



# NO GO TELL

## Touches that are Safe

- you feel happy
- you feel respected
- you feel comfortable



Most people are good, but there are some people who may make you feel uncomfortable.

## Trust your feelings!

You have these feelings to help keep you safe.

## Someone may make you feel uncomfortable by...

- tickling you too much
- giving hugs that are too tight
- giving you a touch that you do not want
- asking you to do something that is not safe

Remember, you have the right to say "NO" to anyone who touches you in a way that makes you feel confused, uncomfortable, or hurt.

## Your body belongs to you!



Advocacy, Prevention & Support  
for Victims of Crime in Bucks County

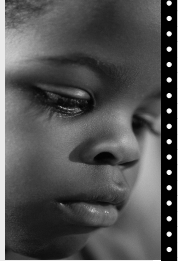
Network of Victim Assistance

24 Hour Victim Support Hotline for Bucks County, PA  
1-800-675-6900  
www.novabucks.org

## When to tell about Unsafe Touches

### Some can hurt

- a hit
- a punch
- a kick



### Some can be confusing

- someone touching the very private parts of your body for no good reason
- someone making you touch their very private parts
- someone asking you to take off your clothes for no good reason

Some people may try to talk, trick, or force kids into touching that is not safe. They may want them to keep it a secret. It is never safe to keep secrets about touching!

You don't have to be polite or listen to these tricks:

- "This is our little secret."
- "It's OK for me to touch you."
- "If you tell, I'll go to jail and it will be your fault."

It's always OK to tell!

It's not your fault!



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**Network of Victim Assistance**

**NO GO TELL**

Child sexual abuse is the violation of a child’s right to a normal, healthy, and trusting relationship. Any sexual contact between a child and an adult or older child, which results in sexual stimulation and gratification for the adult or older child is child sexual abuse. It is a crime that uses power and control over the child and a crime that thrives in secrecy. Even with people they know, children are at risk for sexual abuse. Ninety-three percent of the time, the child will know the offender (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement*, 2000). Former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said “there is no trust more sacred than the world holds with children.” Tragically in any given year, it is estimated more than 650,500 of our nation’s children will become the victim of child sexual abuse (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, 2010).

An important component in the response to child sexual violence is education. Education is key to any comprehensive strategy to prevent sexual violence. Effective prevention education programs include active, personalized, and participatory learning methods that are developmentally appropriate.

The goal of prevention education is to increase children’s protective strategies and build violence prevention skills. Effective prevention programs must empower children, teach children to assess uncomfortable situations, trust their feelings, and find ways to seek help.

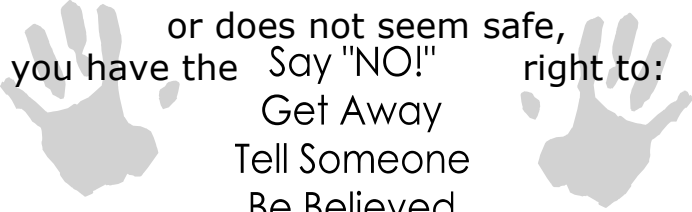
In any situation that makes you feel uncomfortable or does not seem safe, you have the right to:

Say "NO!"

Get Away

Tell Someone

Be Believed



**It is never your fault.**  
 Even if you didn't say no, it is never too late to tell.

**Online Resources:**  
[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)  
[www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)  
[www.novabucks.org](http://www.novabucks.org)  
[www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org)

# Helping your child with ASD understand body boundaries.

Mary Worthington, M.Ed.

As part of a broader approach, we want parents to help develop family skill-building strategies. Even if you have addressed the topic of personal safety with your son or daughter, you may have questioned if it was enough. If you have not communicated the personal safety message, or it is on your "to do" list, now is the time to begin.

Regardless of functioning level, your child needs to be aware of his or her personal safety in a way he or she can understand. Research suggests most children rely on their parents for important information. Establish an atmosphere that reflects you are comfortable talking about sensitive matters and that your child can talk to you without fear. Your knowledge and comfort with personal safety issues will convey the personal safety message in a way that is supportive and non-threatening, and will additionally provide a strong basis to support your son or daughter as he or she grows into adolescence.

In order to build awareness and nurture your child's well-being, keep concepts simple and in short, repeated messages. Adapt the information provided below to your child's developmental level, mode of communication, learning style, and interfering behaviors.

**My body belongs to me.** This concept promotes body ownership, self-esteem, and confidence. Practice this with your child. It is a core principle for building mutual respect, responsibility, and independence.

