

# Personal Space & Consent

## WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL LEARN:

- They are the boss of their own body
- The space around them is their personal space and they can say who and when people are allowed to come into their personal space
- It is ok to say 'no' if someone comes into their personal space
- They should ask for consent to go into someone else's personal space
- There might be times when people need to come into their personal space (for a good reason\*)



## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

One of the most important lessons we can teach our children is that they are the boss of their own body. No one should enter their personal space or touch them without permission—or without a valid reason.

Teaching children about personal space helps them develop social and emotional skills such as empathy, respect, consent, and boundary-setting.

When children learn to understand and value both their own space and the space of others, they become more self-aware, confident, and able to navigate social situations in a healthy and safe way.

When children learn they have the right to set their own personal space boundaries—and that it's equally important to respect others' boundaries—we're helping them build the foundations for safer, more respectful relationships.

Children can say "no" when someone enters their personal space without permission. You can explore what situations might be exceptions, or a good reason\*—like visiting the doctor or dentist, or needing help with bathing or changing—so they understand when certain touches are appropriate and necessary.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO AT HOME AND PLAYGROUP:

For babies and young toddlers, it's less about teaching and more about role modelling respect and building secure, respectful interactions. As they get older, you can start to read books and do other activities. Your language and actions guide their understanding and language.

- You can model respect for their space and ask for consent using simple language like, "Can I give you a hug?" or "Can I pick you up now?" or "Can I give you a high five?"
- Narrate actions to help build awareness ("I'm going to wipe your face now", "time for a nappy change, I am going to come into your personal space and help clean your private parts and put a new nappy on")



- Respect body language – if they pull away, pause and acknowledge it and add language “would you like me to stop? You can say “stop please”
- If they can't tell you yet, you can still tune into their cues—for example, pausing play if they appear overstimulated or need a break. Add language, “I stopped tickling you because it looked like you had enough”
- Teach your child simple sentences like ‘stop it, I don't like it’ or ‘stop, that's my personal space’. You can use simple phrases like:
  - “Your body belongs to you.”
  - “You can say no to hugs.”
  - “Let's ask before we touch someone.”
- Praise boundary-setting: “Great job saying you didn't want a hug.”
- Practice alternatives to physical affection: waves, fist bumps, blowing kisses. If a child doesn't feel like a hug, for example when they say goodbye to a family member, there are many other meaningful ways children can express kindness or appreciation— such as walking with someone, waving goodbye, or blowing a kiss.



## BOOKS:

- **Yes! No!** Jessica Rallli
- **Little Big Chats - Consent:** Jayneen Sanders
- **No means No:** Jayneen Sanders
- **Don't Hug Doug:** Carrie Finison & Daniel Wiseman
- **Can I give you a squish?** Emily Neilson



## GAMES & ACTIVITIES:

- **Personal Space Bubbles:** Use a hula hoop to show the idea of a ‘personal space bubble’” If no hula hoop is available, have children pretend to blow up their personal space bubble by slowly stretching out their arms to create their “bubble.” Practice interacting with others while respecting the personal space bubble
- **Personal Space Bumper Cars:** Children move around the room in hula hoops, trying not to bump into anyone else's “car.” Try different speeds and directions –fast, slow, high, low, backwards—and see if they can “park” their car on a mat without touching others.
- **Mat time:** When sitting on a mat for book time, ask children to use their personal space bubble to find a space on the mat.
- **Feelings and Boundaries Role-Play:** Use dolls or puppets to act out social scenarios: someone trying to hug without asking, asking for space, saying no, etc.