

SELF consent 101

BY DR SOPHIA GRAHAM



Love Uncommon

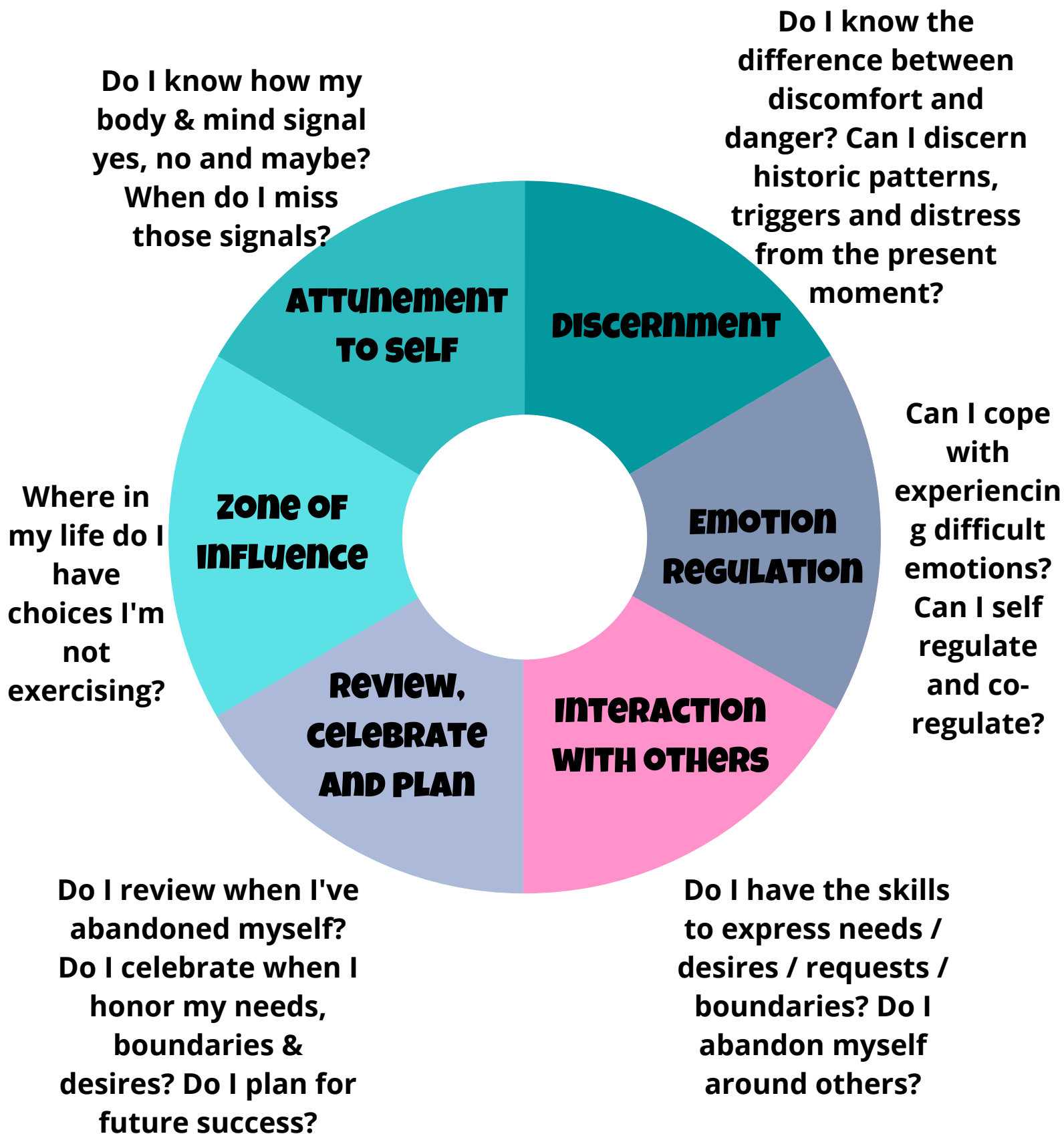


This is going to be a rapid session, but I wanted to give you all a resource that you could take home and sit with later, if that is something that appeals to you. I'm going to race through some 101 concepts of self consent, and we are going to do a brief activity together.

I'd invite you to return to the booklet when you have some quiet time and to reflect on your own connection to your bodies signals of 'yes' and 'no'. I hope you find the session helpful!

You're welcome to read more of my work at loveuncommon.com and feel free to email me any questions at sophia@selfconsent.com

SELF CONSENT SKILLS



HELL YES!

