



GENDER
sex & ty
sexuality

RAINBOW PRIDE
YOUTH ALLIANCE

Gender, sex, and sexuality: A sexual wellness workbook

Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance (RPYA)

RPYA is a grassroots California non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that was founded in 2001. We provide support services to LGBTQ+ youth, as well as their parents and caretakers, including workshops, online support groups, and linkage to resources.

Visit our website for more information:
rpya.health

For crisis support you can also visit our peer crisis counselor program, Unity Hope.

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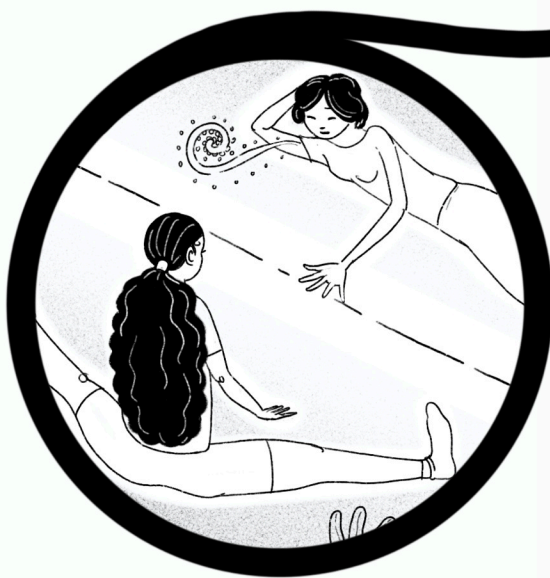
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A sexual wellness workbook

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Introduction note

With few cultural precedents relating to sex education that is inclusive of LGBTQ+ students and LGBTQ+ life, it can be a challenge to talk with young people about sex. Even so, a core intention of Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance is to see future generations liberated from the burden of sex negativity, transphobia, and homophobia that so deeply saturates the culture today. To that end, we feel that we owe it to the young people in our lives to be direct and honest about what a healthy sex life looks like for adults.

This workbook introduces ideas of gender, sex, and sexuality. A broader conversation about sexual wellness should also explore topics of STI prevention, relationship models & dynamics, and the power of queerness to positively transform a heteronormative culture.

This workbook is intended for all people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, and is meant for use as a tool in a workshop setting facilitated by a sexual wellness educator. The concepts presented here are meant to be jumping-off points for group discussions. Use the margins to write notes, ideas, and follow-up questions.



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WHAT IS GENDER EXPRESSION?





WHAT IS GENDER Expression?

According to many cultures around the world, the universe is thought to be maintained by a “**dual-principle**,” opposing forces that act together to turn the **wheel of creation**. For example, space & time, night & day, inside & outside, physical & spiritual, masculine & feminine.



In the same way that the 24-hour cycle includes night, day, and in-between times, all people have different amounts of masculine, feminine, and in-between qualities within.



The way we contend with and display these qualities outwardly (to society) is known as **gender expression** or **gender presentation**.

WHAT IS GENDER EXPRESSION?



Ideally, a person should be able to express their gender in whatever way they feel is appropriate for them.

However, gender expression has also historically depended a lot on **cultural norms** and **societal expectations** of what it means to be a man, woman, trans or non-binary person.



How you express your gender is a matter of knowing yourself and listening to your heart, not to what others expect of you.





What
is
Sex?

What is Sex?

The secret to the **success of human evolution** has been our **social bonds**. That is, the development of **cooperative relationships** that allow our communities to thrive.

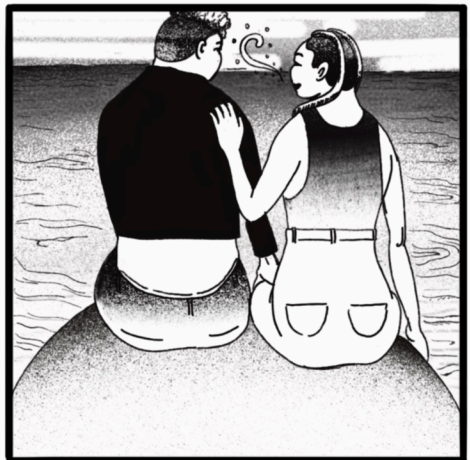
Children bond through playing. **Adults also play**, and this can take many forms, including sex.



*Sexual expression is endlessly variable, but one thing sex must always include is **enthusiastic consent** from everyone involved.*



Sex begins when there is **mutual arousal** between partners. A lot of things are arousing for people. This can include contact with genitals and/or erogenous zones of the body like the lips, ears, neck, armpits, nipples, butt, etc...