**Safe touches are ok touches.** Safe touches make a person feel happy, respected, and comfortable and are part of healthy relationships. Make a visual list of safe touching pictures and words. Associate how it feels getting a specific safe touch such as a hug or a high-five. This is an important step for your child to recognize emotions he or she may be feeling. There may be some safe touches your child may want and some touches your child may not want. Even with safe touches, every person has a choice.

**Uncomfortable touches are touches a person does not want.** As your child develops, help your child understand there are some people who may try to give an uncomfortable touch: a hug that is too tight, bothersome tickling, or any unwanted touch. This is an opportunity to support your child's decision making and promote a response to communicate "no" to touching that he or she does not like. Convey the message that your son or daughter can always tell you about any uncomfortable touch.

**Help your child identify inappropriate touches.** Your child will not always be under your protection. Help your child identify inappropriate touches and requests.

- **Some touches can hurt.** Encourage your child to let you know if he or she feels someone is about to hurt him or her. Some examples of touches that hurt: hitting, punching, or kicking. Associate how your child would feel getting a specific touch from this list. This is another important step to recognize emotions he or she may be feeling.

**Some touches can be confusing.** Keep concepts very simple.

"No person can touch your private parts."

"No person should be asking you to touch a private part of someone else's body."

Note: *While I encourage parents to use anatomically correct terminology with their children, the prevention education language of "private parts" is used in these examples.*

**You have the right to communicate no.** Promoting the right to non-compliance is an important process for your child. It is important to explain your child has the right to communicate "no" to any person who makes him or her feel confused, uncomfortable, or hurt. This is a positive step towards self-advocacy. Practice with your child.

**Tell someone about any not ok behavior.** Explain that it is not safe to keep secrets about an inappropriate touch or request. Sexual abuse is a crime that usually no one witnesses. Sometimes children do not tell about abuse because there may be communication issues, the child may not recognize it is abuse, or the child may fear not being believed. It is important to focus on existing positive, trusting relationships in your child's life. Reinforce your commitment to your child's safety and remind your child that he or she can always talk to you about any inappropriate touch or request. This is an opportunity to talk about other caring and trusted individuals who would offer support, if needed. Together, make a list of all the trusted adults in your child's life.

Reinforce with your child that if someone gave any child an inappropriate touch, **it is NEVER the child's fault.**

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Parents instinctively work to teach children about stranger danger.

Despite the stereotypes of a stranger hanging around a playground, child abuse offenders are most likely someone the child knows and trusts. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 93% of the time, the child knows his or her abuser. Actively participating in your child's relationships provides the opportunity for you to know every person who is spending time with your child.

If an adult encourages hugging or other physical contact with your child, even when your child demonstrates discomfort, talk to the person in a non-accusatory way and explain that the behavior makes your child uncomfortable. Ask the person to stop the behavior. Advocating for your child and modeling assertive behavior empowers and helps them learn about safe and appropriate touch.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you recognize any potentially inappropriate behavior, enlist the support of a professional. Local community agencies, such as a local sexual violence agency can help. The Childhelp USA National Abuse Hotline (1-800-422-4453) is staffed by degreed, professional counselors who are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. They have a database of 55,000 emergency, social service, and support services. All calls are anonymous and toll free.

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)

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Mobilize your community.

Educating adults, teachers, caregivers, and other community members about the steps we can all take to support our children and prevent child sexual abuse increases everyone's safety. Hear the bell. Start the conversation. Join us in building the world we all want to live in.

## Personal Safety Strategies for Parents and Caregivers

1. **Develop positive communication.** In a way your child can understand, let your child know he or she can talk to you about any situation. Be supportive and positive. You may not have all the answers, and being honest can go a long way.
2. **Don't overdo it.** Present personal safety information in very small doses and adapt information to your child's mode of communication, developmental level, and learning style. Use everyday opportunities to talk to your child about personal safety.
3. **Reinforce body ownership with your child.** Remind your child every person is in charge of his or her own body.
4. **Help your child identify touching boundaries.** Regardless of the functioning level of your child, he or she needs to be aware of touching boundaries. Model or use examples of safe touches, using pictures and words to associate feelings. Help your child identify the parts of the body that are not to be touched unless your child needs help staying clean or healthy.
5. **It's ok to say no.** Reinforce appropriate non-compliance with your child. Role play to emphasize how your child may respond to unsafe touching or requests.
6. **It is not safe to keep a secret about touching.** Just because a child does not disclose sexual abuse does not mean it is not happening. Help your child understand that he or she can tell you about any unsafe or confusing touch. Reinforce that there are no secrets about an inappropriate touch or requests.
7. **Focus on your network of support.** Establish the existing positive, trusting relationships, and other individuals your child can talk with should he or she have something important to talk about.
8. **Talk with your child about online safety.** Many children and teens with autism are adept at finding information online, but they still need adult guidance about predators, inappropriate sites, and photos. Talk with your child about online safety, and monitor your child's internet use.
9. **Share what you are learning about child sexual abuse with other adults.** If your child is not receiving personal safety instruction in social skill's class, encourage your child's school to include this topic of instruction.
10. **If you suspect a child is being abused,** contact the police, your local child protective services agency, the Childhelp USA National Abuse Hotline (1-800-422-4453), or a local sexual violence agency.

