

# Consent and Bystander Skills

Grades 4-6, Lesson #7

## Time Needed

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35-45 minutes

## Student Learning Objectives

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To be able to ...

1. Define consent.
2. Recognize when consent has and has not been freely given.
3. Define sexual abuse.
4. Explain the importance of telling an adult about sexual abuse.
5. Understand how to safely and effectively intervene as a bystander when observing bullying, sexual harassment, or unwanted sexual touch

## Agenda

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1. Define consent.
2. Discuss how to obtain consent.
3. Categorize examples - consent or no consent.
4. Discuss consent and power imbalances.
5. Introduce the issues of prevention and reporting with a case study.
6. Introduce and practice bystander skills
7. Use true/false quiz to summarize lesson.

This lesson was most recently edited November 2021.

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### **Materials Needed**

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None

### **FLASH Key Concepts**

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Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how.

It is never okay to touch someone, or make someone else touch you, if they don't want to.

If a kid has been touched in a way that made them uncomfortable, it is important to tell a grown-up who can help.

## Activity

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### 1. Define consent.

Start by defining consent: *Consent means permission or agreement to do something. For example, if someone asks to borrow my pencil and I say yes, I have given consent for them to use my pencil. If I said no, or if they take my pencil without asking, I have NOT given consent. Any questions about the definition of consent?*

*What if someone tricked another person into saying yes by lying to them? Or if they threatened to hurt them or spread a mean rumor about them if they didn't say yes? Do you think that would still count as consent? The answer is no – it is only consent if the person really wanted to say yes and they did it on their own, without pressure or tricks.*

### 2. Discuss how to obtain consent.

*It is very important that people have consent before touching another person, even if they are just trying to be friendly. How would you know if you had consent to give someone else a hug or to tickle them? Right - you would really only know if you asked, "Can I give you a hug?" or "Can I tickle you?" and they said yes. One way to be a good friend to someone is to ask first before touching them and give them a chance to say yes or no.*

### 3. Categorize examples – “consent” or “no consent.”

*Let's think about a few examples, and you tell me if you think there was consent or not in each example.*

- Andy takes a pencil off John's desk and walks away with it. John doesn't say anything. No consent
- Jenny says, if you don't let me borrow this pencil, I'm going to break it in half. Tam says ok. No consent
- Fatima asks Jayshawn if she can borrow his pencil. He says sure. Consent
- Maria is excited to see her friend after winter break. She runs up behind her and gives her a hug without saying anything. No consent
- Francisco sees his friend Gabriel on the first day of school. He is happy to see him and asks if he can give him a hug. Gabriel says yes. Consent

### 4. Define sexual abuse.

*It is especially important that people ask for consent before any kind of sexual touch, which is touching any parts of the body that are usually covered by a bathing suit. Sometimes these parts of the body are called private parts. Touching another person sexually without consent is called sexual abuse. It is illegal and it is very hurtful to the person it happens to. Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how, no matter what. Today we are going to talk more about sexual abuse. Unfortunately, many people have been sexually*

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*abused, or know someone who has. It can be hard to talk about this subject. There's no pressure for anyone to speak up today if they're feeling quiet.*

### 5. Discuss consent and power imbalances.

*Sometimes people feel pressured to say yes to something because the person asking them is a lot older or has power over them. This can happen to kids because kids are taught to respect adults and do what they ask. Usually that's a good idea, and adults are working hard to keep kids safe. Sometimes, though, an adult or older kid takes advantage of their power. Adults and older kids are never supposed to touch younger kids on their private parts unless it's a doctor and they have the kid's and parent's permission.*

*Adults and teens are never allowed to touch kids in a sexual way. The law says that it's not possible for kids to give consent for adults or older kids to touch them sexually because they have so much more power. When an adult or older kid touches a younger kid on their private parts or in a sexual way, it is called sexual abuse, and it is illegal, whether or not the kid said it was okay. If a kid has ever been touched in a way that made them uncomfortable, it is important to tell a grown-up who can help them, and to keep asking until an adult helps them.*

*There are a few important things to know about sexual abuse:*

- It is never, ever the victim's fault. It is always the fault of the person who is doing the sexual abuse.*
- When kids are sexually abused, it is usually by an adult or an older kid. Sometimes it is by someone close to their own age.*
- Kids of all genders can be sexually abused, and the person doing the abuse can be of any gender too.*
- When kids are sexually abused by an adult or older kid, it is usually by a person they know, sometimes even by someone in their family. Sometimes it is a stranger.*
- Sometimes it only happens once, but often sexual abuse happens for a long time.*
- Sexual abuse includes when an adult makes the kid touch them. It also includes when they show their private parts to the kid, or they ask to see the kid's private parts.*
- People who sexually abuse kids sometimes trick or threaten kids, and sometimes they bribe them with gifts. They don't usually use a weapon. They almost always ask kids to keep secrets.*