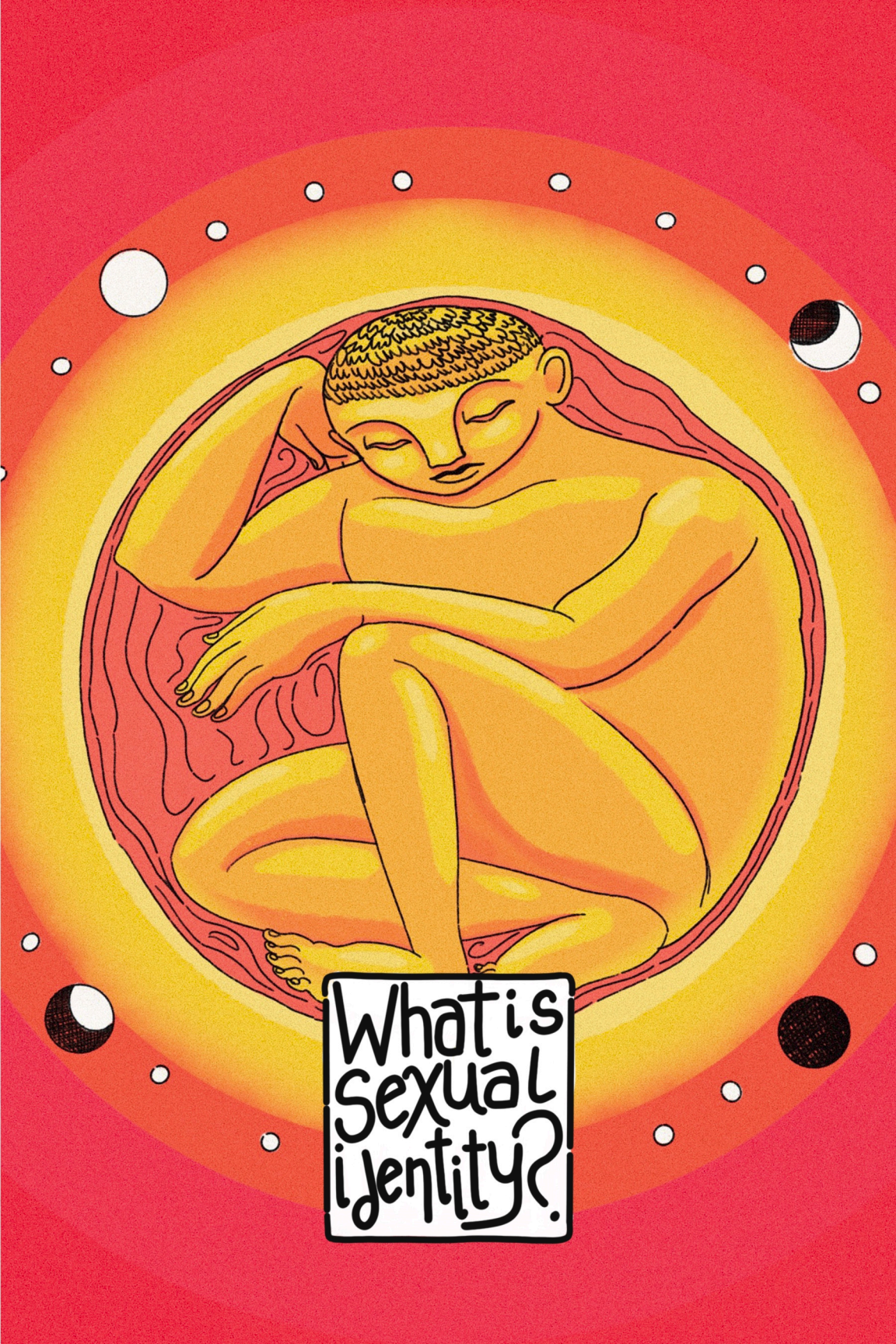


With sex, sometimes there is penetration, sometimes there is not. Sometimes there is orgasm, sometimes there is not. **Sex is more about touch and connection than penetration or orgasms.**



Sex serves two big functions in human beings:

1. Establishing and maintaining those social bonds we mentioned before. **This kind of sex will happen between zero and hundreds (or thousands) of times in a lifetime.**
2. As a means of **reproduction**, making more human beings. **This kind of sex is necessary between zero and (maximum) three times in a lifetime.**



What is
sexual
identity?

Let's say that there are **three layers of sexual identity**:

1. What you desire.
2. What you do with that desire.
3. What you tell people about what you desire.

In other words: what you want to do (**desire**), what you actually do (**behavior**), and what you tell people you are doing (**orientation**).



This is like how the earth as a system can be seen as (1) the earth itself, (2) the atmosphere, and (3) the orbiting moon.

If an alien were to come to study the earth, but could only observe the moon, it would be able to understand something about our planet, but it wouldn't be a complete picture.

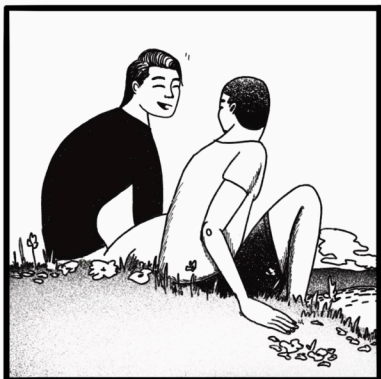


In this same way, the labels that we give ourselves (gay, straight, bi, etc.) help us to understand something about the sexual identity of others, but it is not a complete picture...

What is sexual identity?

For example, a person might still identify as straight even if they also experience desire for people of the same gender.

