

Teaching Children About Boundaries And Consent

Children have a **RIGHT** to have their boundaries respected, and to give or deny consent.

Teach children that permission is important. People need to ask for permission with it comes to physical contact. If someone does something to them without their permission, they can tell that person to stop, and expect them to do so.

Let your child change their mind. Your child might initially say yes in a situation, then say no. Accept the change, and teach them to accept if someone else changes their mind, too. Consent is not a “forever yes”.

Allow your child to give physical affection on their terms. Don't force them to hug, kiss or touch anyone, for any reason. Offer alternatives, like a high-five or fist-bump.

Ask your child for their consent. “May I hold your hand?” “Can I have a hug?” Asking them for consent teaches them that they have a say in how and when someone touches them.

Model consent. Let your child see that when someone says “no,” you respect it, and that you expect others to respect you when you say no.

Children have an **OBLIGATION** to respect the boundaries of others, and others' right to give or deny consent

Encourage children to read facial expressions and body language. With young children, playing charade-style guessing games to identify expressions such as happy, angry, sad, frustrated or scared can help them learn to recognize these expressions.

Teach your child that “no” and “stop” are important words and should be honored. If someone tells them “no” or “stop,” they should immediately stop what they are doing.

Explain, in an age appropriate way, that when it comes to physical or sexual contact, only “yes” means “yes”. Starting and then continuing something until the other person says “no” is not the way to look for consent. Teach children to ask for permission and wait for a “yes”.

Set boundaries, particularly with older children, about “touch games” such as butt-slapping, and boys hitting one another in the genitals and pinching each other's nipples to cause pain. Explain that these types of touches are not games. It is harassment, and possibly assault.



To report suspected child abuse, call 1-877-NJ-ABUSE.



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