

HOW TO TEACH CONSENT TO MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

#NATIONALSEXEDUCATIONDAY

Touch your child with warmth and love. You are communicating respect and consent.

Warm, caring, respectful, consensual conversations at home transfer over into your child's life.

Model consensual behavior with friends and family. Your kids are watching. "May I hug you?" "Would you share your cookies with me?"

Demonstrate and discuss what the word 'no' means.

Help them understand that their body is their own. One way is to ask before sharing hugs. "May I hug you?" "Let's ask her if she'd like a hug."



If your child is uncomfortable with certain shows of affection, such as hugging, offer an option such as a high-five or blowing a kiss. Explain to family members that you are teaching your child to respect their own boundaries and the boundaries of others.

Rather than saying, "Give Grandma a kiss" ask, "Would you like to give Grandma a kiss?" These conversations can take place before the family event.

When your child says "stop" or "no" while tickling or hugging, stop immediately. You are demonstrating appropriate consensual responses.

CONSENT & MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

ACTION STEPS

- Watch amaze.org videos about consent together.
- Come up with a secret message system in which your child can write “anonymous” questions and you respond in writing. Perhaps a box of notecards or convert a shoe box into a mailbox.
- Pick a movie or TV show to watch together to purposefully discuss body language and facial expressions. Make a contest of it - who saw the most negative or positive non-verbal cues?
- Give them a book that discusses consent.

Help them identify their inner voice. Does they feel uncomfortable when someone asks them to do something they don't want to do? Listen to that voice, their gut reaction.

Help kids to read body language. Do faces look sad or scared? Are they relaxed and happy? What might that mean? How are people holding themselves? Are their arms crossed in front of them? Are they standing away from the person speaking to them? Use media such as TV to show examples.

We must teach children to share with others, but sometimes it is okay to say no with kindness.

Teach your child to respectfully accept “no” for an answer.

At this age they are starting to have romantic interests. Teach importance of asking before touching.

Be aware of social constructs that define how “boys” and “girls” are expected to behave and how that might play out in relationships.

What does a healthy relationship look like?

Access to digital media is common at this age. Discuss the permanence of posts. Consider how someone would feel if a certain photo was posted online...forever. How would they feel?

Discuss consequences of non-consensual advances, either physical or on social media. There are legal consequences, but also social and emotional consequences as well. Help your child think through these.

Explain how to be an upstander: If they see a peer crossing a line, stop it. They can do this by calling their peer out on it, they can take the other person away from the situation, they can divert the peer's attention with something else.

SPECIAL NOTE



We are at an important crossroad when it comes to talking to our boys about consent. In this #MeToo movement we are aware that conversations about consent and respect are of the utmost importance. These conversations about respecting others begins before our kids can talk - body language is a fabulous communicator. Conversations about treating others kindly, and that no one has the right to touch, kiss, or have sex without the other person's permission, must be ongoing.

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