



In the Know Campaign: why clarity is essential in rape campaigns

The ["In the Know Campaign"](#) is a very important campaign about rape which focuses on perpetrators and the legal definitions of consent. Personally, I'm not a fan of any campaign which suggests that men don't understand consent - it's not that men don't understand, it's just that they don't think it applies to them. Men are socialised to believe they are entitled to have sex when they want. Rape culture is one manifestation of male entitlement - others can be viewed in the failure to implement the equal pay act, child maintenance, and the law in general.

Targeting campaigns at perpetrators is essential. Far too often they are erased from campaigns which focus on telling women how to behave - that they are at fault if they are raped simply for the crime of being female.

I do appreciate that the In the Know Campaign is directed at perpetrators, but I do have concerns about the following two tips:

...you can't 'guess' or assume that the other person wants sex just because you do. *If you have sex with someone without checking for consent you are putting yourself at risk of being charged for rape.* That's why it's so important that you always check the other person is really up for it *before going ahead.*

It's not enough to say you weren't thinking straight – don't do something you could end up regretting. If you go ahead without checking, saying 'I wasn't thinking' or 'I forgot to ask' *won't* get you off the hook.

In the first, the sentence should read:

"If you have sex with someone without checking for consent you are committing rape."

The second should read:

... do not commit rape. If you go ahead without checking, there are no excuses. You have committed rape.

Rape is not a 'regret'. It's a criminal act. Rape campaigns need to be very clear that it is a criminal act. Suggesting that it's a 'regret' supports the common rape myth that women lie about rape because they regret drunken sex.

We need to stop telling men that they need to check for consent or they 'might be at risk of being charged with rape' and start telling them that no consent makes them a rapist.

Language has power and couching perpetrator campaigns with words like 'risk' and 'regret' are minimising. Rape is a crime. Men who commit rape are rapists. It is as simple as that.



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