What are some things that feel like a 'hell yes' to me?

What sensations do I experience when I think about those things?

What would I label the emotions I experience?

What thoughts come up?

What does it make me want to do or not do?

NO THANKS!

What are some things that feel like a 'no thanks' to me?

What sensations do I experience when I think about those things?

What would I label the emotions I experience?

What thoughts come up?

What does it make me want to do or not do?

DOES POSTURE MATTER?

How we hold our bodies and what we do with them does a lot to send messages to our brains about what is going on. It is commonly understood that we communicate our emotions to others through our body posture, but we also communicate with ourselves. Some of our nerves have a mostly one way flow of information from our brains to our bodies, but a LOT of them are bi-directional. We get some sense of this when we feel physical pain, but it is true for emotional pain too. This means we can use this body- brain connection to check on our decision making.

Today's brief lesson is about exploring whether you can feel your own 'yes' and 'no' more clearly when you try out postures that are congruent and incongruent with those feelings. Most (but not all) people feel a sense of rightness when their body posture lines up with what they are saying and/or feeling. Rightness isn't the same as comfort - you can totally be uncomfortable at the same time as knowing your 'yes' or 'no' is the right choice for you.

When you are in a 'yes' posture and you're thinking about a 'hell yes' it can help you to find sensations in your body that happen when you're feeling 'yes'. When you're in a 'yes' posture and you're feeling a 'no thanks', the incongruent feeling can point you towards the way your body signals 'no' to you. This can help you get in touch with what your body wants and needs and to make choices that reflect your inner wisdom.

HELL YES

Begin with putting together the "hell yes" list above. I'd recommend writing down some activities you love, places you'd love to visit, things you'd love to eat, animals you'd love to snuggle. The more clearly you can imagine the experience the better.

Once you have your 'hell yes' its time to get into a posture that says yes. This is usually one where your hands are outstretched, your palms forward with your head tilted upwards and facing forward, often with a smile or a grin.



When you sit with the things that are a "hell yes", notice whether this posture feels right for you. Are there things that you put in your list that mean this posture feels uncomfortable? If so, it might be that there is some anxiety there as well as a 'yes'. This certainly doesn't mean that it isn't something you want to do, but it might be helpful to notice anyway.

It can be helpful to notice the difference between a joyful 'yes' and a more muted 'yes' might feel like. As you practice, it can help to do this with items that are more conditional, like "Yes, if..."

NO THANKS

Filling in the 'no thanks' list above is a great place to start. While the 'hell yes' list is usually full of intense experiences, you can just note down some things that you know you really dislike (like mushrooms for me). It is usually helpful to have no's that relate to different emotions, so perhaps thinking about things you're grossed out by, things you are afraid of, things you just don't like.

Once you have your 'no thanks' list it is time to get into a posture that says no. You may be front or side on to other people with your hands in front of your torso, palms forward. Often your head will be facing down or to the side. You might be frowning.



When you sit with the things that are a "no thanks", notice whether this posture feels right for you. Are there things that you put in your list that mean this posture feel off? Does it feel more correct for some emotions than others? What adjustments do you need to make for it to feel congruent?

EXERCISES

In class we will be experimenting with the 'yes' posture while feeling 'no' things so that we can notice what incongruence feels like in our bodies. By doing this work we can often start to recognise situations or patterns in our lives when we have been really ignoring our body saying 'no' or 'yes' to us. I know in my own life this was an incredibly important set of exercises for learning what I did and didn't want, and how my body sometimes knew more than my brain! Especially when I wanted things that I didn't want to want - in my case relationships with women! (hello internalised homophobia).

Outside of class it is really helpful to practice the 'yes' and 'no' posture, even when you already know the answer to whether or not you want something. This helps to reinforce for your mind that you have important information in your body and that it is often helpful to consult it!

Final word of warning, while learning all these new ways you can tune into your own yes and no can be joyful and freeing, there can also be a lot of grief. It can be hard to know that you have not been attuned to these signals for a long time, especially if you've been abandoning yourself as a result. It is really important to have compassion for yourself and to remember all the bio/psycho/social reasons that this is the case. A little bit of self validation can really soothe your mind and body.



Self consent

The radical act of tuning in to & showing up for your needs, desires, limits and boundaries.

A powerful declaration:

I am on my side, I am on my side.

WWW.LOVEUNCOMMON.COM



About me!

Dr Sophia Graham is a white, cis, queer disabled woman who loves to teach DBT skills to quirky queers and cultural renegades. Find out more about me @ loveuncommon.com.