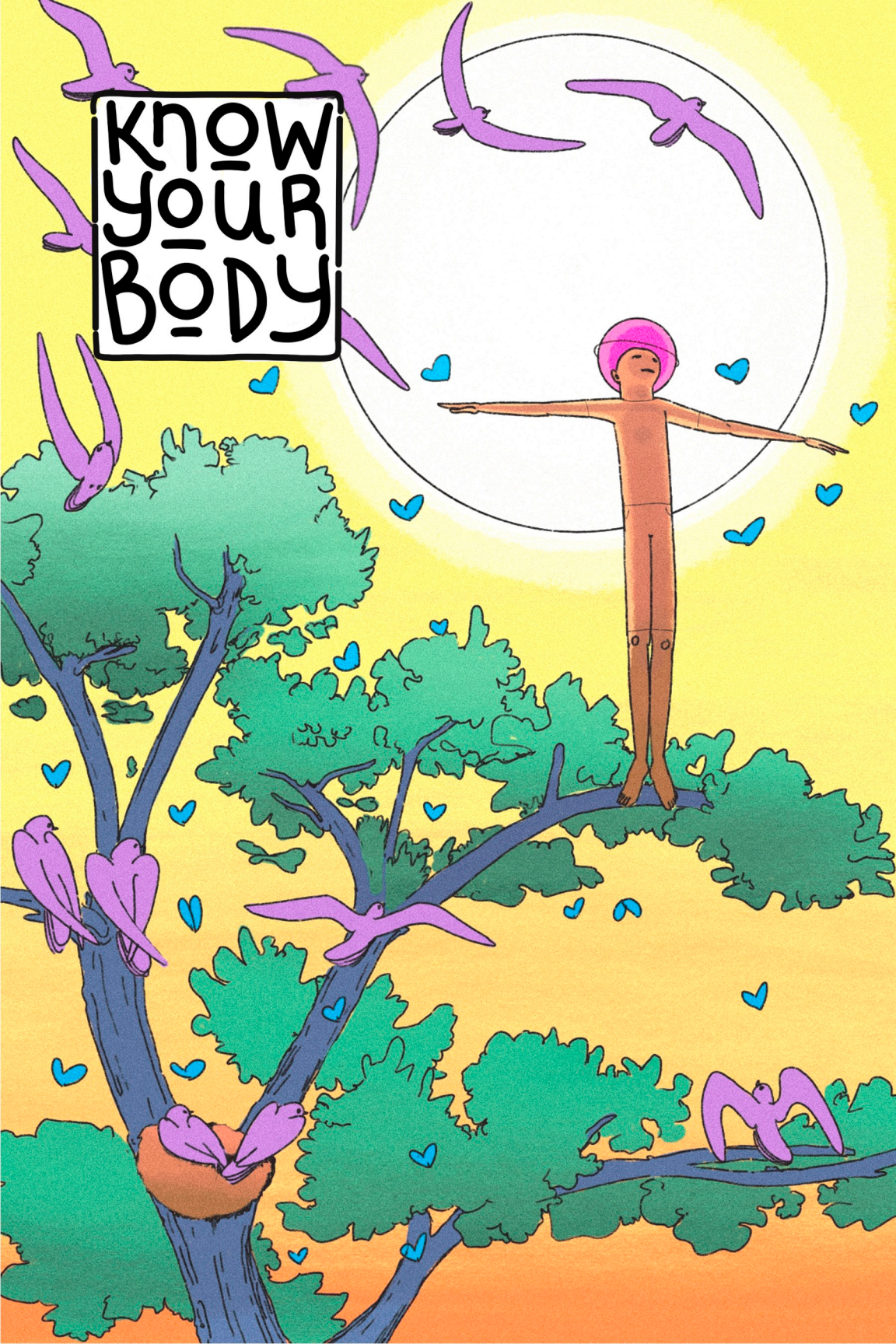
We could define this as bisexual, but **it is for each individual to decide how they present their sexual identity to the world.**



It's okay if all three layers of your sexual identity are not in perfect alignment with one another. After all, the moon doesn't orbit the earth in a perfect circle, either.

However, you will find that the closer you align your desire, behavior & orientation, the more authentic you will feel in your sexual identity and expression.

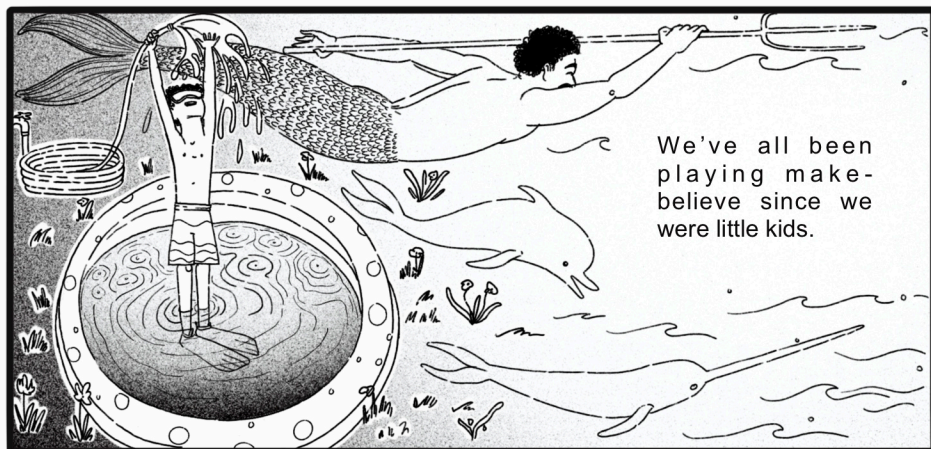
Know Your Body



Our teenage years are a dynamic and high-energy time of life when **a person transitions from child to adult**.

Sex will become a part of most people's adult lives.

Just remember, **everyone is going at their own pace**, so don't pressure yourself to participate in sex before you are ready.



