

Talking to Children About Personal Safety

Ages 6-9

Educating children that their body belongs to them can start early, and continue through teenage years, to help raise empowered young adults who have a clear understanding of healthy consent. Boundaries are important for all ages! It is important to allow children to have choices in how they are touched by other people to show that their boundaries are respected and help grow self-esteem.

Here are some education tips for elementary-aged children:

Teach your kids that “no” and “stop” are important words that should be honored.

Both when someone else says stop (e.g., “Sarah said ‘no’, and when we hear ‘no’ we always stop what we’re doing immediately, no matter what.”) and when your child says no (e.g., “If a friend doesn’t stop when we say “no,” then we need to think about whether or not we feel happy and safe playing with them. If not, it’s okay to choose other friends.”)

If your kids like to create pretend worlds or put on plays together, it may be helpful to create a safe word with friends. At this age, saying “no” may be part of a game or play, so they need to have one word that will stop all activity (perhaps something silly like “peanut butter” or something serious like “I really mean it!”). Choose what works for their group of friends.

Teach children to check in with friends during play to make sure they are respecting other people’s boundaries.

Use language like, “Sarah, let’s ask Joe if he would like a hug good-bye.” If Joe says “no,” cheerfully tell your child, “That’s okay, Sarah! Let’s wave good-bye to Joe.” Encourage kids to watch each other’s facial expressions during play to be sure everyone is comfortable, and teach them to take a time out every so often to check in with each other. This reinforces that everyone has options for how they want to be touched and that each person’s boundaries and feelings should be respected!

Give children options for greeting and saying goodbye to adults and friends.

Instead of a hug, a child could give a high five, a fist-bump, a wave, or even a handshake. Kids may not always feel comfortable around people they just met or even relatives who live far away, and it is important to allow kids to listen to their “gut feelings” about what feels safe, unsafe, or confusing. Giving a child the choice in greetings shows that manners—treating people politely and with respect and care—is different than demanding physical affection.

Never force a child to hug, touch, or kiss anybody.

Explain to relatives why you are giving your child the choice in how they are touched by others (e.g., hug, high five, wave, etc.), even if it might make that relative upset. The most important thing is to give each child the tools to be safe and happy and empower them by respecting their control over their body! It’s important not to teach kids that it’s their job to use their bodies to make others happy.

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How to Talk to Kids

- Create a comfortable environment so it's easy for a child to talk to you.
- Use a calm voice.
- Practice what you want to say.
- Talk to your child everyday—do check-ins over dinner, at bedtime, or after school—and listen to your kids!

Personal Safety Tips

- Tell children that their bodies are their own—no one else has a right to touch or hurt them.
- Teach children they can always say “no” when it comes to their bodies.
- Practice NO, GO, TELL: brainstorm ways to say no, safe places to go, and safe adults to tell.
- Talk about touches they think are safe and those they think are unsafe. Examples of safe touch: high-fives, hugging, or touches that keep us healthy or clean. Examples of unsafe or inappropriate touch: hitting and shoving, as well as all sexual touch between adults and children.
- Encourage children to trust their feelings about safe and unsafe touches. Touches that make them feel “uh-oh” or uncomfortable are probably unsafe.
- Use anatomically correct words for private parts to help children develop a dignified vocabulary for parts of the body.
- Avoid scare tactics. Explain to children that most people don't do anyone harm, but if anyone, even other kids, makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them in an inappropriate way, they need to tell an adult that they trust.
- Teach children that touching safety rules apply all the time, not just with strangers.
- Stress that unsafe or uncomfortable secrets should be told to a trusted adult.
- Help create a support system for your child—make a list of people they can talk to and trust besides you. Remind them it's never too late to tell.
- Remind them unsafe touches or secrets are never the child's fault!

Help your children plan ahead with the following scenarios!

What would you do if:

- You were asked to keep a secret that made you scared?
- You were given an unsafe or uh-oh touch from a classmate? A friend? An adult? A relative?

