

Personal Safety & Boundaries

Teaching children that they can set boundaries for themselves and that they must respect the boundaries of others is the first step in teaching them about consent. It is important for parents and caregivers to model this behavior and respect boundaries as well.

Here are key talking points that reinforce the importance of consent and will help teach your child to be safe and respectful of other people's boundaries and cues.

YOUR BODY IS YOUR BODY. You get to say whether, when, and how people touch you. If someone touches you in a way that you don't like, tell them to stop. If they don't stop, tell me, or another adult you trust. That includes, if the person who touched you is also an adult. I love you, and your safety and well-being are my number one concern.

YOU CAN'T TOUCH SOMEONE IF THEY DO NOT WANT TO BE TOUCHED. If someone tells you they don't like how you're touching them, or asks you to stop, STOP immediately and don't do it again.

YOU CAN ALWAYS COME TALK WITH ME if you feel you or anyone you know is in an unhealthy relationship. If you or people you care about don't want to come to me or another trusted adult, go online to breakthecycle.org for help and information.

IT'S NEVER OKAY TO FORWARD PRIVATE TEXTS OR PHOTOS to other people without someone's permission. If you send partly or fully naked photos of yourself to someone – even a romantic partner – you may have broken the law and could be in trouble. Think about how you would feel if the messages and images you send are shared with others.

IF YOU ARE EVER FORCED into sexual activity of any kind, you should come to me or go to another trusted adult as soon as possible so that you can get the care you need.

TIPS:

Understanding and modeling consent can help your child be safe and have healthier relationships in the future. If your child seems uncomfortable in a particular situation, such as receiving a hug from a family member, be their advocate. Bring to your family member's attention what your child is verbally or non-verbally communicating and ask them to try again later.

Model healthy behavior in your relationships as much as you can including communication, compromise, respect, support and healthy boundaries. If you have special friendships, talk with your kids about what makes them great.

