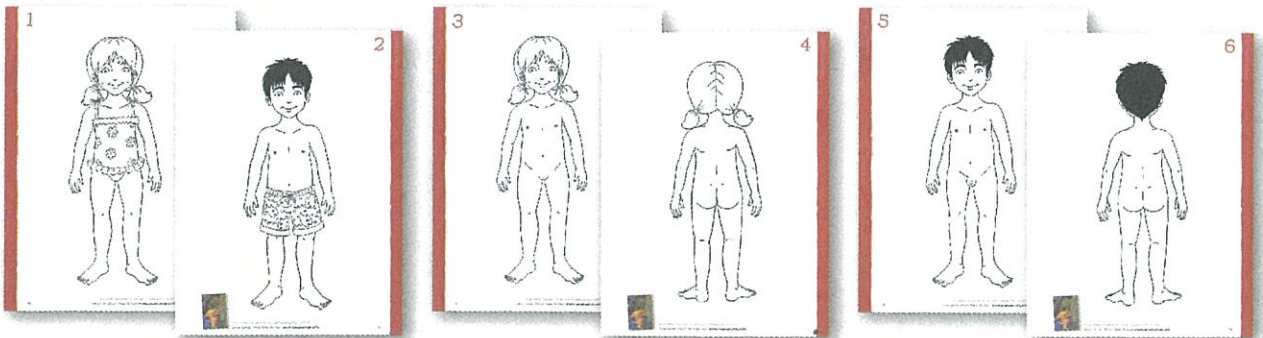


# Key Body Safety Skills

The following Key Body Safety Skills should be taught gradually and in daily conversations as your child grows. If you are concerned about teaching your child these skills, just keep in mind they are age-appropriate, non-graphic, and they also encourage your child to be assertive — a crucial skill in any bullying situation, and a great attribute to have when your child becomes a teenager!



- 1 **As soon as your child** begins to talk and is aware of their body parts, begin to name them correctly, e.g. toes, nose, eyes, arms, legs, etc. Children should equally know the correct names for their genitals from a young age. Teach your child that their penis, vagina, bottom/buttocks, breasts and nipples are called their 'private parts', and that these are their body parts under their swimsuit. Try not to use 'pet names'. This way, if a child is touched inappropriately, they can clearly state to you or a trusted adult where they have been touched. A child's mouth is also known as a 'private zone'. (Resource Masters 1–6 can be used to identify private body parts and teach that private body parts are those under a child's swimsuit.)



**2 Teach your child** about boundaries from a young age. Use the idea of a 'bubble' around them approximately the size of a hula hoop. Refer to this bubble as their own personal space that no-one has the right to enter if they don't wish them to. Let your child know they have the right to say, 'No!' if someone does enter their personal space/bubble. They also have the right to say, 'No' to being kissed or hugged by another child, an older child/teenager or an adult. The older people in your child's life also need to respect your child's boundaries and their wishes. Moving on from this, don't force your child to show affection if they don't wish to by making them kiss or hug another person. This only reinforces to your child that their wishes don't 'really' matter. In order not to insult the older person, your child could simply shake hands or give a high-five this time around. Learning about consent is crucial for a young child and importantly transfers into their teenage and adult years. People in your child's world need to understand that when your child says, 'No' (especially in relation to their body) they mean 'No'. This needs to be respected and adhered to.

**3 Teach your child** that no-one has the right to touch or ask to see their private parts, and if someone does, they must yell, 'No!' or 'Stop!' They should then quickly move away and tell a trusted adult. Reinforce that they must keep on telling until they are believed. Statistics tell us that a child will need to tell three people before they are believed. Educate your child that if someone (i.e. the perpetrator) asks them to touch their own private parts, shows their private parts to the child or shows them images of private parts (pornography/child exploitation material) that this is wrong also, and that they must get away quickly and tell a trusted adult. Ensure your child knows that they are the 'boss of their body' and if an older person does touch their private parts, they are never to blame. It is very empowering for children to physically practice placing their hand out in front of them, standing firm and tall, and saying in a loud strong voice: a) 'No!' or b) 'Stop!' or c) (in a bullying situation) 'I don't like that!' or d) 'Stop! I am the boss of my body!' Throughout your child's life reinforce the 'NO, GO, TELL' concept.