Additional Resources

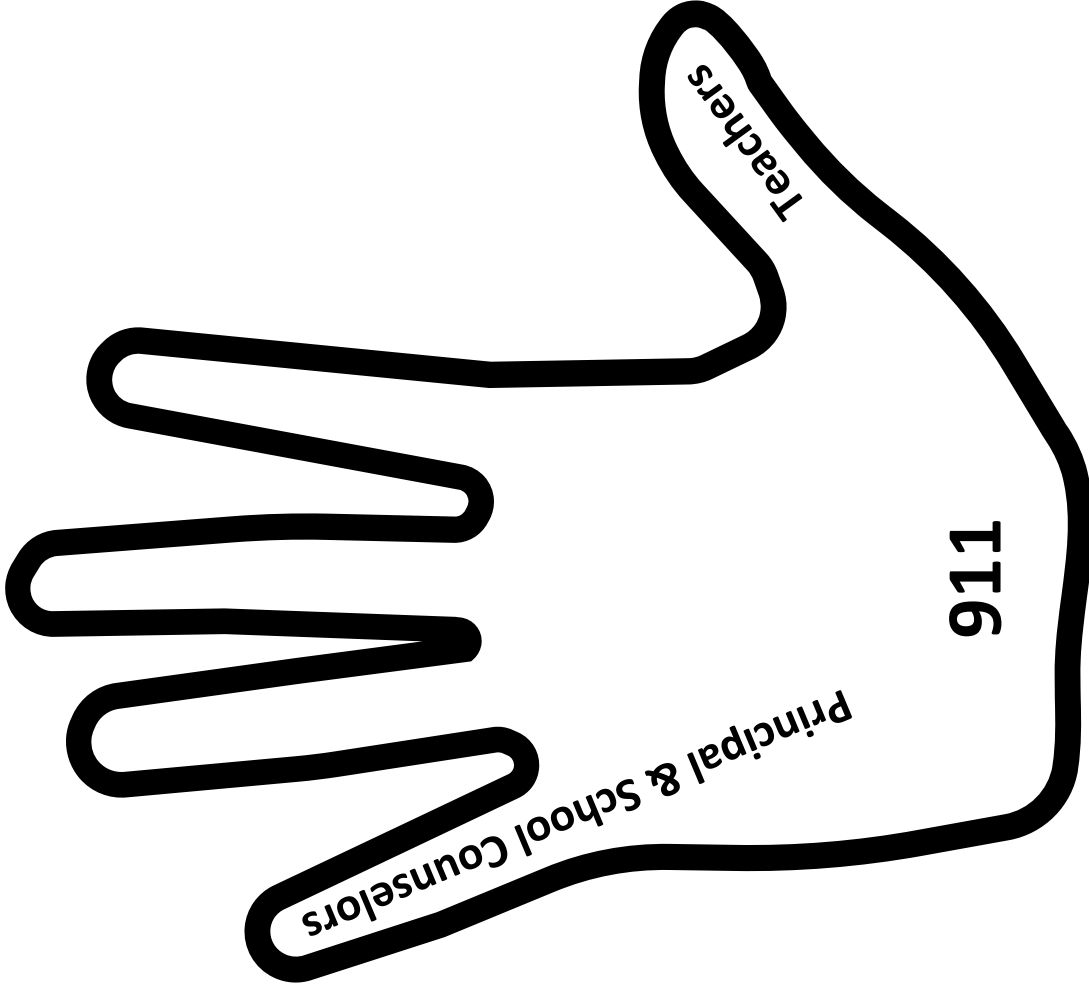
Any school counselor or children's advocate can help adults understand how to talk to children about personal safety. If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

- Baranof Counseling Office: 966-1521
- Keet Gooshi Heen Counseling Office: 966-1733
- Blatchley Counseling Office: 966-6312
- Sitka High School Counseling Office: 966-6527 or 966-6525
- Pacific High School: 747-0525
- SAFV: 747-6511
- Office of Children's Services: 747-2802

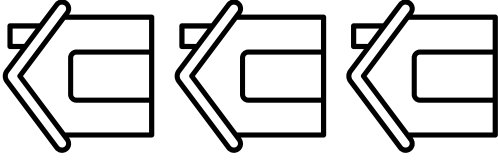
**To report suspected abuse:
1-800-478-4444**

My Very Own Safety Plan

Safe People to Talk to:

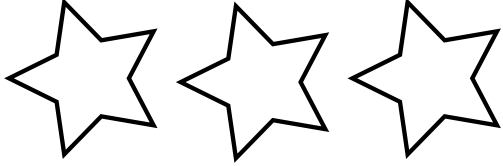


Safe Places to Go:



Things I Can Do

When I Feel Unsafe:

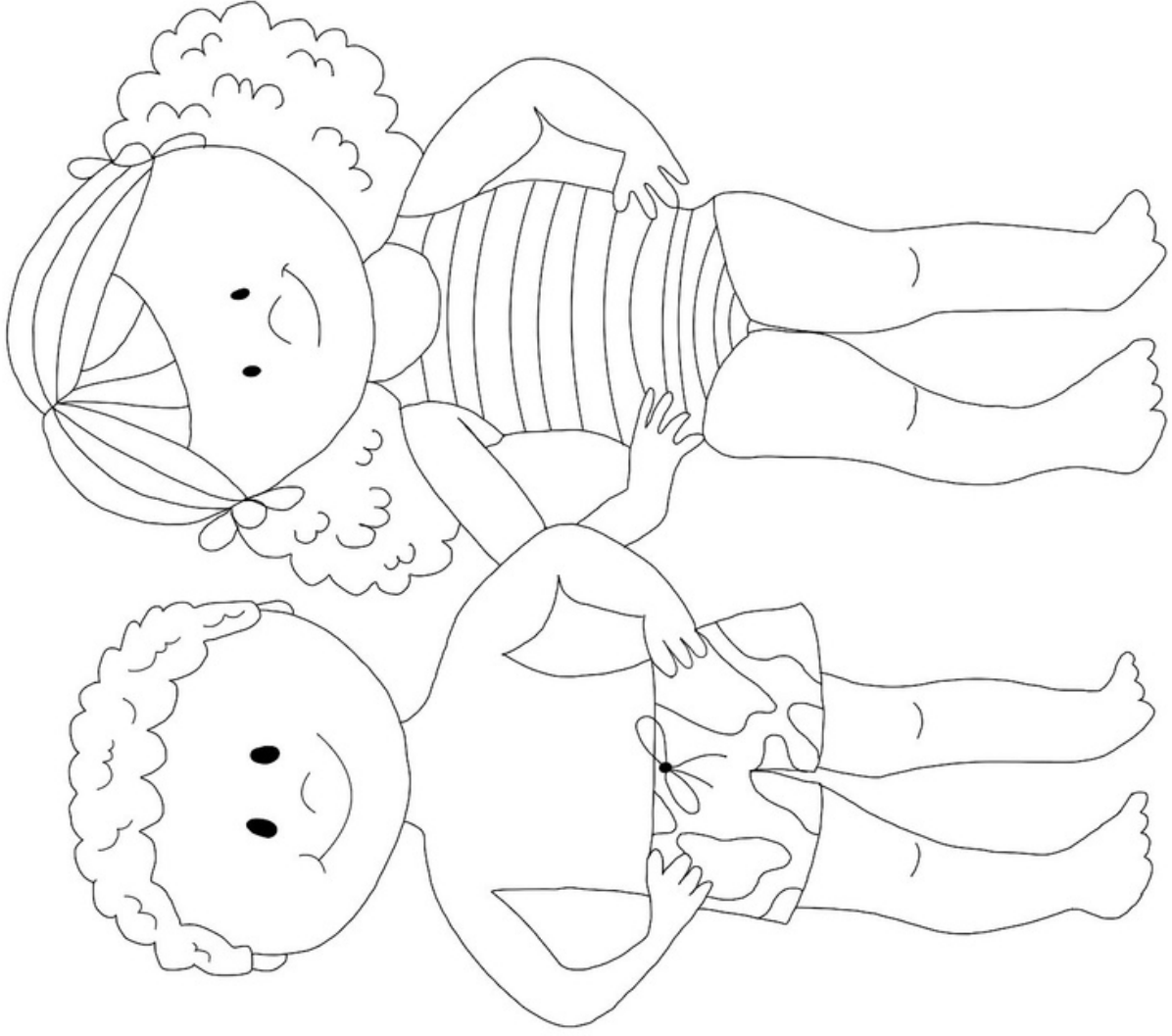
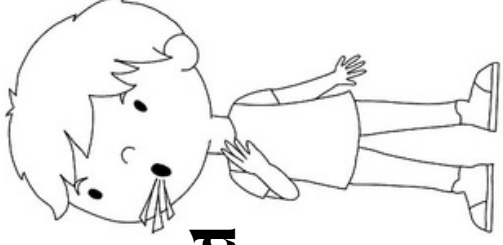


I DESERVE TO FEEL SAFE!

Private parts are the areas of my body covered by my bathing suit.

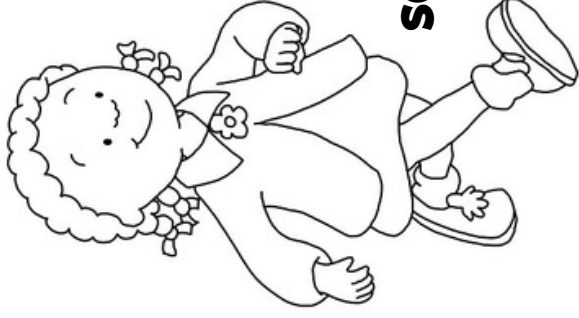
NO!

**Say "no" with
your words and
body!**



GO!

**Get away to
somewhere else
that is safe!**



TELL!

**Tell an adult
you trust!**

