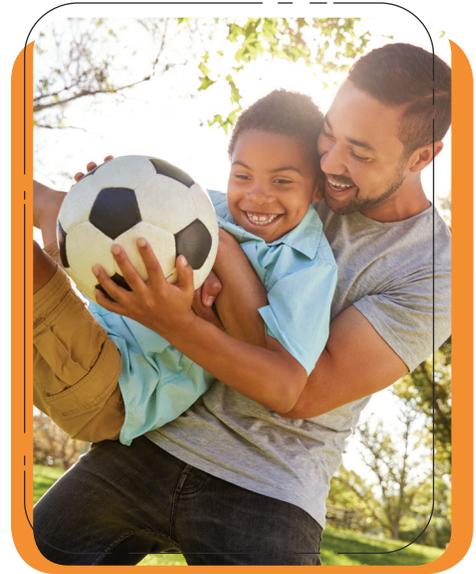


GUIDE TO TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT CONSENT

The idea of talking to your kids about consent can be uncomfortable or overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be! At this age, we want to lay the foundation for setting boundaries, making decisions about their bodies, asking for permission, and responding appropriately when someone says no to them. These conversations empower kids to confidently make decisions about their bodies, feel comfortable talking to you about these topics, and ultimately make it less likely that they will become victimized.

There are many types of scenarios and interactions that are already occurring in your child's life when it comes to the topic of consent. Use these interactions as conversation starters or teachable moments. The following examples are just a few different opportunities that you could use to begin – or continue – talking to your child about consent.



♥♥ OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONVERSATION ♥♥

Remember: Having these conversations is not just a one-time event. Use this guide to help you continue having important conversations with the kids in your life. These discussions are an essential part of a child's development.



OPPORTUNITY #1 YOUR CHILD IS SAD THAT THEIR FRIEND DIDN'T WANT TO SIT NEXT TO THEM ON THE BUS

We want to encourage children to accept a no answer, but we can also understand the sad or upset feelings that might come along with hearing "no" and help them to deal with those hard feelings in a positive way. You might say something like this:

- ♥ "I'm proud of you for respecting your friend's answer and choosing another seat. That shows that you care about your friend."
- ♥ "It seems like you're sad, I can understand that. It can be hard to hear a friend or someone we love tell us no."
- ♥ "What do you think you could do with your sad feelings? What would make you feel better?"



OPPORTUNITY #2 YOU'RE WATCHING TV AND A TEACHABLE MOMENT PRESENTS ITSELF

This could be content about violence, bullying, substance abuse, or a sexual situation. When this happens, it's a great time to either pause the show or talk to your child afterwards about what you just saw. Here are some questions you can ask to start the conversation:

- ♥ "If you were in that situation what would you do? What would you say?"
- ♥ "I hope you know that you could always talk to me if that ever happens to you or if you have any questions about a situation like that."



OPPORTUNITY #3 YOU'RE PLANNING A SURPRISE PARTY FOR A FRIEND

You have instructed your child to keep the surprise a secret. Language around surprises and secrets can be tricky with kids because you don't want them to keep secrets from you if they're being hurt in any way. Here's a way to help differentiate surprises and secrets:

- ♥ "Surprises are happy things that eventually everyone knows about. Our family doesn't keep secrets because they can hurt other people."



OPPORTUNITY #4 YOU ARE A TEACHER IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

There has been an increase in problems with students taking belongings from others without asking. You might address this behavior in the classroom by having a conversation about consent:

- ♥ "In this classroom we show respect and care for each other. When we want to use something that belongs to someone else or someone else is currently using, it's important to ask for their permission."
- ♥ "If they say no, we need to listen to their answer, even if that makes us feel sad or mad. We should not take it from them without their permission."
- ♥ "You can always come to me if you need help asking for permission."



OPPORTUNITY #5 YOU'RE LEAVING A FAMILY EVENT AND GRANDMA IS ASKING YOUR CHILD FOR A HUG GOODBYE

The child is avoiding grandma and hiding behind you. This is a conversation you might want to have with other adults in your life so that they understand the importance of respecting children's boundaries. You might say something like this in the moment:

- ♥ To Grandma: "It looks like someone doesn't feel like giving hugs today. Some days we like hugs and other days we don't and that's okay. We never have to give hugs to anyone."
- ♥ To your child: "We all show our respect and love in different ways. How would you like to say good-bye to Grandma today?" Provide your child with options like a high five, a wave, or simply saying "goodbye."

Remember, it's OK if you don't have all the answers! If you are unsure of something, feel free to let the child know that you will get back to them. Then, take some time, talk to other people, and/or access resources. A great place for resources on this topic is at [SafeSecureKids.org](https://www.SafeSecureKids.org).