

# The Building Blocks of Consent Culture: Teaching skills, setting norms, and reading books

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# What is consent?

- ★ Consent is a practice of valuing and respecting bodily autonomy (ours and others')
- ★ Consent means you are in charge of your own body and other people are in charge of their own bodies. That you get to decide what to do with your body, who gets to touch it, and how.
- ★ Consent means being able to say "YES! I want that! That sounds great!" or being able to say "No! I don't want that!" and having your words respected! It also means asking before you touch someone's body and LISTENING to their YES or NO.

# What is consent culture?

- ★ Normalizes the action of asking for consent and respecting whatever responses are given.
- ★ Affirms that each individual has bodily autonomy and maintains that boundaries (a person's right to choose what is comfortable to them) should be respected unconditionally.
- ★ Consent is a guiding principle for all of our interactions, and our organizations, institutions, policies, and practices.
- ★ Building a consent culture requires dismantling the interconnected forms of oppression that take autonomy and power away from people, which means building consent culture has to include working towards racial justice, gender justice, queer/trans liberation, disability justice, body liberation, etc.

# How are kids taught that they are not in charge of their bodies?

- ★ Adults pick them up and move them!
- ★ Telling them to give hugs/kisses to avoid hurting others' feelings
- ★ Controlling their bodies at school (sit up straight, stay still, you can't go to the bathroom, etc)
- ★ Dress codes
- ★ "If someone's bothering you, it's because they like you" - don't be mad, it's a compliment
- ★ Media that positively depicts not taking 'no' as an answer
- ★ Controlling their food (clean your plate, you have to eat 3 more bites, eat your vegetables to get a treat, etc)

# Strategies for Teaching Skills

- ★ Modeling
- ★ Break it down into simpler parts
- ★ Practice (low-stakes opportunities)
- ★ Games
- ★ Books and stories

# THE GREAT BIG HUG



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But one day, Elephant gave Meerkat a great big hug and Meerkat did not smile a great big smile. Meerkat let out a great big

“OUCH!”



Elephant started tickling, but Ostrich did not start laughing. Instead, Ostrich hopped away and hid in the sand.



*Oh no! Even a great big animal like Ostrich does not want to play with me. Maybe no one will ever want to play with me again! Elephant thought.*

Elephant found Meerkat sitting all alone.





And that is what Elephant did.



Elephant lay on an iceberg in the middle of the ocean, feeling heavy-hearted.

“My heart is so heavy. None of my friends like me anymore. I guess elephants are just too big to have friends. I will live the rest of my life alone on this great big iceberg.”

Elephant wailed a great big wail.



And then Elephant gave Meerkat a great big gentle hug, and Meerkat smiled a great big smile.

The End.

# How can we teach kids that they are in charge of their own bodies?

- ★ Ask/tell a child before you touch them
- ★ Never force physical affection - teach all the different ways we can show affection
- ★ Give them information about their bodies
- ★ Allow them to talk about their own bodies any way they want
- ★ Respect their autonomy with food
- ★ Allow them to choose their own clothes and hairstyles (self expression)
- ★ Give choices whenever possible - share power
- ★ When there is a limitation on their bodily autonomy, explain why
- ★ Remind them that they can say no
- ★ Allow them to say no to you when possible

# How can we teach kids to trust their instincts?

- ★ Help them connect to what safe/loved/respected feels like
- ★ Ask them questions about what different sensations/emotions feel like in their bodies
  - Hunger/fullness
  - Too cold/too warm
  - Bathroom needs
  - Happy, sad, angry, scared
- ★ Demonstrate that you trust their instincts
- ★ Give opportunities for appropriate and supported risk taking - ask questions like:
  - What's your plan?
  - Does your foot feel secure?
  - Do you feel safe?

# How can we teach kids how to say 'no'?

- ★ Teach phrases like "I don't like that" and "I need space"
- ★ Teach nonverbal ways to say 'no'
- ★ Give kids meaningful choices (real opportunities to say yes and no)
- ★ Play games with 'no'
- ★ Teach them to identify power dynamics
- ★ Pausing the play to check in
- ★ Respect their 'no'

# How can we teach kids how to self-advocate?

- ★ Build self-esteem
- ★ Model advocating for yourself and advocating for them
- ★ Give them opportunities to speak up for themselves with your support
- ★ Prepare go-to phrases
- ★ Break it down (3 Steps Model)
  - Say what happened
  - Say how you feel
  - Say what you want

# How can we teach kids to respect other people's bodies?

- ★ Teach "no" and "stop" as magic words
- ★ Practice reading body language and facial expressions
  - In play
  - In books
  - In shows and movies
- ★ Teach kids to ask questions - "how do you want to play?"
- ★ Build empathy - "how have you felt when you were in that situation?"
- ★ Build active bystander skills - looking out for others
- ★ Give language for checking in - "are you ok?"
- ★ Stoplight system

# How can we teach kids to handle being told 'no'?

- ★ Don't distract from hard feelings - sit with them and validate them
- ★ Remind them that when they ask for something they might hear a yes or a no
- ★ Model it - when they say no to you, demonstrate that it's not a rejection
- ★ When you say no to them, remind them that you care about them (the no isn't a rejection of them or the relationship)
- ★ Incorporate it into play (low-stakes practice)
- ★ Use books
  - Elephant as an example of what not to do



# How can we teach kids to take accountability for harm?

- ★ Model good accountability/apologies
- ★ Never force an apology
- ★ Teach questions like “What do you need?” and “How can I help you feel better?”
- ★ Teach conflict resolution skills
- ★ Incorporate it into play (low-stakes practice)
- ★ Normalize mistakes
- ★ Build self-esteem

# Thank you!

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