

**Teaching Children with ASD  
about Personal Safety**

Mary Worthington, M.Ed.  
June 18, 2012  
KATC Autism Institute

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



**Welcome**

Individuals on the autism spectrum

Parents supporting individuals  
on the autism spectrum

Professionals supporting individuals  
on the autism spectrum

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**nova**  
Network of Victim Assistance

[novabucks.org](http://novabucks.org)

Donate Volunteer  
Get advice about reporting and safety services and services

Home About Us Prevention Education Victim Services Get Involved News & Events Contact

**In Crisis? Get help 24 hours a day.**  
Llamada directa de 24 horas, apoyo en crisis en español y en inglés.  
**Call 1-800-675-6900**  
All services are free and confidential to victims, family and friends.  
[Get Help Now](#)

**Education**  
We offer personal safety educational programs to children and teens, parents and teachers, older adults, and individuals with disabilities in schools, community centers and professional settings.

**Advocacy**  
NOVA is an advocate for victims and victims' rights. We provide legal support and accompaniment to all criminal justice proceedings. We speak in support of victims and victims' rights on the local, state, and national level.

**Counseling**  
NOVA provides absolutely free, one-on-one short-term counseling to help victims, their families and significant others to identify and work through their thoughts and feelings surrounding the

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Today's Agenda

- Recognize personal safety issues
- Positive steps to self-advocacy
- What personal safety education for children with ASD looks like
- Body boundaries
- Family skill building strategies
- Reducing risk
- On the spectrum and digital technology
- Q & A

---

---

---

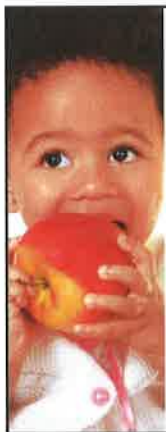
---

---

---

---

---



### Using characteristics as strengths

- Personal safety **now through adulthood**
- For good decisions
- Self-advocacy

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

personal safety education

your experience 

- Did you receive this information?
- Who presented the information?
- How did you feel at the time?
- How was the information presented?
- How did you react?
- What did people say or do that was helpful?
- What did people say or do that was not helpful?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Recent comprehensive national survey

- 6.1% of all children had been sexually victimized in the past year
- 10.2% suffered some form of maltreatment (*other than sexual assault*) including:
  - physical abuse
  - psychological abuse
  - emotional abuse
  - child neglect
  - custodial interference

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., Hamby, S., & Arache, K. (2009). Children's exposure to violence: A comprehensive national survey (NCJ 227744). Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Retrieved from Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/pdffiles1/ojpop227744.pdf>

---

---

---

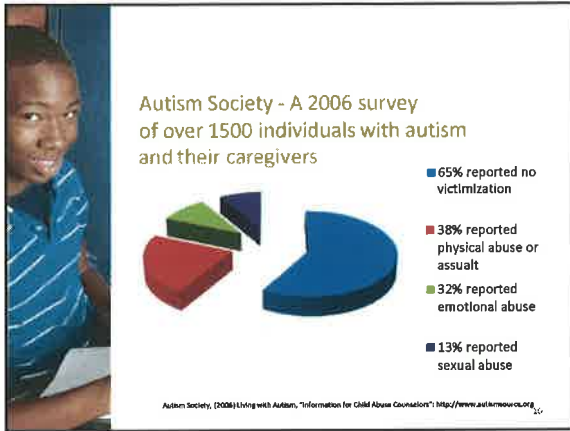
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Child sexual abuse** is any sexual contact with a child.

It can take many forms, including:

- touching behaviors
- non-touching behaviors

11

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



**Touching:**

- OK **Safe**
- Not OK **Unsafe or Uncomfortable**

**Requests:**

- OK **Safe**
- Not OK **Unsafe or Uncomfortable**

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



- occurs everyday
- in every community
- in familiar settings
- with non-strangers

13

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



Despite the stereotypes of a stranger in a trench coat hanging around the playground, child abuse offenders are most likely someone the child knows and trusts.

