

THE CONVERSATION AROUND CONSENT

Teaching children how to give, receive and understand consent is imperative. It is much more than just “No means No”! No matter how old your child is, some strategies can help you broach this tough topic and have those difficult conversations. Here are some tips for talking about consent with your children.

1. Find the opportunities to have little chats

‘Big talks’ about topics like consent can be awkward and tricky, so make the most out of everyday opportunities to have “little chats”. For example, while watching television or a movie, there can be a scene that can help spark a conversation on consent. “Did he ask if he could hold her hand?” or “Did she ask the little boy if she could play with his toy?”

2. Find out what your child knows or thinks

Open-ended questions can be very helpful. For example, ‘What do you think about the Prince kissing Snow White while she was sleeping?’

3. Correct misinformation and offer explanations

It’s important to use language and examples your child can understand. Your explanation can be about physical boundaries. For example, “It’s your body so you decide who can hug, kiss or tickle you. Always remember you have the right to say no if you feel uncomfortable”.

4. Check in and see if your child has any questions

If your child has questions and you are not quite sure what to say, let them know you’re happy they asked the question. Don’t be afraid to tell them that you don’t have the answer, and that you’ll look for more information and get back to them.

5. Practice consent during playtime

Another great way to teach the importance of consent is when you play with your child. For example, during a tickle fight, if your child asks you to stop tickling him, have the reflex to stop immediately and say: “Did you see how I stopped when you asked me to?” This is a good time to explain that you respect their boundaries. This way, the child will be able to clarify whether he or she was only saying to stop for fun or more seriously.