

Speak Up For Yourself

7-8-9 Year Olds

Day 1 of 4

Objectives

To give children a sense of ownership and 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 saying "no" to unwanted touch with people known to the child.

To acknowledge that individual children have different feelings about touch.

Introduction for adult

Children learn they can speak up about what happens to their bodies when we teach them, and show them by our own behavior, that their bodies do indeed belong to themselves. Children already know what touch they like and what touch they don't like. They know what touch seems wrong or makes them uneasy. Prevention of sexual abuse training builds upon these elements and gives children permission to communicate their feelings appropriately and effectively.

As you will see, none of the examples used in the program actually constitute 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 occurs before abuse begins, in the first moments of uncomfortableness, when an offender is still testing to see if the child will go along. So, the child's first opportunity to speak up, to stop what's happening long before abuse begins, comes with touch which might be acceptable to the child under most circumstances, but is unacceptable with this person at this time.

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 out each scenario so children learn the skill, not just the concept.

Introduction for children

We're going to talk about taking care of yourself. And, of course, taking care of yourself should start with your own body.

Who does your body belong to?

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 watch the videotape and see what you can do if someone touches you in a way that's not all right with you.

Watch videotape

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ9F1uUKKWE&list=PLSrCYUKewj4dF58wxBmPx0QayhpO6d34T&index=10>

Role-play

If someone touches you in a way you don't want them to, you have permission to tell them you don't like it. Let's try a "What if..." game.

RP: What if a friend of your dad's always plays with your hair and you don't like it?

If you like it, is it okay?

Maybe, but if you don't like it, you could say, "Please don't do that."

Is that rude?

Would you get in trouble?

If you don't like what someone is doing, you need to tell them and show them.

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

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

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 your friend's mom 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?

Coach the child to use words, body language and eye contact.

Not all cultural groups are comfortable with direct eye contact. If that is the case, having the first two elements (saying "no" and consistent body language) is sufficient as long as the communication is clear.

RP: What if I'm a friend of your mom's and I like picking you up and hugging you, but lately you don't like the way it makes you feel? How would you let me know you want me to stop?

Again, you want the child to combine saying, and showing with her body, what she wants. You also want with each role-play to expand the options, giving the child more ways to say "no."

RP: What about people who tickle or wrestle with you? It's fun for a while, but then it's not fun anymore. What do you say and do?

What if you're laughing so the person thinks you don't mean it when you say, "Stop?"

One suggestion is that they could discuss it with the person at a time when they're not being tickled. Another is to say, "I know I'm laughing, but I really want you to stop."

RP: What if you don't like kisses on the lips anymore? If you don't like it, what could you say and do?

Certainly it is not appropriate to actually role-play kissing, but talk and role-play with your child how to resolve this dilemma.

Children are sensitive about hurting others feelings, so coming up with something like, "Grandpa, I really love you, but I don't want to be kissed on the lips anymore, I want to be kissed on the cheek."

RP: What about someone in your family who swats you on the bottom or messes up your hair, but you feel you're getting too big for that? What could you say and do?

The child could say, "Please don't do that, I'm getting too big for that." Moving away shows body language consistent with the words.

If anyone touches you in a way that you don't like, that makes you feel funny inside or that you think is wrong, you should speak up and say, "Stop it."

Are there some kinds of touch that you like with some people and not with others?

Sure there are. Each of us is different and what we like is different. That's part of what makes you special!