

Did you
miss

The Ethics of
SEX



Ask Yourself These Ethical Questions About Sex

1. What does sex mean to me?

- Is it simply about physical pleasure?
 - What circumstance or types of relationship can best support physical pleasure? (trust, communication, familiarity)
- Is it an expression of commitment between 2 people?
 - What are we committing to? Life together forever? Being present together in this moment? Trying to get each other off? Maintaining each others' privacy?
- How do some of the responsibilities of sex (i.e., pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, etc.) play into this?

2. Do my partner and I both understand sex in the same way?

- Have we shared what meaning we ascribe to sexual intimacy (see #1 above)?
 - What are the impacts for me and a partner if one of us is interested in a one-night-stand and the other is interested in something else?
- Have we been specific about what we're each interested in doing?
 - "Sex" is a euphemism that different people interpret differently depending on their own experiences. In order to consent to sexual activity, one must actually **know** what activity will take place.

3. Are we engaging in sex in a way that shows respect for all involved?

- Are we working together to create an experience that we both want and enjoy?
- Am I using my partner as an instrument for my own pleasure?
- Am I being used by my partner as an instrument for their pleasure?
- Do we treat one another as autonomous people with our own desires, experiences, and feelings?
- Does the sex enhance or weaken our self-esteem?
- Does the sex enhance or weaken our ability to enjoy sex and relationships?

4. Am I choosing to have sex or am I letting something else make that decision for me?

- Have I clearly identified my own desires and intentions about sexual intimacy?
 - When I am uncertain about my own desires and intentions, do I drink to avoid making those decisions? Do I allow another person to make decisions for me?
 - Any time someone is incapacitated by alcohol or other substances, they are unable to consent.
 - Am I engaging sexually because that is what I really want, or am I engaging because I want something else (like wanting to feel loved), or because I'm afraid of what not being sexual would mean?

Resources:

Carmody & Ovenden (2013). Putting ethical sex into practice: sexual negotiation, gender and citizenship in the lives of young women and men. *Journal of Youth Studies*.

Nussbaum (1995). "Objectification." *Philosophy and Public Affairs*; 24, 4;

The Feminist Sexual Ethics Project. <http://www.brandeis.edu/projects/fse/>

Schulman (2011). "Four Ethical Questions You Should Ask Yourself About Sex." <https://www.scu.edu/character/resources/four-ethical-questions-you-should-ask-yourself>