

Creating Consent Culture in O.T.O.

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Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is designed to be used by members of Ordo Templi Orientis. It can be used by leadership in the Man of Earth Triad (local body leaders and organizers), by Rose Croix chapter members in the Lovers Triad who are de facto leaders for the Man of Earth, and for everyone with order-wide leadership responsibilities.

Goals for the class

The class will give leaders an opportunity to share information about what is happening in their communities and learn from one another's experiences.

As an outcome of the class leaders will be asked to take responsibility for listening to individual experiences and monitoring the atmosphere of public events.

Outline

Introductions: what leadership positions do attendees hold (10 minutes)

Reading: "Creating Consent Culture in O.T.O." (10 minutes)

Participants take turns reading aloud from the handout.

Open discussion: (30 minutes)

What's going right? How are people comfortable, expressing affection appropriately, exploring the freedom of Thelema?

What can we improve? Have consent injury incidents happened in your community? How have you seen incidents handled? How can we improve our responses?

Exercise: "Boundary Exercise – Basic" from "Teaching Consent Culture" (10 Minutes)

Final discussion: (10 minutes)

How will you take the insights from this workshop out into your own community?

Examples:

- listening to individual experiences
- monitoring atmosphere at public events
- doing the exercises from the workshop in local communities

Creating Consent Culture in the O.T.O. Reading

Why It's Important

In 2008 Democratic Tennessee senator Doug Henry voted against permitting rape victims to obtain an abortion. He explained, "Rape, when I was learning these things, was the violation of a chaste woman, against her will, by some party not her spouse. Today it's simply, 'Let's don't go forward with this act.'"¹

Henry was explaining the shift from the Aeon of Osiris to the New Aeon. Where men rule and own property, and pass property to their sons, women are valuable when they are virgin and the man can be sure that the son is his own. A non-virgin woman is damaged, spoiled, and has become a whore. In both cases the woman's sexuality is ruled by men: the chaste woman is sexually available to her husband, the whore is available to anyone. A whore cannot be raped, and a man cannot rape his wife, by definition.

In the New Aeon women rule, own property, and control their sexuality. Today American law no longer sanctions the rape of a prostitute, and a husband cannot rape his wife in any state. However New Aeon and Old Aeon attitudes overlap throughout the country. The result is an atmosphere of danger around the free expression of sexuality. This danger severely affects women, intersex people, and the LGBTQ population, with a lesser but still present danger of violence to heterosexual men who express sexuality.

Many of us have stories about things that have happened to our sisters and brothers as well as ourselves. The O.T.O. has strict policies prohibiting harassment. Nonetheless harassment continues around the country and around the world. O.T.O. and Thelema are not isolated cases, the stories in *Pagan Consent Culture* come from many and diverse magical communities facing similar issues.

There is a specific danger for Thelemic women. The Gnostic Creed calls on the power of the Earth as Babalon, who enters Thelema from the Christian tradition where she is Babylon the Whore. Men (and women) entering into Thelema may view the Gnostic priestess, and any Thelemic woman, as a woman who is making herself available for sex. At the very least she is a woman who can be ogled, commented on, and teased with impunity. This attitude can form a barrier for priestesses entering into Mass performance as well as generating an unwelcoming atmosphere for women.

Call to Action

Policy is important but does not in itself create cultural change. We are looking for new ways to create a magical culture in which all Thelemites can freely and safely explore our sexuality and our magic.

¹ Jeff Woods, "Henry Claims He's for Women's Rights", Nashville Scene, July 15 2010. Web site: <http://www.nashvillescene.com/pitw/archives/2010/07/15/henry-claims-hes-for-womens-rights>

This requires conscious effort and participation on the part of everyone in a leadership position in O.T.O. This includes:

- Local body officers, especially body masters
- E.G.C. clergy
- Lovers Triad and Grand Lodge officers

What we can do:

- Read and educate ourselves on O.T.O. policy and in consent culture
- Listen to people in our local communities
- Conduct structured conversations to encourage affirmative consent culture
- Study mediation techniques
- Specifically shift focus from retributive to restorative justice

Affirmative consent shifts emphasis from listening for “no” to stop an act, to listening for a “yes” before starting an act. It requires checking in before initiating a touch. ² An atmosphere of affirmation enthusiastically emphasizes “yes!” Can I hug you? “Yes!” Getting in the habit of checking in can help generate a sense of respect that may also cut down on ogling and commenting activities as well.

When an incident has occurred those involved may embark on the Path of Mediation. We can improve the quality of our mediation by actively studying mediation techniques. We can also shift emphasis from retributive justice which punishes offenders (fines and suspension) to restorative justice focusing on the needs of the survivors. For example, an offender might be required to make an apology. Under retributive justice, once the apology has been offered the punishment has been served and the offender is free to engage in order activities. Under restorative justice, the survivor must accept the apology; until this occurs the offender is blocked from further enjoyment of order privileges. This places the burden of change on the offender while allowing a path of healing for the survivor.³

Individual leaders can make a huge difference in our local valleys. We can also link up with each other and encourage each other in this work to affect order-wide cultural change. This effort is supported both by individual leaders and by formal policy. Working together fraternally, we can make it happen.

² The Affirmative Consent Standard: <http://sgvnowproject.weebly.com/the-affirmative-consent-standard--rape--sexual-assault-education.html>

³ What is Restorative Justice? <http://restorativejustice.org/>

Exercise

1. Break into pairs.
2. Have both partners hide a hand behind their back.
3. On the hidden hand, each partner signals the desired level of touch with the partner: a closed hand for no touch, one finger for a handshake, 2 fingers for a hug.
4. On the facilitator's cue, both partners reveal their hands. Then they exchange touch (or not) based on the *lower* number. For example, if one partner reveals one finger and the other partner reveals two, they shake hands.
5. Switch partners and repeat for several rounds. Partners may choose to experiment and request more or less touch than they normally would.
6. After a few rounds, stop and discuss. How did it feel to be the one revealing a higher or lower number? Did anyone experience feeling rejected or embarrassed? If we struggle not to take another person's boundaries personally, how can we reframe our thinking? Did it feel unusual or enjoyable to clearly (nonverbally) ask for touch? How is the exercise different from normal social exchanges? How can we take the lessons from this exercise into our daily lives?

Recommended Reading

Christine Hoff Kramer. "Teaching Consent Culture: Tips and Games for Kids, Teens and Adults". *Pagan Consent Culture, Building Communities of Empathy and Autonomy*, Christine Hoff Kraemer and Yvonne Aburrow, editors. Asphodel Press, 2015.

Sabazius. "Non Consensual Sexual Conduct." *The Invisible Basilica Blog*. September 9 2012. Web site: <http://invisiblebasilica.blogspot.com/2012/09/non-consensual-sexual-conduct.htm>

Brandy Williams. "Thelema and Consent." *Pagan Consent Culture, Building Communities of Empathy and Autonomy*, Christine Hoff Kraemer and Yvonne Aburrow, editors. Asphodel Press, 2015.