Navigating Respectful Interactions: A Guide to Consent and Personal Boundaries Among Peers

For many performers, joining a drum corps marks the first time they share living space outside their family. This unique co-living experience brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures, uniting them toward a common goal, creating both fun and challenging dynamics.

In the drum corps community, various relationships emerge as people perform together. There's often an unspoken expectation to align with others' comfort zones. However, it's crucial to recognize and uphold your own boundaries, even if they may seem uncommon or rare.

Boundaries, in this context, define limits in your relationship with others, encompassing both physical and emotional aspects. In the intense atmosphere of performance and training, emotions can run the gamut from euphoria to exhaustion, potentially leading to a breakdown of personal boundaries.

The concept of the boundary circle serves as a guide to privacy, determining what information is shared as the circle expands. The tighter the circle, the more private the information. It's essential to navigate this dynamic conscientiously, ensuring the right people are in the appropriate circles.

There are four circles to consider:

* **Privacy**
* **Intimacy**
* **Professional**
* **Acquaintance**

Moving from the inner circles, where intimate details are shared and personal space is closer, to the outer circles, where information is more limited, and personal space is more extended. Physical boundaries, such as kissing and long hugs, are more acceptable in the inner circles, while handshakes and side hugs are appropriate in the outer circles. Staff members and performers always fall within the Professional Circle until any power differentials no longer exist.

It's crucial to understand that moving into the intimacy circle should take time, and a breach of trust or disagreement can quickly move someone out of that circle – and that's perfectly okay.

1. Privacy

-You and only you

Right to remain private

2. Intimacy

-Family, Close Friends

People who have gained your trust and remain trustworthy

3. Professional

-Members of the corps, staff, performers from other corps, performers you teach

Interactions remain observable and interruptible

4. Acquaintances

-Fans, high school students at clinics

Most amount of people, least amount of information and physical touch

The following sentences are examples of how to set a boundary with a peer with your chosen intent. It’s important to practice these sentences so you are comfortable saying them, when it’s time to set a boundary with another person.

Boundary Setting Sentences

Leaving the Door Open

I have already agreed to hang out with someone else. Maybe later?

I’m not interested in dating, but I would like to build a friendship.

I wish I could but I need to practice. Maybe another time?

I'm thinking about it. I need time.

I can’t attend, but I appreciate the invitation.

I can’t do this now, but I’m open to trying in the future.

Assertive

I’m not interested in dating.

I would prefer to not discuss my personal life at this time.

I appreciate the gesture, but in the future, I’d prefer…

I’m not comfortable discussing this topic with you.

No. Thank you.

Thanks, but I’m not interested.

I would like to take it slow.

Thank you for your concern. I’ll take it from here.

It's not appropriate for us to...

Explicit

I’m uncomfortable with what you just said/did.

I’ve changed my mind.

No.

Stop!

I don’t give you permission to do that to me.

I don’t feel safe. I’m leaving.

I won’t be spoken to in that manner.

This is against policy/corps rules and I won't participate.

Please don't touch my stuff again.

Consent

Spirit of Atlanta acknowledges that some performers may choose to enter consensual intimate relationships during their time with the corps. To prioritize personal safety, the following guide is provided for navigating newly explored sexual territory between parties.

Consent is defined as the demonstration of knowing and voluntary agreement, either through words or actions, to participate in mutually agreed-upon sexual activity. It cannot be acquired through force, disregard for objections, actions against another's will, or taking advantage of someone incapacitated. Consent necessitates:

* Clear communication
* An uninfluenced affirmative response
* Progressing one step at a time, consistently
* The freedom to withdraw consent at any point.

**Informed Consent**

Informed consent revolves around having a clear understanding of what you are agreeing to. Sharing openly and confirming understanding reduces the risk of consent violation, enhancing the likelihood that everyone involved fully enjoys the experience. Clarity about your intentions is crucial to avoid misunderstandings and unintentional consent violations. If someone requests something, and you are uncertain about their intentions, seek clarification. You are not obligated to agree to something you don't fully understand.

Discussing the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" is an effective way to exchange and gather information, with particular emphasis on the 'what,' 'why,' and 'how.'

For instance:

* What does 'having sex' mean to you? What specific activities are you interested in?
* Why do you want to engage in sexual activity with me? What are your expectations for our relationship?
* How do you envision feeling? What does "good sex" mean to you?
* What measures will we take to prevent pregnancy? How will we address it if that method fails?
* How will we safeguard each other's sexual health? What steps will we take if that method fails?
* How do you prefer to be treated after sex?

The more you share honestly and check for understanding, the less risk there will be of consent violation and the likelier it will be that everyone fully enjoys themselves. You don't have to agree to something you don't fully understand.

If a person explicitly communicates that they do not want to proceed with a sexual act, want to stop any ongoing act, or do not want to go any further, the other party must cease immediately. Continued pressure beyond this point can be coercive.

When assessing consent, consider these questions:

* Did the person express clear agreement through actions or words for sexual acts?
* Was the consent given freely, without coercion, fraud, violence, or threat of violence?
* Did the individual have the capacity or legal ability to consent?

**Reminders:**

1. Consent to one sexual act does not imply consent to others.
2. Conduct is considered "non-consensual" if no clear consent, verbal or non-verbal, is given. The absence of "no" does not mean "yes."
3. A person has the right to withdraw consent at any time.
4. Substance use does not relieve the obligation to obtain consent.
5. Resistance is not required to demonstrate non-consent.
6. Past or current relationships are not sufficient grounds for consent; it must be obtained regardless of previous experiences.
7. Legal consent cannot be given when:
   * The person is substantially impaired due to alcohol or drugs, incapacitated, or unconscious.
   * The person's ability to resist or consent is substantially impaired due to a physical or mental condition.
   * The person was coerced through force, threat, deception, beating, isolation, or intimidation.
   * The person is not of legal age to consent as determined by the state of the sexual act.