#### NOTE

The perpetrator may show the possible victim child exploitation material to convince him or her that such acts are 'normal' and therefore permissible. See p. 29.

#### 4 As your child becomes older

(3+ years) assist them to identify five trusted adults (one should be from outside the family) who they could tell if they are touched on their private parts, asked to touch someone's private parts or are shown inappropriate images.

#### NOTE

Ask the people your child nominates if it is okay for them to be on your child's list — I suspect they will be honored; if they are not, then they are not the right people to be included on your child's safety network!

The five people nominated by your child are part of their 'safety network'. Have your child point to each digit on their hand and say the names of the people on their safety network. Another great idea is to draw an outline of your child's hand (or make a handprint with paint) and label each digit with the name of their safety network person. Your child could draw a picture of that person at the end of each digit or you could paste on a photograph (for children not yet reading). Display their safety network hand in a prominent place. Resource Master 7 could be used as an alternative to outlining your child's hand. Resource Master 8 is a sample letter you may wish to give to those people who have regular contact with your child. The letter informs them that your child is educated in Body Safety, and asks them to be a part of this ongoing and important education.



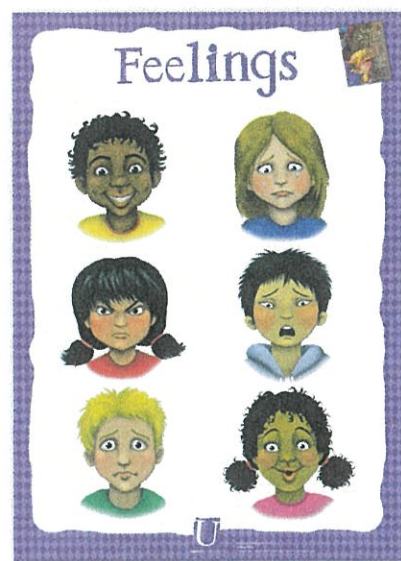
#### NOTE

Some children may want to add their pet or toy to their safety network. This is okay. They can be added to the palm. However, reinforce gently to your child that the pet/toy is great to tell about an unsafe situation but they won't be able to do anything; and that they will also need to tell an adult who can actually help them.

- 5 **Talk about feelings** with your child at the same time as you are discussing inappropriate touch. Discuss what it feels like to be happy, sad, angry, excited, etc. Use posters (see Teaching Pack at [www.somesecrets.info](http://www.somesecrets.info)) or story books to talk about how the child on the poster or in the story book might be feeling. During daily activities, encourage your child to talk about their own feelings, e.g. 'I felt really sad when ... pushed me over. I felt really scared on the big slide. I felt happy when Bec asked me to play with her.' This way your child will be more able to verbalize how they are feeling if someone does touch them inappropriately.



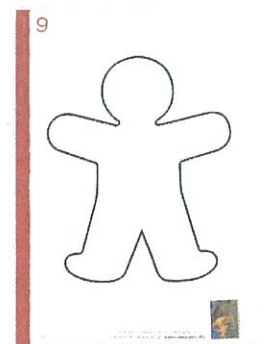
Resource Master 14 could also be used to help children explore their feelings (photocopy and laminate to re-use).



