

Your Body Belongs to You

3-4 Year Olds

Day 1 of 5

Objectives

To give children a sense of mastery over their own bodies.

To distinguish between touch which is acceptable to the child and that which is not.

To role-play responding to everyday examples of unwanted touch.

To establish the three elements of effective communication:

- eye contact,
- say what you mean, and
- consistent body language.

To use these skills in role-playing.

Introduction for adult

Young children already know what touch they like and what touch they don't like. They have a socialized sense of touch which sets general expectations. They know what touch seems wrong or makes them uneasy.

As you will see, none of the examples used actually constitute sexual abuse. However, if children learn to say "no" when they don't want someone to pinch their cheek, or to pick them up, they will be able to say "no" to other kinds of unwanted touch.

Prevention happens before abuse begins, in the first moments of uncomfortableness, when an offender is still testing to see if the child will go along. So, this kind of touch, which would be acceptable to the child under most circumstances, becomes the child's first opportunity to speak up long before abuse begins.

For this reason, it is important to keep judgements of good and bad out of the role-plays. A hug may be wonderful or awful depending on the relationship and the intentions of the person involved. Prevention occurs at the level of the child with his/her own interpretation of what is happening. Children who have been told all hugs are good will not trust their own feelings and will be hampered in their efforts to say "no" when they feel uneasy.

Remember, role-playing is acting the situation out so children learn the skill, not just the concept.

Introduction for children

Who does your body belong to?

Many children of this age will respond with "mom and dad." Talk about who combs their hair, brushes their teeth, dresses them.

If your body belongs to you, then do you think you should be able to say who touches you and how? I think so too. Let's see what the children on the videotape are learning about their bodies.

Watch videotape

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UoP7QLUpN0&list=PLSrCYUKewj4dF58wxBmPx0QayhpO6d34T&index=4&t=0s>

Role-play

RP: What if your aunt always pinches your cheeks and you wish she wouldn't? What could you say and do?

Children might respond with: "Please don't do that," "Stop it," or "I don't like when you to do that."

How could you show her you don't like having your cheeks pinched?

The child should move away or move your hand away.

Do you think grownups can read your mind? Of course not.

So, if you don't want someone to touch you, you have to say so.

There are two ways you can tell someone you don't like what they're doing. One way is with your body and the other way is with your voice.

RP: What if I'm a friend of your dad and I always want you to sit on my lap, but you don't like to anymore? How would you let me know you want to get down?

Children will usually say "Stop." You want them to be specific about what they want. "Please put me down." Often children do not move when they say this, so you want them to demonstrate.

Now show me how you would move to get down.

You want the children to try to get down. Even if they have seen this demonstrated on the videotape, it is just a concept. Each child has to learn to put the two together with action. That is the heart of making the skills real for each of the child.

Good, now let's put them together.

You want them to say, "Please put me down" at the same time they are trying to get down.

Good, that was really clear. I knew exactly what you wanted.

RP: What if I'm another friend of your dad and I love giving bear hugs, but lately it seems like I'm hugging too hard or you don't like the way it makes you feel? How would you let me know you want me to stop?

Again, you want them to combine saying, and showing with their body, what they want. You also want with each role-play to expand the options of the children in terms of language. For example, saying: "No," "Please don't do that," or "I don't like that."

RP: What if I come to tuck in your shirt? If you don't like for me to do that, what would you say?

"Don't do that" is not effective if you want their shirt tucked in. They might say "Thank you, I think I can do that myself."

RP: What about people who tickle you? It's fun at first, but then it's not fun anymore. What would you say and do?

But what if you're laughing so they think you don't mean it when you say, "Stop."

One suggestion is they could talk to the person when they are not being tickled. Another is to say, "Even though I'm laughing, I really want you to stop."

RP: What about someone in your family who picks you up all the time, but you feel you're getting too big for that. What could you say and do?

"Please don't pick me up, I'm getting too big."

If anyone touches you in a way that you don't like, that makes you feel funny inside or that you think is wrong, tell them to stop.

Are there some kinds of touch that you like with some people and not with others? Sure, there are. Each of you is different and what you like is different. That's part of what makes you special!