With that in mind, get to know your own body before you start to get to know other people's bodies...



Good ways to get to know your body include yoga, breathing exercises like meditation, and of course, masturbation (using your own imagination, erotic literature, and/or responsibly-produced porn).

KNOW YOUR BODY

When you know what you like, what you want, and how you are able experience pleasure, it will be easier to communicate with a sex partner in the future.

Importantly, you will be able to tell a partner what you don't want, what doesn't feel good, and what is off-limits for you.



Consent & Limits

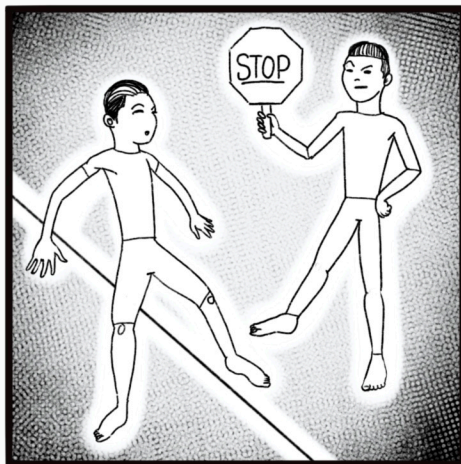


What are you into?

Well...

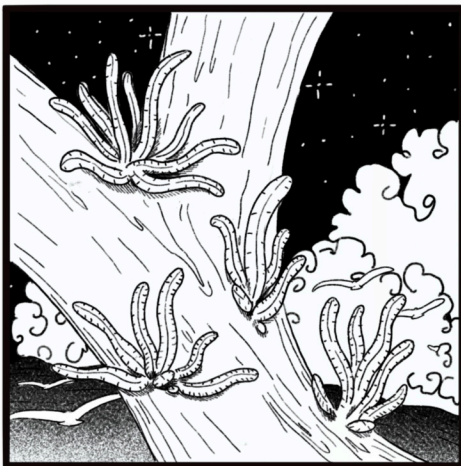
Contrary to what you might see in movies and porn, **sex doesn't just happen.**

You and your sex partner need to negotiate beforehand what will happen during sex play. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that what you agree to is **safe, sane, and consensual.**



You should know what you are into and what your limits are. **Ask your partner what they are into** and what their limits are, too.

If you don't know what you like, then have more conversations before going any further. There's no rush!



Soft limits. These are things that you are mostly against but may be willing to try under the right circumstances. These may change over time.

For example, a person may only want to do frottage or oral sex until they meet someone with whom they feel comfortable enough to try penetrative sex (vaginal or anal).

Hard limits. These are non-negotiable things that you are absolutely unwilling to do. If a partner violates these limits, this is cause for concern and the sex should stop immediately.



Withdrawing consent. Just because you agreed to do something at one point doesn't mean you have to follow through with it if you find that it makes you uncomfortable or you're just not into it anymore.



Checking in. If you fall out of the moment, it is okay to let your partner know that you need to take a break or stop altogether.

Check in with each other regularly during sex play to make sure everyone is feeling alright.

You can say things like, “**Does that feel good?**” or “Do you want me to keep on doing that?” See what they say and continue from there.





The first time you have sex is the beginning of your sex life, and that should be a beautiful thing. So, instead of saying “**losing your virginity**,” let’s call it your **sexual debut**.

Your first sexual experience should not feel like a loss, it should feel like the beginning of an exciting new stage in life.

Penetrative sex (vaginal or anal) is an advanced-level sex act, so your sexual debut doesn’t need to include penetrative sex.

In fact, a significant number of men who have sex with men (MSM), called “sides”, simply don’t enjoy anal sex at all (between 20-40%, that’s a lot!), and that’s okay.

Sexual DEBUT & Low-risk SEX

Let’s talk about a few **low-stakes, low-risk sex acts** that don’t involve vaginal or anal penetration.

A black and white illustration of a man and a woman sitting in a hot tub, facing each other and kissing. The man is wearing a necklace. The hot tub is surrounded by plants and a wooden deck.

Sexual DEBUT & LOW-RISK SEX

Mutual masturbation.

Masturbating with another person; either next to each other, showing your partner how you like to masturbate, and/or you and your partner helping each other to masturbate.

Frottage. A French word meaning "to rub". Contact with the genitals and other erogenous parts of the body with or without clothes on.

Oral sex. Stimulation of the genitals and/or butt using the mouth.





