Yale is one of only two colleges in Connecticut with an affirmative consent policy. If I hadn’t gone to Yale, I might have blamed myself when, as a freshman, a man pinned me to a wall in a frat house basement and kissed my mouth and my neck even as I tried to pull away. I might have thought it was my fault for not having the strength or the courage to say “no,” for hoping desperately that he would know from the way I turned my head and tried to squirm away that I wasn’t interested and that I wanted him to stop. Without Yale’s affirmative consent policy, I would have believed that I had been the one at fault and that he had done nothing wrong. I would have been haunted by guilt and shame and disappointment with myself.

Instead, I knew immediately that not only was the man the one at fault, but also that he should have known better. How? Because just like me, that man had been required to attend training sessions during freshman orientation and again in sophomore year, workshops that taught every Yale student that the absence of a “no” does not mean “yes.”

Affirmative consent does not entirely eliminate sexual assault. It is not a magic bullet. But it does decrease sexual assault, and it sets the bar for consent where it should be: enthusiastic, positive, unwavering. Equally important is the burden it lifts from victims’ shoulders, and places firmly where it belongs: on the shoulders of those who do not respect the bodily autonomy of others.

Please — help lift that burden from victims and put it on perpetrators. Right now, college students all over Connecticut believe that they are obliged to fight back, scream and risk their safety in order for their sexual assault to be considered valid or legitimate. There are many circumstances where those things are impossible. Moreover, why teach students that by default they should assume that someone is willing to engage in sexual activity with them? Instead, let’s teach students to pay attention to, listen to, and respect their sexual partners. Let’s teach them not to assume consent, but to ask for it. Let’s set the bar where it should be, right from the start of most students’ sex lives.

Sexual assault is devastating enough without the added burden of guilt and self-recrimination. Affirmative consent policies save victims from that pain, and demand sexual accountability and empathy from students instead of allowing for assumptions and willful ignorance. Affirmative consent policies protect victims and punish rapists. It’s that simple.