**93% of the time, the child knows his/her abuser.**

U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2008. Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement. 2008

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



- respect for authority
- "no"
- autonomy
- boundaries
- knowledge

15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**points of consideration**

- parent's style
- when only two alternatives are considered
- fear
- controlling the situation
- building a supportive environment
  - information
  - providing support when needed
  - modeling behavior

16

---

---

---

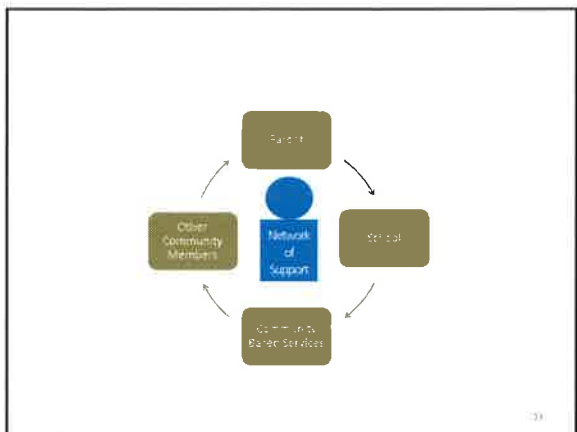
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

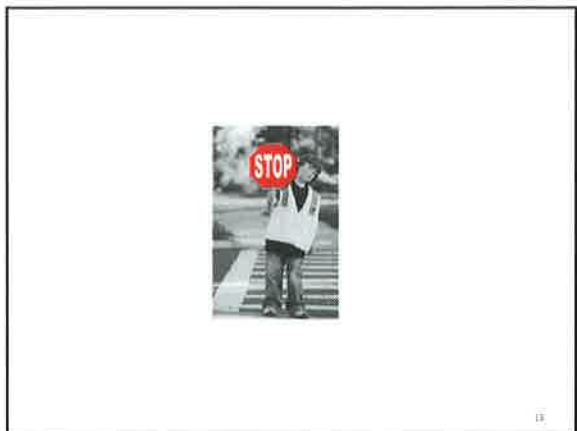
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



- body ownership
- respect for one's body
- appropriate boundaries
- promotion of healthy behaviors
- recognition of sexual abuse or exploitation
- appropriate non-compliance
- age-appropriate
- respectful of the person

25

---

---

---


---

---


---

---

---



- Personal Safety prevention education for general education classrooms since 1984
- Personal Safety practice-informed curriculum prevention education for children with ASD developed in 2007



26

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

What might be a challenge for a child on the autism spectrum?



27

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



- abstract or conceptual thinking
- listening skills
- taking another's perspective
- understanding the behavior of others

21

---

---

---

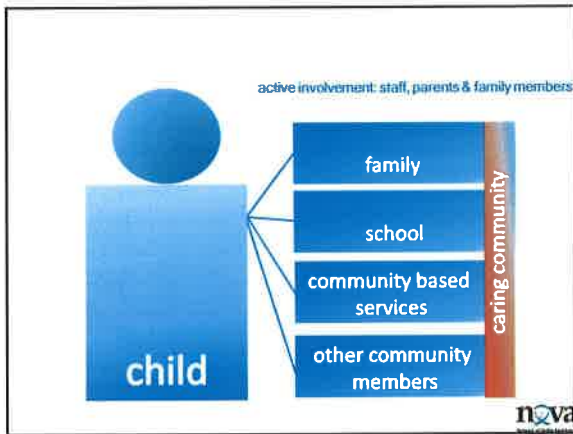
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

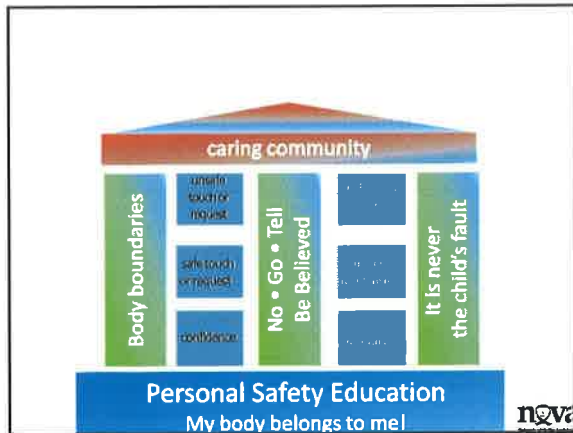
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---



Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

### Lesson Overview

- All About Me
- Just Right Space
- It's All My Body
- OK Touches
- Not OK Touches
- Ways To Say No
- Public and Private Places
- Telling Someone
- Talking About Touching
- Celebration



nova

---

---

---

---

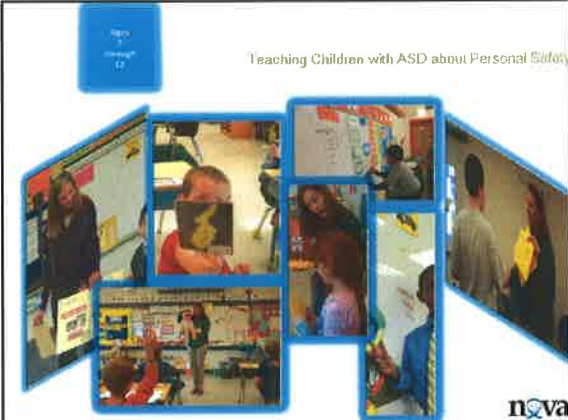
---

---

---

---

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety



nova

---

---

---

---

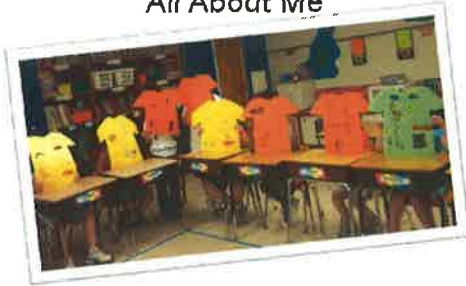
---

---

---

---

### All About Me



Lesson 1

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

27

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Just Right Space



Lesson 2

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Just Right Space  
Skill Practice

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Demonstrating Too Close  
Skill Practice

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### It Is All My Body



Lesson 3

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Body Ownership

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### OK Touches



Lesson 4

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Demonstrating Safe Touch  
Skill Practice

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Not OK Touches



Lesson 5

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

12

---

---

---

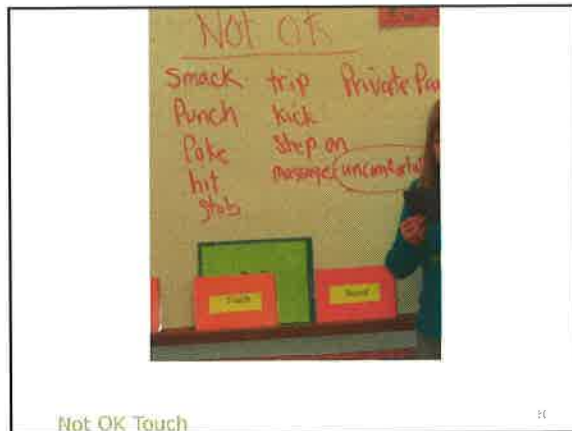
---

---

---

---

---



Not OK Touch

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Ways To Say No



Lesson 6

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Skill Practice "No"

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Public and Private Places



Lesson 7

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Telling Someone



Lesson 8

Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Safe Tree

44

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



This is Janie.  
An older person touched her on a  
private part of her body for no good  
reason. It was a **NOT OK** touch.



This made Janie feel sad and angry.  
Janie thought about who she could  
tell.



Janie thought about telling her aunt.



Janie thought about telling her friends.



Janie thought about telling her  
grandfather.



Janie thought about telling the police.