PERSONAL
HYGIENE

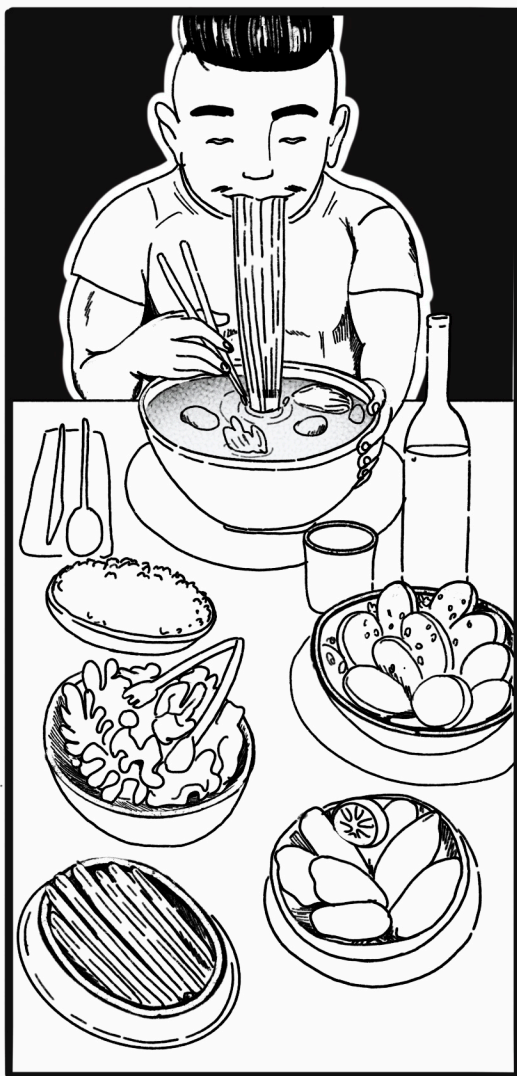
PERSONAL HYGIENE

With anal sex, the **top** (or insertive partner) introduces either a toy or a penis into the rectum of the **bottom** (or receptive partner).

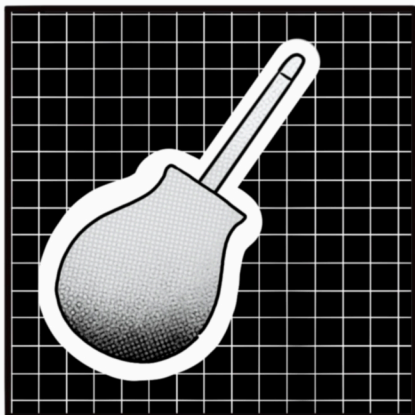
This can be very pleasurable, especially for prostate-havers; but if done the wrong way, it can be painful and potentially upsetting. **So, let's go over a few best practices.**

Know your body and feed it good food. Anal sex involves playing with your butt! Avoiding any contact with doo-doo during anal sex is the goal since this can be very unpleasant and a potential health risk.

The anal canal is a hallway, not a waiting room. **Fiber-rich foods help keep your digestive system healthy and clean.** So, eat lots of plant food and drink plenty of water to create a healthy intestinal rhythm for yourself.



A healthy diet also translates into better mental health outcomes. Do a little reading about the 'gut-brain connection'.



Douching is an option. Many people practice douching before anal sex, which means flushing the rectum with water using a device called an anal douche. Do some research to familiarize yourself with anal douching practices. “How to Anal Douche Properly” by Davey Wavey (@wickydkewl on Youtube) is a great resource.



Go it alone before partnered sex. Consider all of these best practices and try anal play by yourself (with a small toy) first so that you know how your body reacts to this kind of stimulation.



Penis-havers should also use soap and water to clean their penis.

Intact (or uncircumcised) penis-havers need to take one additional step and **gently pull back the foreskin while showering**, and use soap and water to **clean both the foreskin and head of the penis**.



Vagina-havers should use soap and water externally to clean their vagina. **Internal cleaning or douching of the vagina is not recommended by medical professionals.**



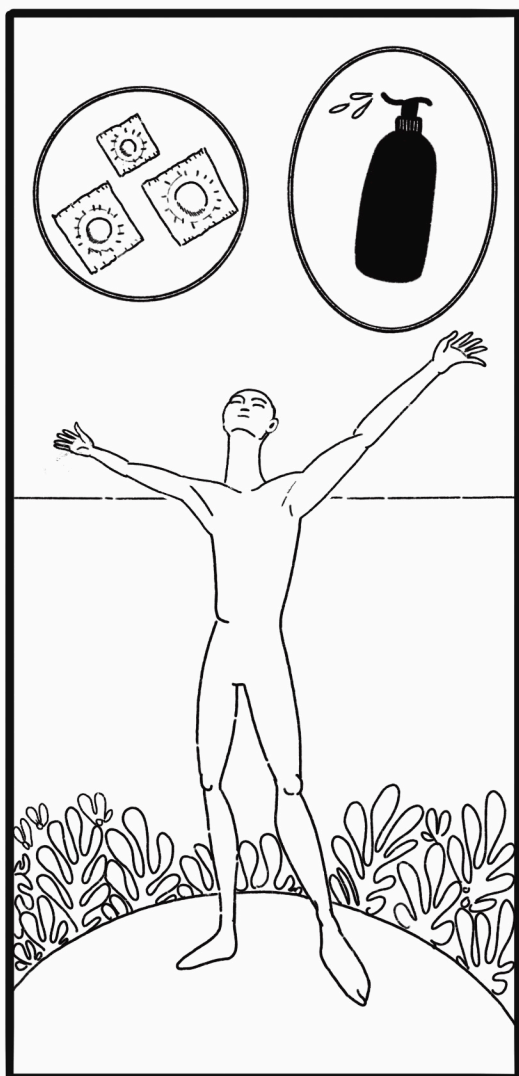
**Penetration
& Pleasure**

For some people, penetrative sex is great! But before you just “go for it,” you need to:

1. Relax. You will be more at ease if you make sure you trust your partner and that you are in a pleasant, safe environment.

2. Talk and do foreplay like kissing, touching, etc.

3. Have lots of lube and condoms on hand.



When you are ready to begin penetration, use a lot of **water- or silicon-based lube** to reduce friction, thereby increasing pleasure.

