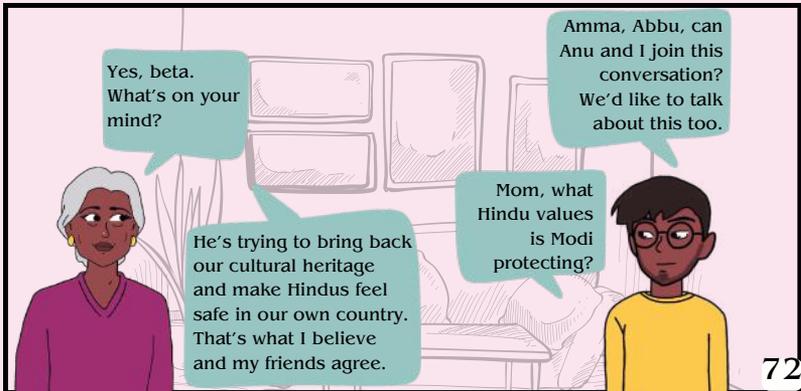
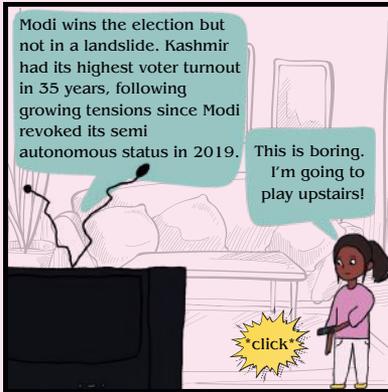
1. [Consent action, land back, & Palestine](#)
2. [Sexual violence a tactic of war](#)
3. [Kashmir/Palestine teach-ins guide](#)
4. [Kashmir and Palestine and British Colonialism](#)

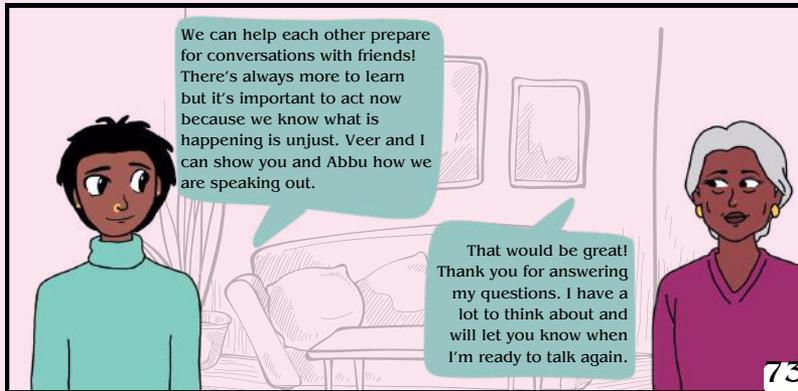
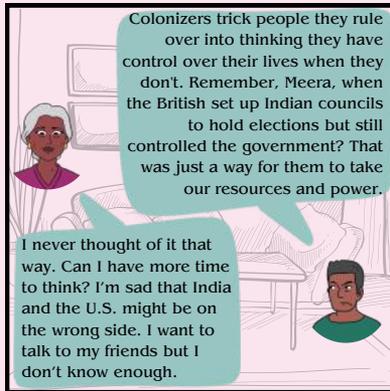
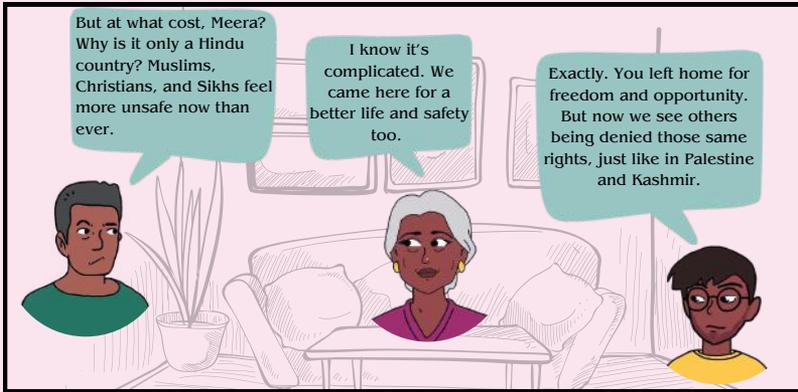
Are you a bookworm? Check out these reads & related podcasts

