

BODY BOUNDARIES

Body boundaries are a person's own rules about what feels acceptable or unacceptable when it comes to their body. This often involves how close others can be, whether touch is welcome, and how much personal space feels comfortable. Caregivers sometimes explain this to children using the idea of a "body bubble."

It's important for children to learn that their body belongs to them. When caregivers support children in upholding their body boundaries, children learn that they are in charge of their own bodies. Adults can model healthy body boundaries, advocate for children, and help enforce limits with others.

Body boundaries can change depending on the situation or how someone is feeling. A person's boundaries with a stranger at the grocery store will be different from their boundaries with a close friend or family member. Boundaries may also shift if someone is sick, overwhelmed, angry, in pain, or in a public place versus at home. Body boundaries are a right that both children and adults have.

What Body Boundaries Can Include

- How close is comfortable for another person to be to you?
- Is it okay for this person to touch you?
- Where is it okay for them to touch you on your body?
- Do you want them to hug you?
- How long is a hug okay for you?
- Is it okay to ask you for this information?

Supporting Children to Develop Healthy Boundaries

- Speak up. It is your right and responsibility to interrupt and speak up when you see another adult violating a child's body boundary.
 1. For example: "Nana, I heard Jake say that he didn't want a kiss. That is his body boundary. It's not okay for you to try to still kiss him when he's said no. Jake, do you want to offer a hug or a wave instead?"
 2. Children learn from your actions and how they are treated.
- Model your own personal boundaries.
- Own up to mistakes. Sometimes, as adults, we miss verbal or nonverbal cues from the children in our lives about body boundaries. It's important that when you make a mistake, you acknowledge that you crossed their body boundary, apologize, and try to do better in the future. Hold space for them to tell you how it made them feel (and don't get defensive).
- Use medical terms for body parts. Not slang or cutesy words. This helps children learn specific terms to be able to communicate their boundaries in a clear and specific way.

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Emotional Boundaries

Body boundaries are just one kind of boundary we have. We also have emotional boundaries, like what we will or won't share, listen to, or tolerate.

Need More Support?

Local Resources:

- [Health and Relationship Educator](#)
- [Let's Talk about Touching](#) (Professional Development) - Connect with your local CCRR about local offerings
- Family Physicians, Pediatricians, or Nurse Practitioners
- Public Health Nurse
- Counsellors

Resources Found in the WKCCRR Library:

- Yes! No!: A First Conversation about Consent by Megan Madison
- My Body! What I Say Goes! by Jayneen Sanders

Videos:

- [Consent for Kids Video](#)
- [The Boundaries Song](#)

Online Resources:

- [A Caregiver's Guide to Teaching ABCs of Consent](#)
- [Amaze Jr.: Age-Appropriate Videos for Talking to Kids Ages 4-9](#)
- [Sex Positive Families Resources](#)
- [Jayneen Sanders' Website – Free Resources for Printing and Supports for Teaching Body Safety](#)
- [Additional List of Learning Resources to Explore](#)