First, put a **correctly-sized** condom on the toy or penis. **Insert it slowly** and leave it there without moving. Then, start to move it slowly, and continue from there, always soliciting feedback from your partner.

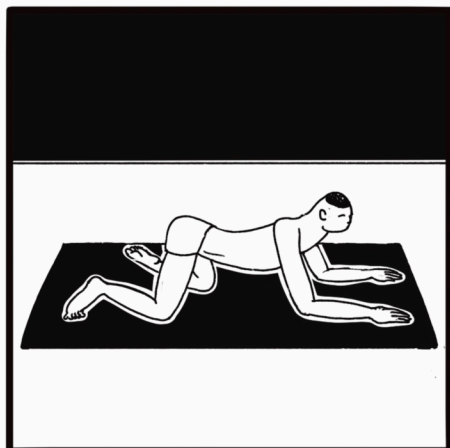
*And seriously, use more lube than you think you need.

Condom advice

Never use oil or oil-based lubes with condoms because the condom will tear.

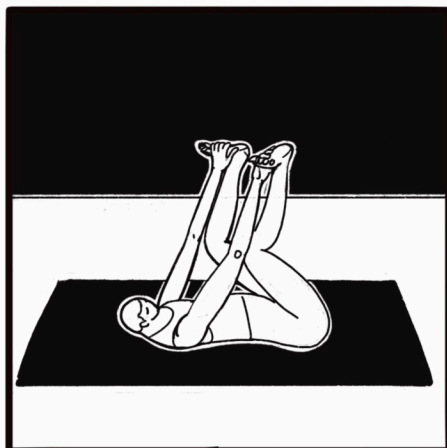
Never flush a condom down the toilet.

If you have a penis and are nervous about wearing a condom, try masturbating to completion while wearing a condom a few times so that your body becomes accustomed to the sensation.



Pleasure and anal. If the bottom is a penis-haver, the pleasure of anal sex comes from the stimulation (or “milking”) of the prostate, an organ that produces the fluid-part of the ejaculate.

Milking the prostate results in more ejaculate.



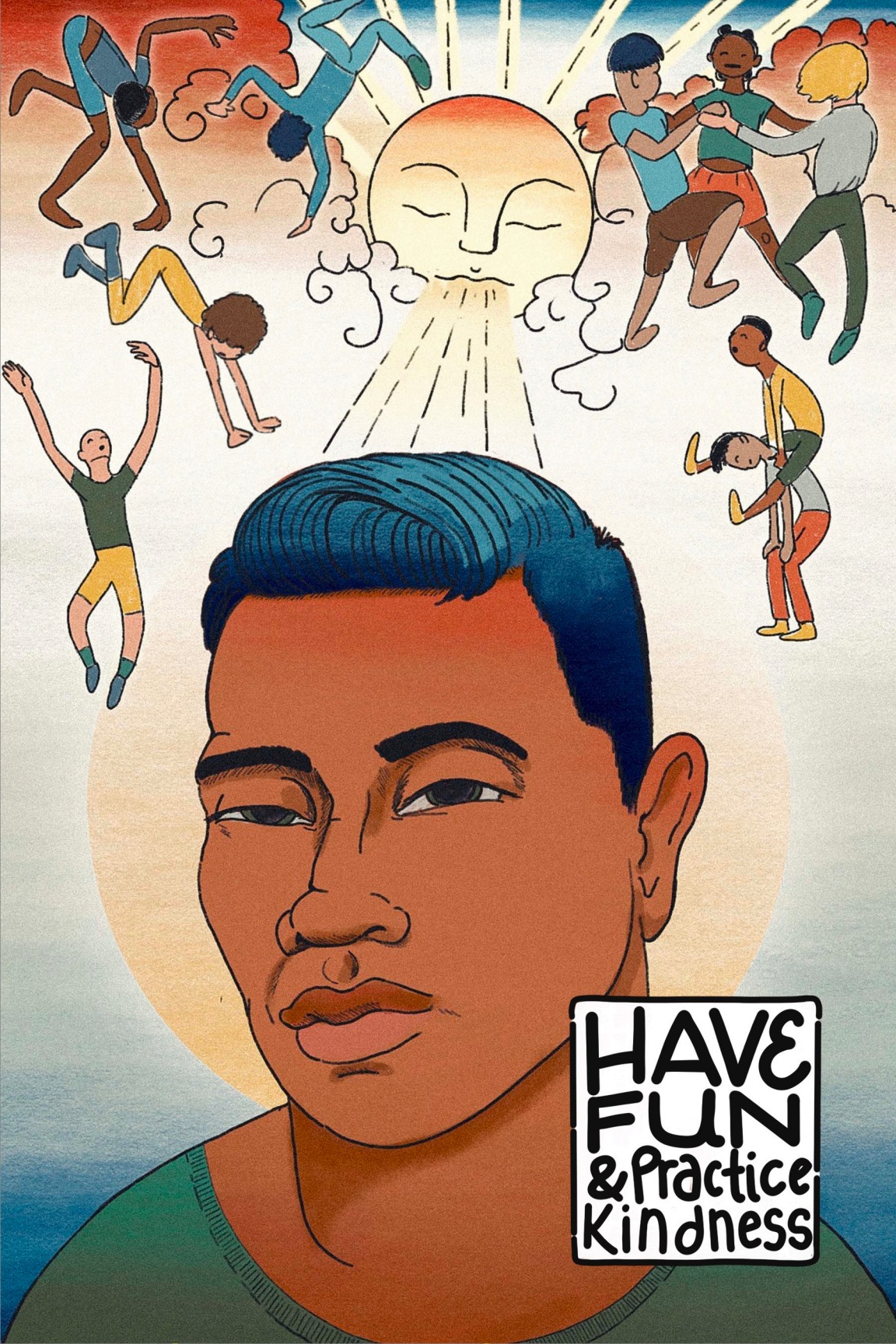
Pleasure and vaginal. If the bottom is a vagina-haver, the pleasure comes from the stimulation of the vulva (the external part) and the clitoral shaft (the internal part of the clitoris, similar in structure to the shaft of the penis).