### 5. Introduce the issues of prevention and reporting with a case study.

*It's never okay to touch someone, or make someone else touch you, if they don't want to. It doesn't matter how old the other person is or what they say. I want to read you a story about a grown-up who tried to take advantage of his power, and we can talk together about how to handle the situation.*

***"Eric and Destiny were doing yard work for their neighbor, Mr. Simms, the way they had done every summer for years. This time, instead of bringing them their pay when they were done, he invited them into his house for lemonade. They figured it was OK, since they'd known him a long time. While he was handing them the cups of lemonade, he touched their hands longer than necessary and then he stroked***

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### ***Destiny's hair while she drank ..."***

Ask the class "How do you think Eric and Destiny felt?" Students will say things like "scared," "angry," "embarrassed." Point out that they may also have felt "fine." But, in this case: You're right, that is how they felt.

***"They looked at each other, and Eric moved closer to Destiny. Then Mr. Simms offered them twice their usual pay if they would take off their clothes."***

Ask the class, "What can the kids do?" As they respond, write their answers on the board. If students suggest violence, say, "It would be all right, if necessary, but it probably isn't necessary." The first thing to do is:

- A. SAY NO, in a strong voice (or "Cut it out." "Leave me alone.")
- B. LEAVE right away, even if it seems weird or awkward.

***"They did tell him to leave them alone. He did stop. And he handed them twice their usual salary anyway, saying 'Let's keep this just between us.' They were afraid to say no, so they did promise not to tell and they took the money and left quickly."***

Ask the class, "How do you think they felt now?" and "What do you think Eric and Destiny should do?" Make sure the class decides that they should tell someone. There are two reasons: To protect themselves from continued abuse and (even if it's a one-time occurrence which they can avoid in the future) to protect other children...neighbors, their own younger siblings.

***"They decided it was OK to break their promise. They told their parents. They thought they might get yelled at for going into Mr. Simms' house to begin with; but their dad just said, 'I'm glad you told us. It's not your fault this happened and I'm sorry it happened to you.' And their mom called the police. She said 'Mr. Simms may be nice in other ways, but he's got a serious problem and we need help protecting you and other children from him.' Eric and Destiny were really glad they told."***

Point out that even though Eric and Destiny told right away in this story, it's never too late to tell, even if something happened years ago.

### **6. Introduce and practice bystander skills**

*In our last example, a grown-up did something wrong with kids. In those situations, it's important for kids to leave the situation as quickly as possible and to tell an adult who will help them.*

*Now I want us to consider a different type of situation, where a kid is being teased or bullied right in front of you. There are important ways to help in this situation, such as (1) trying to stop the person who is being mean; (2) helping the person who is being teased or bullied get away; and (3) getting an adult to help.*

Note: You may need to remind students that the purpose of helping as a bystander is to ensure everyone's safety, including their own. If students suggest dangerous or unsafe alternatives, redirect them to safe and effective options.

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**Imagine a boy is being teased for being the smallest person in the class.** Of course, it's never okay to bully or tease someone, and what this person is doing is wrong.

- If you saw this happening, what could you say to the person who is being mean to try to get them to stop?
- How would you get an adult to help you if this were happening on the playground? What if it were happening in the hallway?

**Now let's talk about what to do if a kid touched another kid in a way that made them uncomfortable, or tried to make another kid touch them.** Of course it is never okay to touch someone, or make someone else touch you, if they don't want to. Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how.

- If you saw a situation like this, what are some things you could say to the kid who was ignoring what the other person wanted to try to get them to stop? What could you say if they were one of your friends?
- What could you do to help the person being touched to get away?
- When you run to an adult to get their help, what could you say?

### 7. Ask the class to tell you whether each of the following statements you will read aloud to them is TRUE or FALSE:

- People who sexually abuse kids usually have weapons. (false)
- When kids are sexually abused, it is often by someone they know. (true)
- Only girls are sexually abused. (false)
- Even if a kid promises to keep the abuse a secret, it's OK to tell. (true)
- If a kid was sexually abused many years ago, they can still tell someone now. It's never too late to tell. (true)

Thank the class for their attention and remind them that they can always talk to you if they have questions about sexual abuse or if they or someone they know needs help.

## Homework

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Students' options:

- Family homework: What would you like me to do if someone asks me to keep a secret from you?
- Individual homework: Explain why it's important to ask for consent before you hug or tickle someone.