

NEGOTIATION

What is negotiation?

Negotiation is the process of resolving differences to come to an agreement about something, in this case sex and physical intimacy. It is reaching a mutual agreement about what will happen between you based on what each person wants.

Very often people want different things when it comes to sex and physical intimacy. Negotiation is the key to identifying what it is that each person wants and then coming to an agreement about what will suit everyone.

Non-negotiable issues

There will always be some non-negotiable issues in a sexual relationship. For example, one person may not be ready for sex. A non-negotiable issue needs to be communicated to and understood by the other person. It is worth identifying these up front (eg. 'I'm just not ready for sex yet').

The role of communication

Good communication is the key to a positive negotiation of what each person wants from the sexual relationship. There are different ways to communicate messages which can all play a part in negotiation.

Verbal communication

Obviously, this is talking to someone – a necessary and important part of negotiation. The best way to get a message to someone is to tell them directly. This can be hard around sensitive issues like sex and relationships but it will be better in the long term if you can learn to talk to each other.

Non-verbal communication

A lot of communication in relationships is unspoken. It's a gesture (arm around the shoulder), a facial expression (a frown or downcast eyes), a movement (stepping away). Non-verbal communication can be very effective and get a message across quickly. It is often used to express someone's withdrawal of consent or desire to continue (eg. not responding to touch, stiffening muscles, or turning away).

Non-verbal communication can be interpreted the wrong way. If you are unsure about what someone means by their actions ask them. Or, if you feel like your actions aren't getting the message across – tell the person directly what you want them to hear.



Some things you might need to negotiate

1. What is ok for you in regard to sex (eg. I feel ok with kissing & touching but not sex).
2. What is ok for the other person in regard to sex.
3. The type of environment you want to be intimate in (eg. Not in the car!)
4. Signs that might mean you want to stop (eg. turning your face away)
5. Ways to slow things down if they are moving to fast (eg. Can we cool it?)
6. What you want to happen afterwards (eg. I'd like some quiet time together)
7. When you might be ready to go further with physical intimacy (eg. "When we have been together for longer")
8. What contraception you will use (eg. I think we should use condom for STI's and the pill for birth control)
9. The privacy of your physical relationship (eg. What happens between us stays between us)

Agreements and changing agreements

Negotiation is an ongoing process. What is good for you today might be totally different tomorrow. So, it is good to keep talking and watching out for non-verbal signs from each other. Remember, it is okay to:

- **Change your mind**
- **Decide not to do something**
- **Try something but choose not to do it again**
- **Say NO!**

BUT IT'S HARD TO DO!

Yes, it can be a bit awkward or weird or uncomfortable at first but it will get easier. You lay the foundations now and you will benefit in all your sexual relationships in the future. If you keep the talk going it will become a natural part of the process. And it will make the physical part of your relationship so much better. Promise!

