Consensus Guidelines for Couples
Are We on the Same Page?
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1. Consensus is important and should be sought by couples in major decisions and with decisions that affect both partners.

2. Consensus should be freely given, not negotiated under duress or achieved through manipulation, coercion or deception.

3. Either partner can present a topic for discussion and hopeful consensus.

4. After discussion and information gathering, a specific plan should be “voted” upon to see if agreement and consensus is achieved. Although voting and/or raising your hand on a decision may seem mechanical, voting is recommended as a clear symbol of having a voice and/or reaching consensus – for or against. (Some partners mistakenly think that because we “talked about” something, that we have an agreement. Other partners seem to later “forget” the agreement we discussed. Again, voting and recognizing agreement helps to avoid these problems.)

5. A lack of consensus essentially veto’s a decision or plan. Couples may choose to further discuss the item, but care must be taken to avoid manipulation or coercion. An explanation of a vote could follow, but not necessarily have to occur. Without the option of vetoing a decision, then consensus has little meaning and power is not shared.

6. Although one person may present a plan, after a consensus vote is achieved, then the decision becomes “our” decision. If the decision turns out to be a bad or a good decision, it was “our” decision – where responsibility and/or fault is equally attributed.

7. A decision can be modified, but only through another consensus on the modification. One person cannot just disregard or dismiss a previous decision. Any change from the original plan should occur with consensus, prior to the event and as soon as possible.