A good top knows how to bottom. A good bottom knows how to top. Try switching roles and see how you like it. At the very least, it will make you a more mindful lover to know what your partner is experiencing.



Pleasure is also experienced (for both top and bottom) as a **whole-body sensation** because you are **connecting intimately with someone you are attracted to on an emotional, intellectual, and physical level**. Choose a sex partner who fits these standards.



**HAVE
FUN
& Practice
Kindness**



Caring. Prioritizing your needs doesn't mean ignoring your partner's needs. Treat your sex partners with the same consideration that you want them to show you.

Aftercare. Once sex ends, take a moment to cuddle and talk. This is a moment to check in, see how things went, and to bask in the energy you've created together.

And remember, **a relationship can last one night or an entire lifetime.** However long it lasts, treat your partner with kindness.

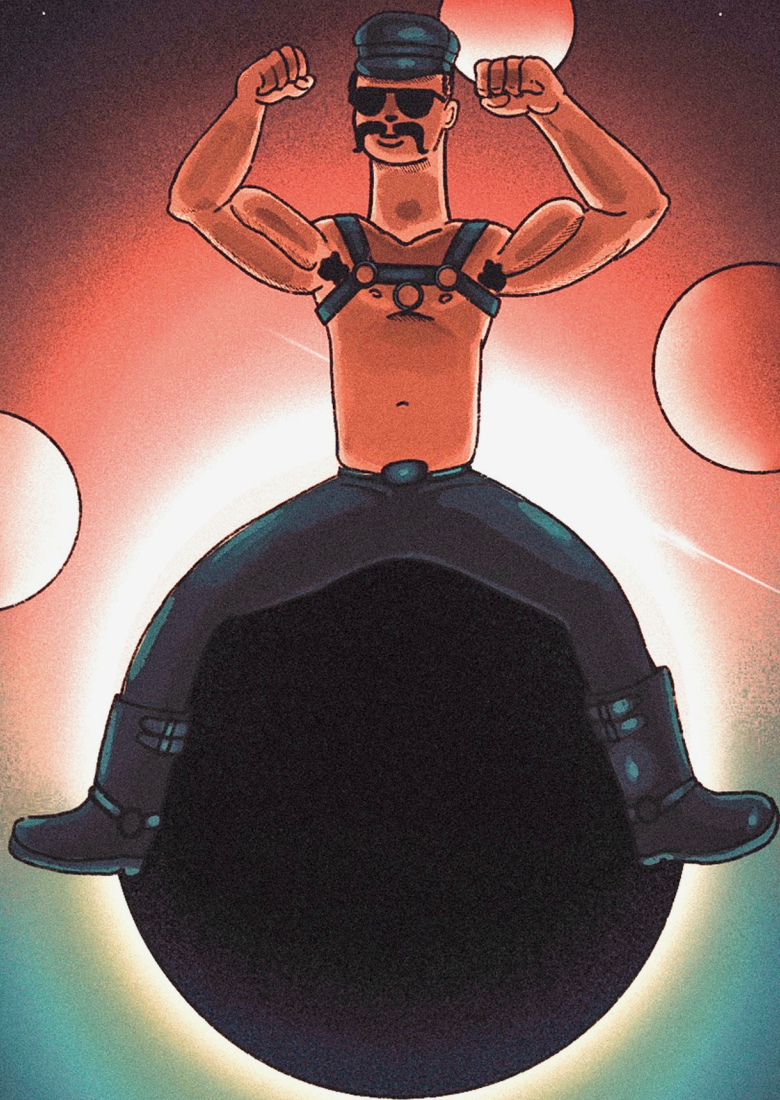
Ask a kindergartener why they like to play, and they will tell you, **"to have FUN!"** If you ask them what kind of games they like to play, they won't hesitate to tell you. "Hide and seek!" or "cops and robbers!"

Sex is a form of play for adults, so **we should practice the same kind of self-awareness that kindergartners do** by (1) recognizing that play is for fun, and (2) being able to articulate clearly how we like to have fun to our playmates.

When you know **what your sexual interests are and how you derive pleasure from sex**, then you will be better able to communicate with your partner. When you do this, you are **advocating for your own pleasure.**

If a partner is doing something that you don't like or are not comfortable with, then you can let them know by saying, **"I don't like that,"** or "that doesn't feel good," and redirect them by saying, "what I really like is..." or **"try this instead..."**





non-normative
Desire
(kink)

non-normative Desire (kink)

There are countless ways that human beings have sex and experience desire. Often, our desires are unique and do not necessarily align with a conventional understanding of what sex should look like.

