

I Ask How to Teach Consent Early



Late childhood and early adolescence is a time when children get messages about relationships and consent from TV shows, movies, social media, and friends. This makes it an ideal time for parents to have conversations about consent. Talking with your child now will encourage open and honest communication as they mature and enter their first relationships.

What Is Consent?

- Consent means asking someone for their permission to do something and accepting their answer.
- Consent shows up in kids' lives when they ask peers if and what they want to play, if they want to sit together at lunch or on the bus, if they'd like to share school supplies, toys, food, etc.
- Helping kids to ask for consent and accept rejection in these everyday ways builds a foundation for practicing consent in intimate relationships as they get older.

Talk Openly

- Ask yourself: What messages is my child getting about relationships and consent? What messages do I want them to get?
- Let your child know they can come to you with questions about consent and relationships.
- Answer their questions honestly and encourage ongoing conversations about respect and safety.

For example, you could tell your child, "Everyone's body deserves respect," or "If someone hurts us, it's okay to talk about it."

Teach Respect for Boundaries

- Teach your child that consent means always choosing to respect others' boundaries.
- Boundaries are a person's right to choose what is comfortable for them.

For example, "It sounds like your friend didn't want to sit beside you on the bus today. Sometimes you don't want to sit beside me and that's okay. Everybody gets to make choices about what's comfortable for them."

Teach How to Ask for Consent

- Help your child to think about how their actions might make another person feel and to ask questions if they don't know.
- Everyone has different boundaries, and no one should ever feel pressured to do something that they're uncomfortable with.

Model Asking for Consent

- Show your child ways to ask for consent by modeling the words and actions yourself.
- Model respect for boundaries by asking your child for consent and accepting their answer, like when asking for a hug or sharing information about them with others.
- Use teachable moments to talk about consent and respect.



For example, "I could tell your guidance counselor that grandma died if that's okay with you," or "It's okay if you don't want a goodnight hug."