Social Stories

45

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

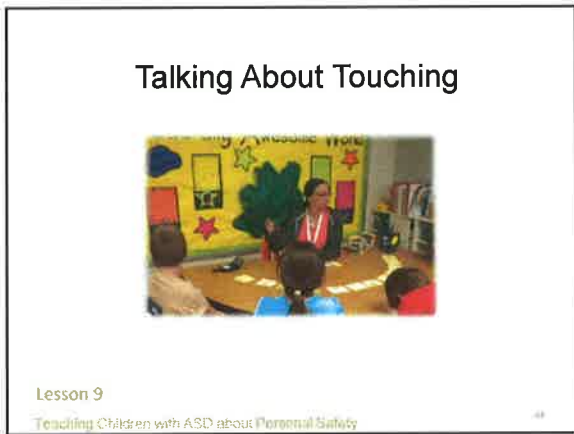
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---



## Celebration



**Presentation of the Personal Safety Certificate**

Lesson 10  
Teaching Children with ASD about Personal Safety

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Celebration

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

School pt 2, 3	Student #1 Prog Year 2	Student #2 Prog Year 2	Student #3 Prog Year 2	Student #4	Student #5	Student #6	Student #7
Pin correct	6	6	7	9	8	9	4
Post correct	6	9	9	4	9	2	6
1 Just right spaces sitting	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
2 Body ownership	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
3 Teacher Touch-hug	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
4 Presenter Touch-hug	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
5 School bathroom - not OK look	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
6 If someone hurt you, what would you do?	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
7 Public Place Example	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
8 Private place example	3	9	9	4	9	3	9
9 Keep a secret about OK touch?	3	9	9	4	9	3	9

---

---

---

---

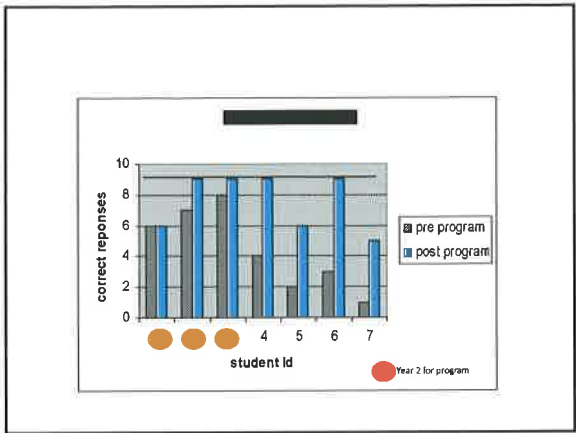
---

---

---

---





---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies

Now is the time to begin.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies

- Research suggests most children rely on their parents for important information.

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



developing family skill-building strategies

- atmosphere
- message
- support

88

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



developing family skill-building strategies

**Concepts**

- simple
- short
- repeated

90

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



developing family skill-building strategies

**1. My body belongs to me.**

- body ownership
- use accurate language
- builds self-esteem
- helps set boundaries
- sends a signal to any potential offender that someone has taken the time to provide that child with important information

92

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies



**2. Safe touches are ok touches.**

- How do they make you feel?
  - emotions
  - choice

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies



**3. Uncomfortable touches are touches a person does not want.**

- How do they make you feel?
  - emotions
  - choice
- No one should touch any child in a way he or she does not want.

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies



**Help your child identify inappropriate touches.**

- some touches can hurt
- some touches can be confusing

**Help your child develop strong boundaries and what he or she can do if someone crosses that boundary.**

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies

**4. You have the right to communicate "no."**

- promoting non-compliance
  - confused
  - uncomfortable
  - hurt
- practice



22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies



**5. Tell someone about any Not OK behavior.**

- secret
  - the standard should be: NO secrets
- trust
- support

**Keep telling until somebody takes action.**

46

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies



**Why children don't tell.**

- not recognize it as abuse
- not being believed
- scared
- protect
- love

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

developing family skill-building strategies



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**SSABER**

**Stay Calm** I am happy to help you.

**Support** I am sorry this happened to you.

**Affirm** You did the right thing by telling me.

**Believe** It's not your fault, I believe you.

**Empower** You have the right to be safe.

**Report** We need to tell others about this to make sure you are safe.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

family strategies • additional information

1. Make your home a “no secrets zone.”
2. Respect your child’s personal boundaries.
3. Use the proper names for body parts with your child.
4. Monitor “one-to-one” situations. Know who is supervising your children.
5. Recognize that sexual offenders come in all shapes and sizes.
6. Make the most of opportunities to discuss the topic with your child.
7. Not all background checks are created equal.
8. Avoid “good touch/bad touch”.
9. Be clear and cover all bases.
10. If you do not know, ask!

