

TALKING ABOUT BOUNDARIES AND CONSENT

With children and teens

WHAT EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW

Boundaries are rules that we put in place to keep ourselves safe. This can be emotionally or physically.

Consent is actively agreeing to participate in anything. Consent can be given by words or actions, as long as those words or actions create a clear permission and willingness to engage in the activity. Silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent. It's important to remember that consent can be given or taken away at any moment.



Encourage Self-Agency

Children and teens should be encouraged to set their own boundaries at any age. Forcing young children to hug a family member that they may not want to gives them the impression that they do not have control over their body and choices (when it comes to their boundaries).

Understand All Aspects

Consent is not just about sex! We often talk about consent in regards to sexual intercourse or sexual activities. Consent is something that we all give (or don't give) every day. Did you allow someone to borrow your pen? That's consent! Did you agree to take your child to the park? That's consent! Talking about consent in a broader and age-appropriate sense allows the more "adult" conversations about consent to flow more easily when the time is right.



Lead By Example

Children and teens often learn more from what we do than from what we say! Make your actions match your words. Continue to set your own boundaries in a healthy way. This shows your child or teen how it's done. Healthy ways to set your own boundaries can include saying no to taking on more work projects than you can manage, or ending an uncomfortable conversation in a respectful way.

Teach **NO!**

It's okay to say "No!" Remind your child or teen that saying no to something they don't want to do is not being rude; it's creating safety. If their friends are pressuring them to do something, they can say "no," mean "no," and continue to have their answer be "no."

Talk to them about ways to say no that make them feel comfortable and unapologetic. Maybe your child doesn't want to attend something they were invited to. Instead of forcing them to go, or telling them to ignore the response, try this: "Thank you for the invitation. I cannot attend. I hope you have fun."

