

# TALKING TO YOUR KIDS



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It's never too early to teach your kids about their bodies, their private parts, and who can and cannot touch them.

*They can decide who touches them and who doesn't.*

Explain that if anyone — even Mommy, Daddy, or someone you know well — touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable (even a back rub or kiss on the cheek), they can talk to you about it.

Teach your children that they are allowed to determine their physical space and boundaries.

This PDF will offer some helpful points and strategies in helping you talk with your children about their physical boundaries and teach them how to stay safe.

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Talking to your kids about sexual assault or abuse can be difficult. That's why we compiled a list of ways to approach this important conversation with your children.

## 1 Teach Children About Their Bodies

Children should know the anatomical names for their body parts and be able to communicate about their bodies. In everyday tasks such as bathing or going to the bathroom, use formal terms such as "penis" and "vagina" in addition to slang words you may hear elsewhere.

These conversations should be ongoing as children continue to develop. Don't allow your discomfort with this topic to prevent your child from vital, healthy information.

**It is our job as guardians to inform, equip, and protect our children.**

There are age-appropriate children's books which can help with the conversation. (See Additional Resources at the end of this document for more information.)

## 2 Teach Your Child About Healthy and Safe Body Boundaries

Make sure your child knows these special parts of their bodies should be kept private. Explain that sometimes we need help with cleanliness or health regarding those areas.

However, parents and doctors should always ask permission before these private parts are touched, and they should always provide a reason. ("I am going to check your bum to make sure it's healthy.")

Make sure your children are aware that no one may hug, kiss, tickle, hit, or touch them ANYWHERE without their permission.

**When they request for something to stop, it needs to stop immediately.**

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## 3 Never Force Your Child to Hug or Kiss Someone

When you force a child to hug or kiss someone they don't want to, you are teaching them that others can override their body autonomy when it comes to showing affection — the very thing predators abuse.

Giving your child the choice helps him or her decide who they allow in their inner circle and is a huge part in teaching them that they are in control of their own bodies.

**While it's important to be polite, it should never be at the expense of your child's protection.**

## 4 Teach Them Predators Can Be Anyone

Protect your kids by teaching them that just because you know or love someone does not mean they won't hurt you.

And make sure they know they can confide in you if anyone does touch them in a way that makes them uncomfortable. Diffuse the power inequality by letting your kids know they won't "get in trouble" for "telling."

## Educate and Empower

your young ones with the knowledge that Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle, Pastor, even Friend are more likely to touch them inappropriately than a stranger.\*

\*This might sound too horrific and dramatic, but that's *exactly* what the abuser is counting on— for you to NEVER suspect them.

Provide your child the option of hugging, kissing, or waving hello or goodbye.

Even if they have enjoyed embracing a person in the past, they still have a right to refuse this time.

Explain to your relatives that you're teaching your child body safety and they get to choose how they interact with others.

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## 5 Use a Code Word

Some kids have a hard enough time understanding their emotions without the tragedy of sexual assault, so make it easy for them to tell you something is wrong.

Come up with a code word or phrase with your child that they can use if someone makes them uncomfortable by anything they say or do.

## 6 Ask Questions

Many victims of sexual abuse confide in someone! You want that someone to be you! Ask your children questions and ask **MORE** questions.

But be aware, most children will close up if they believe their answers will get them or someone else in trouble, so be sure to be as non-threatening as possible.

### For Example...

Teach your kids about “tricky people.” Tell them that they can tell you, “I think \_\_\_\_\_ might be a tricky person” or “\_\_\_\_\_ did something a tricky person might do.”

\*The code word can be as simple as “peanut butter sandwich.”

*Ask your child if anyone has ever made them uncomfortable by what they've said or how they've touched them. **Be specific.** It may be awkward to you, but it could save your child.*

## 7 Respect Your Child's Comfort


If your child expresses a dislike in someone, find out the reason why and look for ways to protect them. Children will typically have an easier time saying they dislike someone than pinpointing what *exactly* about that person makes them uncomfortable.

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## 8 Be Approachable

Let your kids know that **NO MATTER WHAT** anyone tells them, they can always tell you anything. Teach them that if someone tells them not to tell their parents something, then it is important they tell you right away.

Create a **“no punishment”** policy for confessing secrets so they know they won't be in trouble for anything they tell you—even if they have to admit to going against your rules to tell you what happened.



Have a family rule of “no secrets” from Mommy and Daddy, even if someone has told them to keep quiet.

## 9 Teach the Word “No”

“No” is a powerful word. Ask anyone with a two-year-old and they will tell you their child has no problem telling anyone “NO.” As our kids get older, we teach them to be polite and to respect adults, but with this, they can lose the ability to tell adults “NO.”

### **Empower your kids to say “NO!”**

Practice this with your kids. Yell “NO,” say it firmly, stamp your foot, and point your finger as you say it. Make it a game. This training will help your child say it if they ever find themselves in an uncomfortable situation. A predator will not continue to pursue a child that is likely to blow their cover, so teach your child that “NO” is a good word.

**While being respectful is a good thing, NO ONE is allowed to disrespect your child. Respect is earned, and “no” is part of respecting themselves.**

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## 10 Check in Sporadically, Be Present Whenever Possible

Whenever possible, be with your child for lessons, sports practices, etc. A music teacher should be okay with you being present during their lesson.

Most parents can't be around 100% of the time, but there are ways to minimize opportunity for abuse. **Randomly come home, stop in at your child's daycare center, or FaceTime your child's caretaker.** This way, they learn you may pop in at any time.

The people in your child's life won't expect to have unlimited, unsupervised time with your child and that alone could help prevent abuse.

## 11 Suspect Anyone

Sexual abusers can come from anywhere and take many forms. Much of what parents observe is just the tip of the iceberg. Stop giving people the benefit of the doubt when they show an unusual interest in your child. Don't assume that your own family members are exempt from unhealthy or abusive behavior with your child.

*Teacher*                      Pastor                      **Friend**                      Cousin  
   **Babysitter**                      Brother                      Uncle                      *Dad*  
   Grandpa                      Grandma                      Aunt                      Neighbor  
**Coach**                      *Mom*                      **Sister**

It's not that everyone must be feared, but **always pay attention to how people treat your child** and never assume because someone is a close friend that they're incapable of abuse.

**Do what you can to protect your child regardless of who takes care of them.**

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AMANDA ZARATE, FOUNDER OF  
FIGHTING FOR ME, INC. :

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PDF reviewed by Deanna Daniels, LMFT, Executive Director

### *Additional Resources: Children's Bibliotherapy Books*

1. Bobby and Mandeel's Good Touch and Bad Touch Children's Safety Book by Robert Kahn
2. It's my body: A book to teach young children how to resist uncomfortable touch by Lory Freeman
3. Your body belongs to you by Cornelia Maude Spelman
4. I said No a kid's guide to keeping private parts private by Zack and Kimberly King  
  
(Book was written by a real family. Both the mother and son who experienced sexual abuse wrote this to help others)
5. Miles is the Boss of his body by Samantha Kurtzman Counter
6. God made all of me: A book to help children protect their bodies by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb

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