



What is Consent?

Consent means that you agree to something. You say YES. We consent to all kinds of things every day like scheduling appointments or whether to buy the new car that the salesman is showing us. But consent isn't just saying YES. We need our consent to be "informed." Informed consent means that when you say YES, you understand exactly what you are agreeing to and what the results may be. Informed consent is especially important in sexual matters. Your child needs to understand what saying YES means if someone asks them to engage in any romantic or sexual behavior. It could lead to pleasure, but it could also lead to fear, a sexually transmitted infection, pregnancy, etc. We don't want to scare our children, but they do need to fully understand what saying YES means.

WHAT MY CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW

1. Your body belongs to you, and someone needs to ask to get consent from you before touching you. Remember, "My body belongs to me."
2. You need to understand what you are saying YES to. If you don't understand what someone is doing or asking you to do, you can say NO.



TIPS FOR TEACHING YOUR CHILD ABOUT CONSENT

1. Use role play with your child so that they can practice saying YES or NO in various scenarios. You can do the same to teach them how to ask others for consent.
2. Develop social stories on what consent is and how and when to say YES or NO.
3. Teach them early that their body belongs to them and no one can touch it unless they say YES.
4. Be a role model for your child. Ask them before you hug or kiss them and ask family members to do the same. This shows that you respect their decisions.

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What my child needs to know continued...

3. You can say NO to someone touching you, even family members, or say YES to one thing (hugging) and NO to another (kissing).
4. If you don't feel comfortable or safe in a situation, you should say NO loudly and leave. You should tell a trusted adult what happened.
5. You must also get consent from other people before you touch them. The other person must say YES.

Tips for teaching your child about consent continued...

5. Talk to them about parties where there may be drinking going on and how drinking can lower their ability to say NO or others' ability to say NO. Be sure they understand that if someone is drinking or has taken drugs, they cannot give informed consent because they are under the influence.
6. Give your child as much practice in making choices as you can. If they practice saying YES or NO to simple things early, they will be more comfortable saying YES or NO when the situations become more complicated as they get older.
7. If your child is non-verbal, have them practice saying YES or NO using their primary communication mode.
8. Give your child specific strategies for getting out of a situation in which they are not comfortable (leaving the room, yelling NO, calling an adult).
9. Be alert to non-verbal cues that your child may be giving (e.g., not wanting to be around a certain person, acting scared or uncomfortable and talk to them about what you are seeing and how you can help.