Non-normative desires, or kinks, are a normal feature of human sexuality, so there is no need to feel shame for having atypical sexual interests.



Sex and desire are primal urges that come from **deep inside the unconscious mind.**



The drive to fulfill sexual desire is an evolutionary trait many millions of years old, so it is no use fighting or denying it.

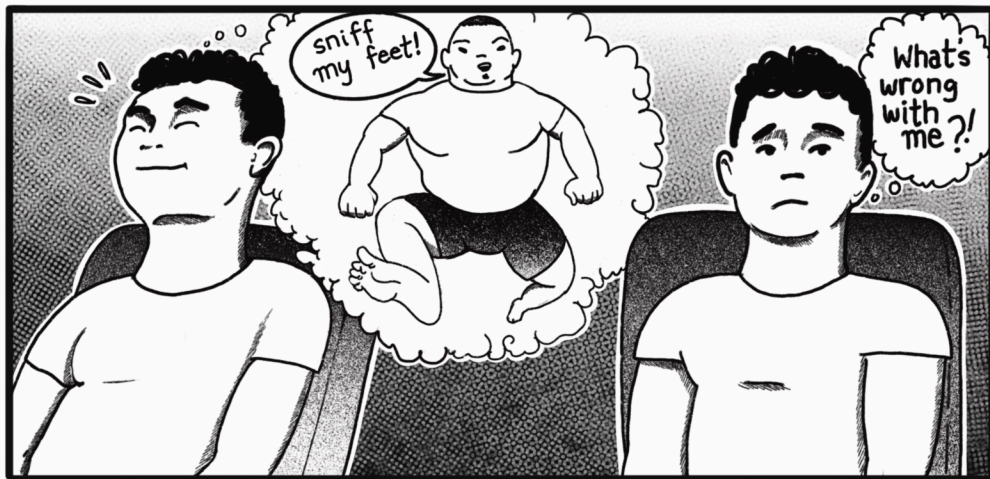
A desire that is denied may become an obsession. **Obsessive behavior can be harmful to yourself and to people around you.**



When we understand our desires, however, we will be better able to express ourselves **authentically** and **responsibly** in our sex life.

Sometimes, **the unconscious mind** will process fears or challenging experiences by integrating them into our **erotic imagination**. As a result, sometimes our sexual desires are at odds with the way we conceive of ourselves.

For example, some people who were bullied as children may have a sexuality that features arousal from being ridiculed or humiliated.



It's okay to desire something sexually that you wouldn't otherwise want in everyday life or in a non-sexual situation. If we think of sex as play, then we can regard this kind of desire as a game of make-believe or fantasy play.

On the other hand, some kinky desires have nothing to do with past experiences. **Often, we respond to something sexually for no reason at all other than it makes us feel good!** And that's okay, too. There is no need to overthink it or pathologize yourself (or others).

Sexual interests & expression are super diverse, so your partner may not share your same interests. But you may be surprised. Talk about it and find common ground.

As always, whatever you do decide to explore together must meet the criteria of **safe, sane, and consensual**.

Additional discussion points



What does it mean to “know yourself”?

Sex must always include is enthusiastic consent from everyone involved. What does enthusiastic consent mean?

E.O Wilson, one of the most celebrated biologists of the 20th Century, said that, “Sexual practices are to be regarded first as bonding devices and only second as a means of procreation.” What did he mean by that?

Sex doesn’t need to include penetration. Can you think of another way to connect intimately with a sex partner without penetration?

What are some other ways you can think of to connect intimately with someone that doesn’t involve sex at all?

What does “responsibly produced porn” mean?

There are benefits to abstaining from sex until you’re older. What do you think some of those benefits are?

Human sexuality is super diverse, people are into all kinds of things. However, consent is always key. What are some desires that should not be realized?

Check out these resources



RPYA sexual wellness comics online



Teensource.org
Resources for CA teens



The Trevor Project
Resources for Sexual Health Support



GSA Network
Sexual Health Resources for Teens



MPX information
for San Bernardino County



MPX information
for Riverside County



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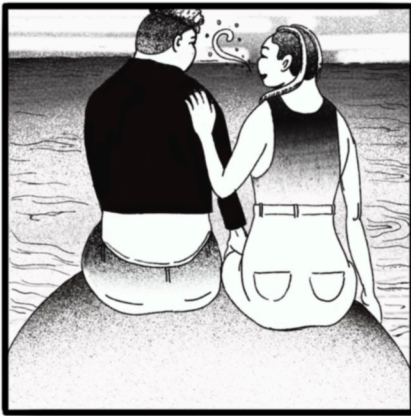




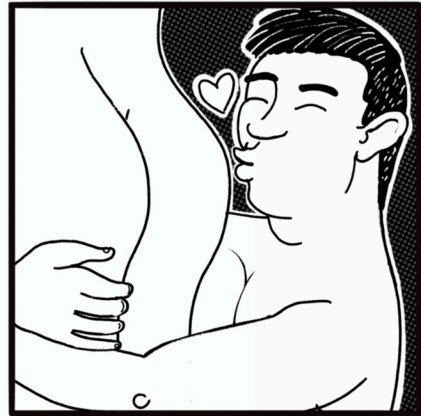
Understanding gender
& sexuality



Knowing yourself &
communicating with
your partners



Consent, boundaries,
& advocating for
yourself



Discussion prompts,
resources, & more