

SMART Moves Family and Caregiver Resource

Consent Discussion Guide

Discuss the topic of consent with your child to make sure they feel empowered to set and respect boundaries.

Why Is Consent Important?

In SMART Moves: Healthy Relationships, youth learn about healthy interpersonal relationships and how they can support healthy decision-making. A key component of healthy relationships is consent. Consent is about communicating boundaries and respecting the boundaries of others. It applies to situations involving someone's personal space or belongings (e.g., asking for a hug, asking to borrow someone's clothes or sharing personal information). Introducing the concept of consent at a young age ensures youth feel empowered to make decisions about their bodies and know how to respond when consent isn't respected. As they grow older, the issue of consent becomes even more important as youth begin to enter into romantic relationships.

As a parent or caregiver, you play an important role in supporting your children as they develop healthy relationships. You can discuss different types of relationships with them, talk about how to set and communicate healthy boundaries, and teach them what to do in case those boundaries aren't respected. It's important to make sure youth feel empowered to make their own decisions, while letting them know they can come to you if they have questions.

Family Activity: Discussing Consent

- Find a comfortable place to sit down without distractions. Consider the following times: during or after dinner, while you're traveling on a long trip together or before bedtime.
- Ask your child to tell you what they learned in the SMART Moves: Healthy Relationships module about consent. If they need guidance, prompt them with the following reminders.
 - › **Grades K-2:**
 - The use of permission in "Caller May I"
 - Asking consent to enter someone's personal space
 - › **Grades 3-5:**
 - The use of permission in "May I Have the Bag?"
 - › **Grades 6-8:**
 - The use of permission in Relationship All-Stars
 - Asking consent to get someone's personal information

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- Ask your child the following questions:
 - › What is consent? When do you need to ask for consent? When do other people need to ask you for your consent?
 - › What should you say or do if someone doesn't respect your boundaries?
- Thank your child for talking about consent with you, and let them know they can always come to you if they have questions.

Providing Continued Support

There are simple strategies you can use to teach your child respect for their own and others' bodies.

- 1. Model consent in interactions with your child.** Ask them, “Do you want a kiss goodnight?” or, “Can I sit beside you while we read?” to emphasize that they get to make decisions about their body, and their boundaries should be respected.
- 2. Remind your child to ask others for consent.** Teach them to ask permission before entering someone's personal space (e.g., to give a hug or hold hands). Explain they also need permission before borrowing someone's belongings.
- 3. Teach your child that the words “no” and “stop” should be respected.** If a young person says “no” to a goodbye hug or “stop” during a tickle fight, accept their answer. Similarly, remind them to respect others when they say “no,” even if it makes them feel sad or disappointed.
- 4. Continue the conversation.** Consent shouldn't be a one-time conversation. As they grow older, youth will encounter more complex situations and may have questions about how to respond. Make sure your child knows they can talk to you, even if it might be uncomfortable.
- 5. Make sure your child knows what to do if their or someone else's boundaries haven't been respected.** Ensure they know which trusted adults they can turn to if someone doesn't respect their boundaries.
- 6. Check out these resources for more information:**
 - › Consent at Every Age: gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/12/consent-every-age
 - › Teaching Consent: safesecurekids.org/teaching-consent
 - › The Healthy Sex Talk: Teaching Kids Consent Ages 1-21: talkwithyourkids.org/lets-talk-about/healthy-sex-talk-teaching-kids-consent-ages-1-21.html#:~:text=Teach%20children%20to%20ask%20permission,%2C%20%E2%80%9CThat's%20okay%2C%20Sarah
 - › Sexual Assault Resource for Parents and Caregivers: nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2013-01/saam_2013_resource-for-parents-and-caregivers.pdf