## Resources

### Teaching Children with ASD About Personal Safety

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#### Articles:

Autism Spectrum Disorders, B. M. Kuehn, CDC; Autism spectrum disorders common. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 297, 940, 2007.

Content and contingencies: Considerations regarding curriculum development for young children with autism. S. K. Lund, *The Behavior Analyst Today*, 2, 187-191, 2002.

Educating children with autism, National Research Council, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001.

Sexual Abuse Prevention Strategies and Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Lynne Muccigrosso, *Sexuality and Disabilities*, Vol. 9, No 3, 1991.

Tips for Teaching High Functioning People with Autism, Susan Moreno, Susan and Carol O'Neal, O.A.S.I.S. (Online Asperger's Syndrome Information and Support).

"Working with Families with Children/Parents with Developmental Disabilities." Virginia Cruz, D.S.W., The Social Work Program, Metropolitan State College of Denver, P.O. Box 173362, Campus Box 70, Denver, Colorado, 80217.

Facts of Traumatic Stress and Children with Developmental Disabilities, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Margaret Charlton, Ph.D., Matthew Kliethermes, Ph.D., Brian Tallant, MS, Anne Taverne, Ph.D., Amy Tishelman, Ph.D., 2004.

#### Online Resources:

[www.aacap.org/page.wv?name=Child+Sexual+Abuse&section=Facts+for+Families](http://www.aacap.org/page.wv?name=Child+Sexual+Abuse&section=Facts+for+Families)

[www.cestudy.org](http://www.cestudy.org)

[www.livethegreendot.com](http://www.livethegreendot.com)

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

[www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/autism.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/autism.htm)

[www.NCTSnet.org](http://www.NCTSnet.org)

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

[www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

[www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov)

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

[www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org)

## Resources

### Teaching Children with ASD About Personal Safety

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## Resources

### References:

Barnard, John, M.Ed., Hiney, Phil, Ph.D., "Advanced Curriculum Design for Students with ASD." Presentation.

Connell, James E., Ph.D., "How to Help the Adolescent with ASD." Presentation.

Guld, Amanda, Ph.D., "Effective Teaching Strategies, PBS, and Ethical Behavior Interventions." Presentation.

Levenberg, Rebecca, MS, "Working with Children with Autism." Presentation.

Ortiz, John M., Ph.D., "Neurodevelopmental Disorders: Unraveling the Tapestry." Presentation.

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Shore, Stephen, Ed.D., "Evaluating Different Approaches for Supporting Children With Autism." Presentation.

Tincani, Matt, Ph.D., "Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder." Presentation.

### Resources and further reading:

*Child Sexual Abuse Curriculum for the Developmentally Disabled*, Charles C. Thomas, Ph.D., Sandra A. Burkhardt, Ph.D., Anthony F. Rotatori, Ph.D., Charles C. Thomas, Ltd., 1997.

*Just Say Know*, David Hinsburger, Diverse City Press, 2004.

*Rachel in the World: A Memoir*, Jane Bernstein, University of Illinois Press, 2007.

*Sexuality: Your Sons and Daughters With Intellectual Disabilities*, David Hinsburger, Karen Melberg Schwier, Brookes Publishing Company, 2000.

*Teaching developmentally disabled children: The ME book*, O.I. Lovaas (with Ackerman, A., Alexander, D., Firestone, P., Perkins, M., Young, D.B., Carr, E.G., & Newsome, C.), PRO-ED, 1981.

*Ten Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew*, Ellen Notbohm, Future Horizons, 2005.

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (novel), Mark Haddon, Random House, 2003.

*The Out-of-Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Processing Disorder*, Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A., Berkley Publishing Group, 2005.

*The Social Skills Picture Book*, Jed Baker, Ph.D., Future Horizons, Inc., 2001.