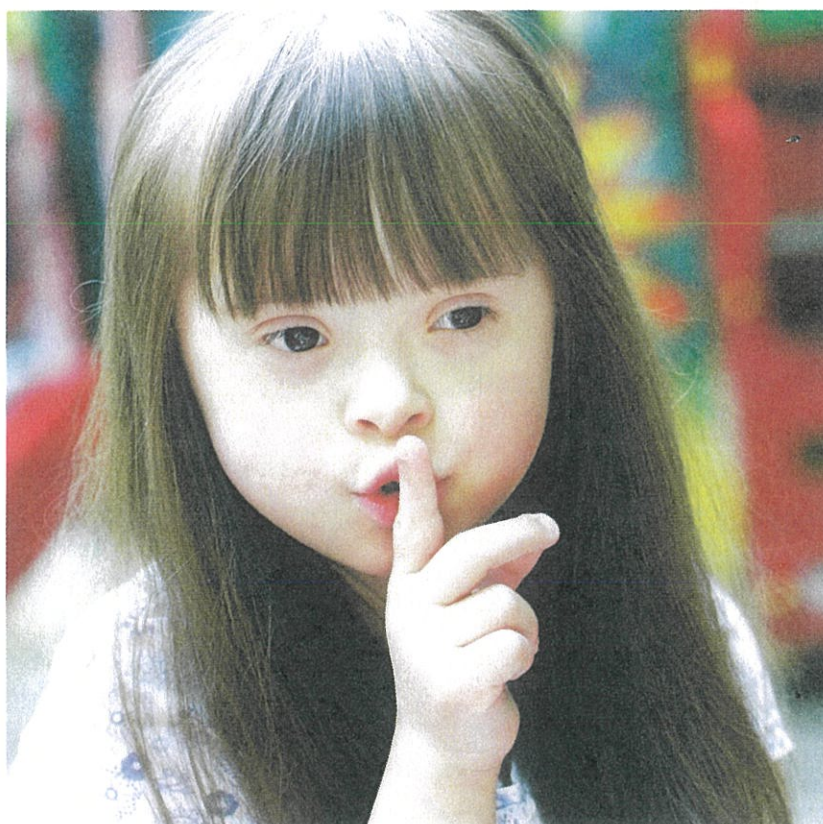
- 6 **Talk with your child** about feeling 'safe' and 'unsafe'. This is a concept young children find hard to grasp. Discuss times when your child might feel 'unsafe', e.g. being pushed down a steep slide; or 'safe', e.g. snuggled up on the couch reading a book with you. Children need to understand the different emotions that come with feeling 'safe' and 'unsafe'. For example, when feeling 'safe', they may feel happy and have a warm feeling inside; when feeling 'unsafe', they may feel scared and have a sick feeling in their tummy. Allow your child time to verbalize how their body reacts when they feel 'safe' or 'unsafe'. The cards from the Teaching Pack can be used for this activity and are available at [www.somesecrets.info](http://www.somesecrets.info)



- 7 **When in an unsafe situation** we all experience our 'early warning signs'. These are the messages our body sends to us when we feel unsafe. Discuss with your child their early warning signs, e.g. heart beating fast or hard, feeling sick in the tummy, sweaty palms, feeling like crying, weak or shaky legs. Let them come up with some ideas of their own. You could use Resource Master 9 to label your child's early warning signs. Tell your child that they must tell you or a trusted adult on their safety network if any of their early warning signs happen in any situation. Reinforce that you (and the people on their safety network) will always believe them and that they can tell you anything.



- 8 **As your child grows**, try as much as possible to discourage the keeping of secrets. Talk about 'safe/happy surprises' such as not telling Granny about her surprise birthday party and 'unsafe/bad' secrets such as someone else touching their private parts. Make sure your child knows that if someone does ask them to keep a secret about inappropriate touching or viewing images of private parts that they must tell you or someone on their safety network straightaway.



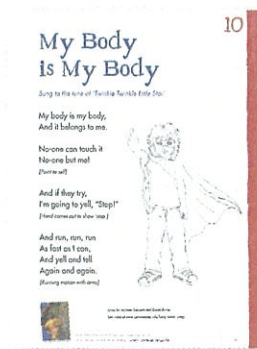
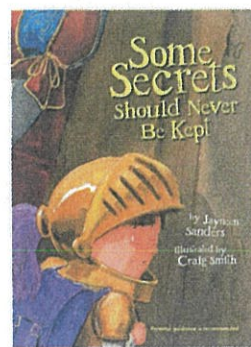
#### NOTE

The keeping of secrets is a crucial part of the grooming process used by perpetrators (see p. 17) and therefore it is **very important** your child knows the difference between happy surprises and a secret that makes them feel bad and uncomfortable.