1. [Hostile Homelands \(book and podcast\) by Azad Essa](#)
2. [Brown History Podcast](#)
3. [The Right to Maim by Jasbir K Paur](#)
4. [Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson](#)

Don't know where to start? Explore these foundational lessons

1. [Video: Noam Chomsky's Manufacturing Consent](#)
2. [The Palestine Academy](#)
3. [The Kashmir Syllabus](#)





Cooking Up a Culture of Consent

Consent and boundaries are the building blocks of respectful and healthy interactions, but they can only become a part of our culture if we openly discuss them.



Understanding and practicing consent is necessary for creating a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for everyone. By talking about consent, we can learn from each other and build a stronger, more informed community by:

- * Clarifying what consent looks like in different situations
- * Promoting mutual respect and understanding
- * Empowering individuals to both set and respect/ boundaries

Digesting the Zine

Lessons Learned

Actions to Take

Individual Level

Navigating consent and boundaries involves a balance of personal needs and cultural norms. Reflecting on your boundaries is a foundation for engaging with others and also promoting your own wellness.

Identify Your Boundaries:
Explore what wellness means to you and be gentle with yourself — your needs may change over time!



Interpersonal Level

Healthy relationships begin with looking inward and extending what you have learned to others. Using frameworks like FRIES can help with openly communicating consent and boundaries in different cultural settings.

Encourage Discussions: Talk about consent, share your boundaries, and keep the dialogue going in everyday conversations. You can read this zine with a buddy or a book club!



Lessons Learned

Actions to Take

Community Level

Integrating consent and boundaries in communities involves reflecting on how groups influence norms and promote — or hinder — accountability. Through transformative practices, we create safer and healthier communities.

Create a Safer Space: Have conversations that are inclusive, respectful, and judgment-free about your community's values and norms. Establish community agreements together.



Societal Level

Practicing consent on a global scale is necessary to protect everyone's autonomy. By using our voices and resources to stand on the side of liberation, we can redistribute power and end systemic violence.

Share Resources: Share flyers and resources (like this) about consent through social media and in-person to spread awareness. Ask your community to take action with you!



Your Voice Matters

Just like our zine's family around the dinner table, your voice is essential in shaping a culture where consent is understood and respected. Imagine a community where nosy questions lead to enlightening discussions, where no cheek is nonconsensually pinched, and where every decision is made with mutual respect. We invite you again to bring what you learned and practiced to your communities. And we challenge you to continue being honest and bold in conversations about consent and boundaries at the dinner table and beyond.



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Thank you to the authors' loved ones for reading our zine Avani Ramachandra, Anneli Merivaara, Laura Long, Leena Ramachandra, Shalini Ramachandra, and Swagata Chakroborty.

About South Asian SOAR

SOAR is a home for the national movement to end gender-based violence in the South Asian diaspora. We aspire to a future of joy, healing, safety, and liberation for South Asian survivors. We believe in dismantling the systems of oppression and cultures of power that enable violence and prevent healing, especially for marginalized survivors. And, we are resolutely committed to building new possibilities that amplify survivor voices, provide abundant resources and pathways to healing, and strive toward our collective liberation.

[Read more about SOAR here:](#)



[Find all resources and citations here:](#)



About SOAR's Reproductive Justice Pod

The Reproductive Justice (RJ) Pod is a collective of South Asian American organizers working at the intersection of survivor justice and reproductive justice. The RJ pod is committed to advocating for reproductive agency, shifting culture, and resourcing the South Asian community. The pod's zine creation was led by Aarij Abbas, Adishree Nayak, Krithi Vachaspati, Nuzhat Zaman, and Yasmine Ramachandra.

Our organizing is rooted in harnessing the collective power of our diaspora to transform culture and systems. To become an organizer at SOAR, apply to join the movement as an Individual Member.

[Read more here:](#)



Interested in supporting SOAR's organizers? Fund the next resource in our series!

[Donate here to build a future free of violence:](#)

