

# HOW TO TEACH CONSENT TO HIGH SCHOOLERS

#NATIONALSEXEDUCATIONDAY

Touch your child with warmth and love. You are communicating respect and consent.

Warm, caring, respectful, consensual conversations at home transfer over into your child's life.

Model consensual behavior with friends and family. Your kids are watching. "May I hug you?" "Would you share your cookies with me?"

Demonstrate and discuss what the word 'no' means.

Help them understand that their body is their own. One way is to ask before sharing hugs. "May I hug you?" "Let's ask her if she'd like a hug."



If your child is uncomfortable with certain shows of affection, such as hugging, offer an option such as a high-five or blowing a kiss. Explain to family members that you are teaching your child to respect their own boundaries and the boundaries of others.

Rather than saying, "Give Grandma a kiss" ask, "Would you like to give Grandma a kiss?" These conversations can take place before the family event.

When your child says "stop" or "no" while hugging, stop immediately. You are demonstrating appropriate consensual responses.

# CONSENT & HIGH SCHOOLERS



There is a difference between social manners and forced affection. Children should be taught to be respectful, but should honor their boundaries and their own comfort levels.

Teach kindness, but also educate the importance of a firm, definitive “no”.

Help them identify their inner voice. Does they feel uncomfortable when someone asks them to do something they don’t want to do? Listen to that voice, their gut reaction.

Help kids to read body language. What does it mean if someone has their arms crossed in front of them? Are they standing away from the person speaking to them? In romantic situations, what are non-verbal cues that the person may or may not be interested? (Pulling away, not responding, responding enthusiastically, etc.) Use media such as TV to show examples.

We must teach children to share with others, but sometimes it is okay to say no with kindness.

Teach your child to respectfully accept “no” for an answer.

At this age they are starting to have romantic interests. Teach importance of asking before touching or kissing.

Be aware of social constructs that define how “boys” and “girls” are expected to behave and how that might play out in relationships.

What does a healthy relationship look like?



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## ACTION STEPS

- Give them a book such as *What Does Consent Really Mean?* by Pete Wallis and Thalia Wallis.
- Use media such as music, movies or television shows to start conversations. "What did you think of that scene? Did that look like consent to you?" "What might you do in that situation?"
- Give them a journal to help them explore their feelings. Many young people are confused by their emerging sexuality and writing can help sort out their thoughts.

Access to digital media is common at this age. Discuss the permanence of posts. Consider how someone would feel if a certain photo was posted online...forever. How would they feel?

If someone is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they cannot give consent. In fact, alcohol is the number one date-rape drug.

Enthusiastic consent must be given. Silence or shrugging is not consent.

Check in with your romantic partner. "Do you like this?" "Would you like to do this?"

Check in with yourself. "Do I like this?" "Is this what I want?" Listen to your inner voice.

Understand that yes once doesn't mean yes next time.

A person can always change their mind from "yes" to "no".

Pressure from a romantic partner to engage in an intimate, physical relationship is not consent.

Peer pressure or media pressure can trick a young person into "everyone is doing it", when in fact most are not. This can be confusing to a young person when it comes to consent.

If your child is in a romantic relationship, discuss STI and pregnancy prevention. Encourage them to have a respectful conversation with their partner and make a consensual plan of protection.

Explain how to be an upstander: If they see a peer crossing a line, stop it. They can do this by calling their peer out on it, they can take the other person away from the situation, they can divert the peer's attention with something else.

## SPECIAL NOTE



We are at an important crossroad when it comes to talking to our boys about consent. In this #MeToo movement we are aware that conversations about consent and respect are of the utmost importance. These conversations about respecting others begins before our kids can talk - body language is a fabulous communicator. Conversations about treating others kindly, and that no one has the right to touch, kiss, or have sex without the other person's permission, must be ongoing.

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