54

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

resources to utilize

Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you recognize any potentially inappropriate behavior, enlist the support of a professional.

- Local community agencies
- The Childhelp USA National Abuse Hotline (1-800-422-4453)
  - staffed by degreed, professional counselors
  - 24/365
  - database of 55,000 emergency, social service, and support services
  - all calls are anonymous and toll free

55

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

In Kentucky

**Division of Protection and Permanency (DPP)**

If you believe a child is being abused, neglected or is dependent, you should call the protection and permanency office [in your county](#) or the Toll Free Child Protection Hot Line.

**Child Protection Hot Line:**  
**1-877-KYSAFE1**  
or  
**1-877-597-2331**  
**(Toll Free)**

<http://chfs.ky.gov/default.htm>

56

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

resources to utilize

If you, as a parent, are faced with a situation where you have reasonable suspicion to suspect child sexual abuse, trust your instincts, and report it.

- Some states designate Child Protective Services as the agency that accepts reports of suspected child abuse.
- Others designate law enforcement. Many states have toll-free lines that accept reports of abuse for the entire state.
- To find out where to make a report in your state go to [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

97

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**It is never the child's fault!**

88

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



signs and symptoms

Inconsistent with usual behavior

89

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



signs and symptoms

- changes in school performance
- changes in attendance
- withdrawn
- detached
- changes in sleeping
- unusual or excessive fear of a particular person

76

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



physical injuries

- unexplained bruises
- repeated injuries
- various stages of healing
- extra layers of clothing

81

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



indicators of sexual abuse

- physical injury
- resistance to remove clothing at appropriate times
- suspicious stains
- infections
- pain when going to the bathroom
- sleep problems (sweats, terrors, nightmares)

72

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---





offenders

- tricks
- groom
- secrets

29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

on the autism spectrum • digital technology

A phenomenal way to interact with the world.



Changing risks in today's society...  
in the physical realm and on the Internet.

30

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



MP3/iPods



phones



computers



tablets

31

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- very positive side
  - gives a voice to non-verbal individuals with autism
  - educational benefits
  - communication benefits
  - identify feelings

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- possible issues about the Internet
  - not regulated
  - potential for deception
  - inappropriate sites
  - addiction

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- the Internet does not require
  - social functioning
  - eye contact
  - social response

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Internet relationships skip normal human sequences
  - no social demands – just click off
  - human disconnect
  - inappropriate social facial affect is irrelevant

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- many kids on the autism spectrum
  - like the required repetitive motor movements
  - are collectors
    - data
    - something else
      - images

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- websites
- social networking
- video-sharing
- portable gaming
- online gambling

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Social Networks**

- everyone can control their own profile
  - identity formation
  - inappropriate content

29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Portable Gaming**

- through the game, individuals can find:
  - acceptance
  - respect
  - recognition

31

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Searching**

- through "surfing", individuals can find:
  - appropriate information
  - inappropriate content
    - pornography

32

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Symptoms:

- losing track of time
- continuing the behavior when consequences are negative
- being secretive about usage

15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What to do:

- monitor
- public space

16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Keep an eye on what teens are posting.
- Parental control software products are available if necessary.
- Recognize that your child can log into Facebook.
- Trust your instincts.

17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### What to do:

- iPad does not replace the need for children on the autism spectrum to engage in a wide range of therapies that will support their development
- It is your child, your family and the network that surrounds you that is the miracle.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



"It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."  
[Irish Proverb](#) -

88

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Thank You!**  
Mary Worthington

**nova**  
Network of Victim Assistance  
[www.novabucks.org](http://www.novabucks.org)

50

---

---

---

---

---

---

---