

How to Teach your Kids about Consent

Today, the media is flooded with unpleasant news of abuse against children. These alarming rates of abuse cut across children of all age groups. Many of these victims unconsciously fall prey to predators and realize the harm that has been done to them very late. It is, therefore, essential that kids of all ages are schooled on the subject of **consent**.

As a parent, you probably wonder how best to keep your kids safe and how to teach them the nuances of body contact. You may ask yourself if you should start to teach them early or wait until they are teenagers. You are not alone; many parents are in the dilemma of "when" and "what" to teach their kids in this regard.

This article examines the myths and facts about teaching consent to kids. In addition, the questions on when and **how to teach your kids consent** are also answered. So, let's get right into the details.

What is Consent?

It's a popular myth that **consent** revolves only around sex. That wouldn't be true in all contexts. The inclusion of sex in your conversation with your kids will be dependent on their age. You can't possibly try to explain sex to a preschooler now, can you?

Having such intimate conversations with your kids is first to make them realize that they have a right over their bodies, and they can choose who touches or engages them. In essence, consent is really about boundaries.

It is crucial to make your kids realize that boundaries can be as simple as allowing or rejecting physical touches such as tickling, handshake, hugging, and role-playing. This way, you make your kids recognize that boundaries are about ownership of and responsibility for their bodies.

Please note that having taught your kids boundaries, you ought to show by example that you respect their boundaries. Here are a few tips on respecting your kids' boundaries:

- Seek their permission before you touch them;
- Apologize if you touch them against their will;
- If they decline your touch, especially when it doesn't endanger them, then let them be;

- Always remind them that they have control over their bodies.

Why is it Important to Teach Kids About Consent?

The following are the benefits of sensitizing your kids about consent:

1. Awareness

Your kids deserve to know that their bodies are solely theirs. "Knowledge" in this context indeed "is power," and you must empower your kids. In the words of psychology professor [Elizabeth L. Jeglic](#), "we need to empower our children to be able to recognize when their body autonomy is being violated and to feel safe in relaying that information to us." Subsequently, a kid who feels responsible for their body can detect when someone else seems to be taking advantage of them and report such a person to the appropriate quarters.

2. Building a strong communication network

It's much easier to build healthy relationships with your kids when they know they can talk to you about their bodies, especially when you are not unnecessarily evasive. Having conversations about consent with your kids will build trust between you and your kids. This way, you will find it easier to detect and stop any form of abuse that your kid may be exposed to, and you will also build a solid and open relationship with your kids.

3. Protection

Enlightened kids can easily recognize the traits of an abuser and can speak up early enough. An informed kid will be firm in turning off the subtle advances of an abuser. Statistics show that [child predators](#), based on their characteristics, have more difficulty molesting kids who are aware of their advances.

What are the Risks of not Teaching Kids about Consent?

You do not only endanger your kids when you do not **teach your kids consent**; you cause just as much harm when you give false information or skim over the subject. The following are likely consequences of not teaching this subject to your kids:

1. Misinformation

[Kids are curious by nature](#), and what you generally refuse to talk about, they will find others to talk to. Often, kids talk to their friends who may know little or nothing about many things. Now imagine the kind of orientation your kids will get from their friends on questions about their bodies? Such unhealthy conversations make it difficult for kids to learn other things from their parents and unlearn the false information they have learned from others.

2. Inferiority complex

A kid who is not properly informed about their bodies and their role in deciding who has access builds a sense of inferiority. The puberty stage is usually very confusing for such kids, and they often become shy about their bodies. If such a situation is not quickly addressed, it can lead to depression.

3. Exposure to abuse

When kids don't know about boundaries, they wouldn't know when other people have crossed the line. Such kids can easily be abused without realizing they are being abused. Statistics show that kids who are not well educated about their bodies and changes become easy prey to abusers.

How to Teach Kids About Consent (by age)

Discussions around consent will, in part, involve sexuality, but for younger kids, the conversation is different. There are age-appropriate tips on **how to teach your kids consent**. These tips are discussed under the following headings:

○ Young Children (ages 1-5)

This is the best time to **teach your kids consent**. At this stage, you are your kids' greatest influence. Basic tips that you can imbibe daily will help you effectively communicate boundaries to your kids. They include:

- Allow your kids to make their choices daily; a simple "yes" or "no" is a good place to start.
- Teach your kids that the words "no" and "stop" are vital and should be respected.
- Ask for permission to help wash your kid's body as an example of seeking their consent.
- Encourage your kids to read other people's facial expressions and body language.
- Teach your kids to ask permission before touching or hugging people, and vice versa.

- Never, under any circumstances, compel your kids to embrace, touch, or kiss another person.
- Encourage your kids to wash their genitals while bathing; this promotes body pride and a sense of ownership.

○ **Older Children (Ages 5-12)**

At this stage, your kids are becoming self-aware and are a little more influenced by their peers. The changes in their bodies affect their hormones, and they are likely to try out new things and develop new hobbies and habits. Here are a few tips on teaching your kids within this age bracket about **consent**:

- Teach your kids that the changes in their bodies are normal and that we all grow up.
- Teach your kids to be self-assured in their decision to either be touched or not.
- Teach your kids how to use safewords when they're playing or in danger.
- Teach your kids to respect one another's space and empathize with others.
- Please pay attention to them by talking about their day-to-day activities in great detail.
- Please don't make fun of children for their boy-girl relationships as this makes them timid to share sensitive details that may include abuse with you.

○ **Teens and Young Adults**

This appears to be the most delicate part of parenting. However, it is the easiest phase to teach boundaries and sexual consent. At this stage, you do not need to "code" your words, and you can be as open as possible. This may be fun for you if you are comfortable sharing your tales of coming of age and the lessons you have learned. The goal here is to become your kid's friend and to help them stay true to their boundaries. Here are a few tips that will help:

- Encourage your kids to believe in themselves and their abilities by boosting their self-esteem.
- Teach your kids what "good" and "bad" touch mean, especially amongst their peers and social groups.

- Stop "locker room banter" in its tracks by being the first to teach your kids the fundamentals of pleasure, protection, and pregnancy.
- Have frequent "sex discussions" and empathic mentions of consent.
- Discuss parties, relationships, and commitments sincerely and openly.

Conclusion

Parenting is a lifetime job, and now more than ever, you have got to be at the top of your game. In other words, protecting your kids should be your top priority.

It is in your kid's best interest to be equipped with the sound knowledge of consent. Hence, ensure you make it a priority to **teach your kids consent**. This way, they will be protected in your absence and even as they grow.

Teaching your kids about the concept at an early stage is preparing them to not only recognize sexual predators but also to be responsible individuals. If more kids are informed and taught consent, more child predators will be exposed, and the society will become safer. Be the parent who makes all the difference. The world is counting on you.

References

1. Simons, D. (2015). Chapter 3: Sex Offender Typologies. Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. <https://smart.ojp.gov/somapi/chapter-3-sex-offender-typologies>.
2. <https://www.elizabethjeglic.com/>
3. <https://www.easternflorida.edu/community-resources/child-development-centers/parent-resource-library/documents/curiosity-and-wonder.pdf>

