

What Is CABINS? A Consent Checklist Beyond Yes or No

SEO Title Tag: *CABINS Consent Checklist Explained | Love Psychotherapy*

Meta Description: *CABINS breaks consent into six parts — Consent, Aftercare, Boundaries, Intentions, Negotiation, Safety. A practical guide to using it in your relationship.*

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Target Keyword: *CABINS consent*

Quick Takeaways

- CABINS stands for Consent, Aftercare, Boundaries, Intentions, Negotiation, and Safety.
- Intentions — why you're doing something and what you want to feel — is the layer most people skip.
- Aftercare should be planned in advance, not improvised after the scene ends.
- Boundaries include both hard limits (non-negotiable) and soft limits (approach with care).
- The checklist structure helps people who find open-ended emotional check-ins harder to start.

Most people learn consent as a single yes-or-no gate: did they agree, or didn't they? CABINS treats consent as something with six moving parts — Consent, Aftercare, Boundaries, Intentions, Negotiation, and Safety — that all need attention, not just the initial agreement. It's a useful checklist precisely because it forces conversations that a simple yes/no tends to skip.

Consent

The foundation: explicit, informed agreement to specific activities, given by someone with the capacity to give it. Ongoing, not one-time — consent for last month's scene doesn't automatically transfer to tonight's.

Aftercare

What happens after the scene ends matters as much as what happens during it. Aftercare should be discussed and agreed upon before you start, not improvised afterward. That includes physical care (water, warmth, first aid if needed), emotional care (reassurance, quiet time, check-ins), and practical care (who's responsible for cleanup, who's driving home). Skipping this conversation is one of the most common negotiation gaps — people plan the scene in detail and leave the landing to chance.

Boundaries

Boundaries cover both hard limits (non-negotiable, full stop) and soft limits (things you're curious about but want approached carefully, or only under certain conditions). Boundaries aren't static — revisit them, especially with a partner you're playing with regularly, since comfort and curiosity both shift over time.

Intentions

This is the layer people skip most often: why are you doing this, and what do you want to feel? Two people can agree to the exact same activity for very different emotional reasons — one seeking catharsis, the other seeking closeness — and if those intentions are mismatched, the scene can feel physically consensual and emotionally hollow at the same time. Naming intentions out loud closes that gap.

Negotiation

The practical, often written-out conversation covering what will happen, what won't, safewords and signals, and any relevant health information. Negotiation is where the other five elements of CABINS actually get discussed concretely, rather than assumed.

Safety

Physical safety planning: understanding the real risks of an activity, having necessary equipment and knowledge on hand, knowing what to do if something goes wrong, and having a plan for stopping cleanly if needed. Safety also includes emotional safety — knowing a partner will respect a safeword without resentment or guilt-tripping afterward.

Using CABINS in Practice

You don't need to run through all six letters as a formal script every time. For a new partner or a new activity, working through each one explicitly is worth the time. For established dynamics, a shorthand check-in — "anything changed on any of these since last time?" — keeps the framework alive without turning every scene into a meeting.

- New partner or new activity: walk through all six explicitly, ideally in writing.
- Established dynamic, routine activity: a quick verbal check on anything that's changed is often enough.
- After a scene that felt off: CABINS gives you a structured way to figure out which piece broke down, rather than a vague sense that "something was wrong."

Why the Structure Helps

A checklist like CABINS is especially useful for people who find open-ended emotional conversations harder to initiate — having named categories to move through, rather than a blank "so, how are we feeling about all this?", lowers the barrier to actually having the conversation. It also gives partners a shared vocabulary for troubleshooting: "I think our aftercare didn't match" is a much more actionable sentence than "something felt wrong last time."

Want support with this in your own relationship or practice?

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Well wishes. 🙏

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Pronouns: They/Them

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