

Incorporating Consent into the Everyday

It's never too early to start incorporating messages about consent into your interactions with the children in your life. Consent isn't just about permission to touch. It's about shared power, and involves constant and collaborative conversations. Building a child's circuitry around consent is about developing their sense of self and empathy for others.

When we are teaching children about consent, we are really letting them know that:

If someone broke their body boundary, it is not their fault.

We are a trusted & caring source of information & support.

They can trust their instincts, feelings & body cues.

They have rights, & so do others.

They're voice matters.

These conversations are ongoing and can happen over years. Use your child's questions, family discussions, books, media and everyday situations as opportunities to have open conversations so that the 'one big awkward talk' can be avoided.

All children are different, and you know your child best. The following ideas are best guided by your child's ability to focus, their interests and the questions they have.

SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

- Britt Hawthorne | @britthawthorne
- Dr. Becky Kennedy | @drbeckyatgoodinside
- Sex Positive Families, LLC | @sexpositive_families
- Consent Comes First | @consentcomesfirst
- Rosalia Rivera, Safety Skills | @consentparenting
- E2E Publishing, Children's Books & Activities | @educate2empower



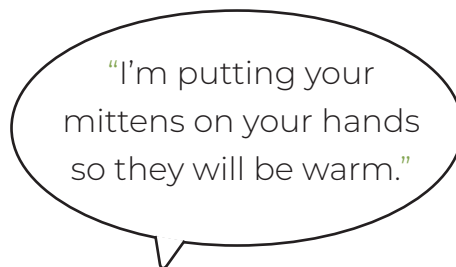
Birth to 2 Years Old

- Use the correct terms for your child's private parts from birth.

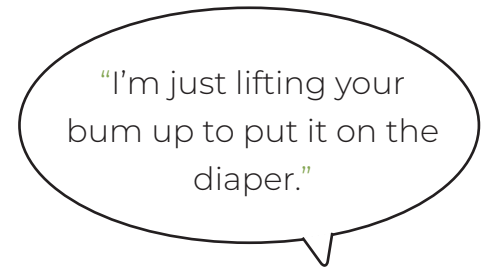
For example: Penis, bum, testicles, vulva, vagina, breasts, mouth, etc.

- Tell your child what you are doing to their body and why.

That could sound like:



or



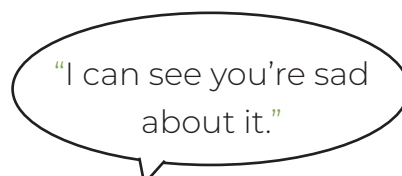
- Note your child's body language.

For example: During tickling or touching games, when interacting with someone they do not know, respond immediately when a child is engaged or disengaged.

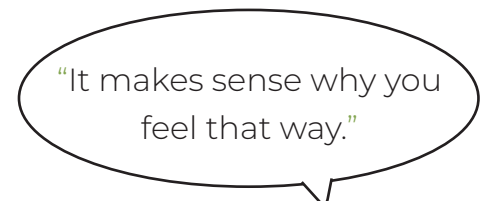
- Encourage medical professionals to talk to your child about what they are doing and why.

- Validate their feelings.

That could sound like:



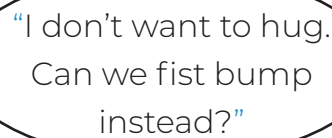
or



2 - 3 Years Old

- Introduce the term 'body boundary' - The invisible space around our bodies that can change depending on who we're with and our mood.
- Let your child know that they can say 'no' to any touch and offer different ways to greet another person.

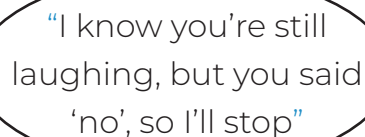
That could sound like:



"I don't want to hug.
Can we fist bump
instead?"

- Ask your child "Can I have a kiss/hug?" before you offer one.
- Let your child know they can say 'no' to tickling games. Stop when they indicate they are no longer having fun or say 'no' or 'stop'.

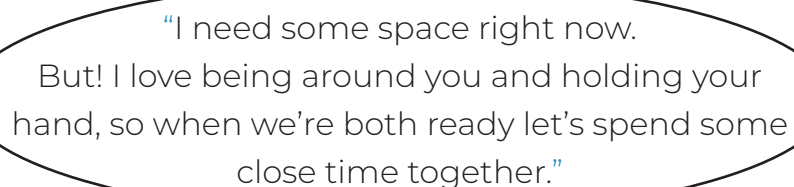
That could sound like:



"I know you're still
laughing, but you said
'no', so I'll stop"

- Let your child have choice and agency whenever possible and safe.
For example: Asking for a bite of your child's snack, asking to take their photo, asking to share info they've told you with another person.
- Model empathy.
For example: Giving others full attention, admitting how you're feeling.
- Model your own body boundaries.

That could sound like:

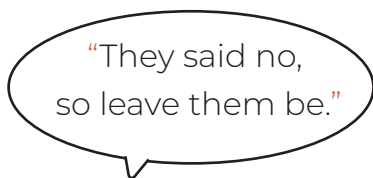


"I need some space right now.
But! I love being around you and holding your
hand, so when we're both ready let's spend some
close time together."

3 - 6 Years Old

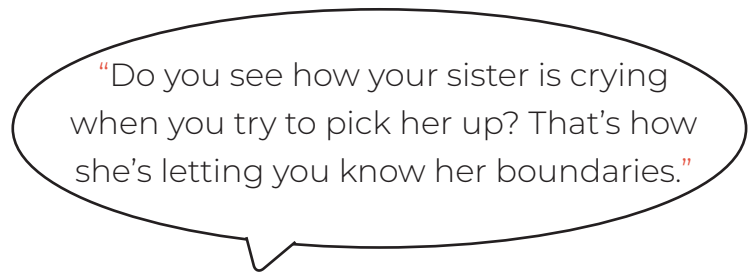
- Reinforce that children can trust their feelings and instincts, even when they inconvenience others.
- Use interactions between siblings/playmates to practice boundaries and consent.

That could sound like:



"They said no, so leave them be."

or



"Do you see how your sister is crying when you try to pick her up? That's how she's letting you know her boundaries."

- Talk about private spaces that are just for them, and discuss ways to enter someone else's private space.

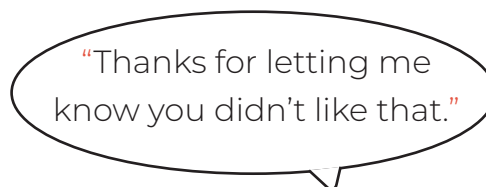
For example: Knocking on a door and waiting for a response before going in.

- Model 'rejection' in a gracious and respectful way.
- Ask your child to notice how they're feeling today and encourage them to explore these feelings.

For example: Ask them to notice where the feeling is in their body, what colour the feeling is, how big their feeling is or if they could touch their feeling, what it could feel like.

- Notice and thank your child for communicating their own boundaries

That could sound like:



"Thanks for letting me know you didn't like that."

- Let your child identify people in their lives who they feel safe with and they could talk to (include people inside and outside your family).

7 - 9 Years Old

- Notice and talk about the different ways people say 'no', both verbally and through body language.

For example: Silence, shrugging, turning away.

- Let your child know that they don't have to suppress their needs or wants to satisfy others or make them happy.

That could sound like:

"You're allowed to have that toy. Those are your sister's sad feelings and it's not your job to make her happy."

- Start talking about online relationships in the same way you talk about in person relationships.

For example: Respect, boundaries, and communication still apply!

**If you have follow-up questions or any concerns,
feel free to reach out to us.**



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