- 9 **Discuss with your child** when it is appropriate for someone to touch their private parts, e.g. a doctor when they are sick (but making sure they know you must be in the room). Discuss with your child that if someone does touch their private parts (without you there) that they have the right to say, 'No!' or 'Stop!' and outstretch their arm and hand, then get away as quickly as possible and tell a trusted adult. Children (from a very young age) need to know their body is their body and no-one has the right to touch it inappropriately.



- 10 **Read 'Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept'** with your child on a monthly to two-monthly basis when they are young. The book can be read and reread to children from 3 to 12 years. It is also ideal to read before camps, sleepovers, etc. The discussion questions at the back of the book are invaluable for the all-important and ongoing discussions with your child. For a child who has never been sexually abused, this book is 'just another story' but the message is very clear. Children are visual learners, so like any good fairy tale or fable, the safety message will be readily absorbed. Go to [www.somesecrets.info](http://www.somesecrets.info) for more information on how to purchase. Also teach your child the empowering but very simple 'Body Safety Song' at [www.somesecrets.info/body-safety-song/](http://www.somesecrets.info/body-safety-song/) or featured on Resource Master 10.



- 11 Continue to reinforce** the Body Safety message by trying some ‘What could you do?’ scenarios with your child. You can use this time to talk about all sorts of emotional issues as well as Body Safety scenarios.

For example:

- What could you do if someone took your bucket and spade from the sandbox?
- What could you say/do if you didn’t feel like a goodbye kiss from Grandpa?
- What could you do if another child asked to see your private parts?
- What could you do if an older person touched your private parts or asked you to touch theirs?
- What could you do if someone pushed you down the slide?
- What could you do if a child at school showed you their private parts?
- What could you do if a person asked to see your private parts?

Make up your own scenarios to suit your child and the discussion/s you wish to have. Ask yourself, What learning do I want my child to achieve from this discussion? See also Body Safety Skills Conversation Starter Cards on pp. 54–63.

Lastly, sexual abuse prevention education is not only a parent’s responsibility, it is also the community’s responsibility. Ask your child’s child-care center, kindergarten or elementary school if they are running a Body Safety program. If they are not, ask why not. And **please** lobby for it. See Educating the Community on p. 31.

#### NOTE

Educating your child in Body Safety may not only protect them, but it may protect other children as well. It is not uncommon for children to disclose sexual abuse to a friend. The friend needs to know that what happened to the child who disclosed is wrong and they must tell a trusted adult immediately — even if the other child has asked them to keep it a secret.

## Final Tips

- 1 There is no 'special time' to teach Body Safety. It needs to be an ongoing and natural discussion as your child grows. It is best to relax and make the discussion as casual and informal as possible, using 'teachable moments' when they arise. For example, when your child is old enough to wash and dry themselves when bathing, ask them to wash and dry their own private parts. This is a good time to reinforce that their body is their body and only they can touch it. By creating a home environment where there is openness, discussion and no topic is 'off the table', it will be much easier for your child to talk to you if something does happen. If you are tense and uptight, your child will take these cues from you and think these 'conversations' may be something to worry about — which of course they are not!
- 2 Talk about and ensure your child has an understanding of public and private places/spaces. For example, you could say that public places are 'shared by everyone' such as the lounge room in the house and the playground at school; but private places are 'just for you' such as the toilet/bathroom and our bedroom. Point out if someone wants to enter our bedroom they should ask us if it is okay as it is a private place.
- 3 Trust your child. Just like adults, children have an 'inbuilt radar' when it comes to safe and unsafe touch. If they say they don't want to go with someone or they don't want to be left alone with a person (who you may even deem a good friend), trust your child's instincts and respect their wishes.
- 4 For some children (particularly boys) the inappropriate touch of the perpetrator may feel pleasurable. Therefore, it is imperative when educating children that they know their private parts should not be touched even if it feels good.

