

Blurred Lines: Diving into the Aziz Ansari Allegations Published on The Xó Social on February 18th, 2018

In the midst of the #MeToo movement, we have yet another allegation of sexual assault on our hands. This movement was especially highlighted at the Golden Globes with women and men dressing in all black and wear a pin on their clothing stating that “Times Up.” This time, however, we seem to have some blurred lines through the pages that make up this encounter with another A-lister.

By now most of us have read on babe.net about “Grace” and her interaction with famous stand-up comedian and actor, Aziz Ansari. Or better yet, we’ve heard this story from our own friends or relatives.

In a very detailed and length [recollection](#), Grace describes her date with Ansari just weeks after they had met back in September 2017 and has accused Ansari of sexual assault.

Since the story has gone viral, Ansari has since put out a [statement](#) where he acknowledges Grace’s story and mentioned that he has reached out privately to her to apologize.

This story however is unlike the others we have heard about Hollywood’s monsters. This encounter wasn’t using force or intimidation as Harvey Weinstein, now defamed Hollywood heavyweight producer accused by over 80 women of rape and coercion. Or in the workplace, as Kevin Spacey preferred to commit his crimes. This doesn’t seem to be a crime at all. Which brings questions and important topics up: Was this just an awkward situation between two consenting adults? What exactly are nonverbal signals to make a clear “no” statement? How can we learn from this date gone wrong?

Based on Grace’s telling of the story there seemed to be some confusion or misread signals between her and Ansari during that September night out in New York. In her statement she mentioned moments seeming to try and paint Ansari as a villain but had me question why it was included in the article.

For example, when arriving at Ansari’s apartment before they planned to head out to dinner, she points out he poured her a glass of wine, “It was white. I didn’t get to choose and I prefer red, but it was white wine.”

Towards the end of the night, back at Ansari’s residence, when *Grace* wanted to slow things down she took a seat on the floor next to the couch that Ansari sat at. She then continues to say how she thought at this point Ansari would have done something to calm her down by rubbing her back or playing with her hair. While some see these details as supportive to the encounter play-by-play, details such as that carried on throughout the article adding which seemed to be irrelevant facts about that night.

Pointing out these seemingly irrelevant details of that night is not to minimize Grace's story. It's to highlight that we should all be focused on the severity of the situation.

Grace states that she was giving several non-verbal cues, such as pulling away while she was sitting on the countertop in his kitchen as he was performing oral sex on her. Despite the non-verbal cues of her discomfort, Grace, was eventually able to voice her discomfort in full sentences by telling Ansari that she needed to take things slowly.

Ansari seemingly acknowledged her verbal discomfort, immediately stopped, and then de-escalated the situation by moving their encounters to his living room and calling her an Uber, at her request. Grace recounts crying on her way home feeling violated. The next day she made Ansari aware of the feelings she had about the night before. He responded expressing his concern because he had thought the night was consensual and fine.

So where were the lines blurred? Was it the not so clear nonverbal cues that could have been difficult to pick up on? Or did Ansari see her discomfort but continue since Grace didn't voice her uncertainty sooner or clearer? Was this just simply a misunderstanding?

What happened that night wasn't criminal, but it definitely was not okay, due to the fact that Grace left the encounter shaken up and feeling violated. There's no doubt that bad dates happen, we've seemingly all been on one. Whether it was an encounter that moved fast or a lack of effective communication, these two independent adults just weren't on the same page at the same time.

People need to be educated on consistent consent. Verbal consent and verbal cues are the most definitive in romantic and sexual encounters. And just because they are given at the beginning of the encounter does not mean it remains so by the end. It's about checking in from start to finish how your partner feels.

Not only that, people should pay attention to non-verbal cues of discomfort coming from their partners such as pulling away, walking away, pushing away, and facial expressions pertaining to discomfort or unwanted physical advances. We can also recognize nonverbal cues of pleasure such as reciprocating soft touches, nodding...etc.

It can be difficult for people to verbalize their discomfort and would rather rely on more subtle actions to get their point across. It's up to people to learn how to be more confident in the way they speak up about feeling uncomfortable, but it's also up to people to pick up on nonverbal cues as well.

It's an incredibly complex situation that lies in the grey area. Blurred lines are difficult to comprehend, so what can we do?