

# Netflix's New 'Anti-Harassment' Guidelines Reveal How Corporations Are Trivializing Consent

Consent is paramount. Anything we do that involves another person, be it sex, work, or just holding a conversation, requires that all parties involved give their consent. Any rational person who cares about personal choice would agree with me here.

Yet our perspectives of consent are becoming warped. In the wake of the #MeToo movement, a new debate over how to ensure consent is both explicit and mutual has arisen. This alone isn't a problem; *of course* we should be working to ensure this.

But the issue is becoming increasingly trivialised, and our view of consent as being willful interaction between two or more persons is beginning to morph into mollycoddled nannying, with adults being treated like children who don't know how to make their own decisions.

## Don't Even Think About It

A particularly apt and contemporary example of this trivialisation of consent comes from streaming-service Netflix, who have recently imposed [draconically-strict rules](#) on interaction that border on parody.

Among these [new requirements](#) for workers are: no eye-contact for more than 5 seconds, no flirting, no asking for phone numbers, no "lingering-hugs," to name a few.

"Everyone was spoken to about #MeToo," an on-set employee working on *Black Mirror* told [The Sun](#). "Senior staff went to a harassment meeting to learn what is and isn't appropriate.

Looking at anyone longer than five seconds is considered creepy.”

A true real-world application of [Poe's Law](#), it's still hard to believe that these rules aren't the work of some satirical newspaper, or that Netflix hasn't suddenly been bought-out by nuns.

Jokes aside, however, and Netflix's new rules set a pretty troubling precedent for the post-#MeToo world. Rather than an effort to ensure that consent is given, Netflix seems to assume here that people simply cannot be trusted to make their own decisions, and that giving consent is simply too hefty a task for mere adults to carry out.

Moreover, this has some troubling implications for the poor employees of Netflix. With such strict rules in place, the bar for misconduct has been set impossibly low, and minor social faux-pas have been grouped together with genuine cases of sexual harassment.

### **Regulating Consent**

Ultimately, consent must be left to the parties involved. One thing that the #MeToo movement did particularly well was encouraging those whose consent had been breached to speak out, and in doing so allowed the parties involved the opportunity to deal with issues themselves.

Sadly, this was before the movement became somewhat trivialised by [sensational stories](#) and overcompensation a la Netflix. Nonetheless, the early calls to speak out against personal violations of consent were both important and on the right track; they accepted that consent was a matter for the parties involved.

This is the way consent should be. As John Locke philosophised, individual and personal consent is what separates free people from the oppressed. Being able to make our own decisions is what ensures our freedom and allows us to be the masters of our own lives and actions. Companies like

Netflix treating their employees like children demonstrates a worrying sign of our times; managing one's own consent is now too dangerous. We need an authority to make our decisions for us.

I understand that this may seem somewhat hyperbolic, but this trivialisation of consent goes against our long-standing views of what makes a free and independent person. #MeToo gave people the chance to take control of their own encounters with non-consent. It is not an excuse to take that control away.

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[Image Credit: Netflix]