

# A SAFER FAMILY. A SAFER WORLD.

A Resource for Parents and Caregivers of Children 0-12 on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress

[www.hcsats.org](http://www.hcsats.org)

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# Harborview Center For Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress

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## Basic Facts

- CSA involves sexual contact with a child when they did not, or cannot, consent
- CSA involves the use of a child for one's own sexual gratification
- CSA is more often perpetrated by someone the child knows
- There are many types of CSA, both touching and non-touching crimes

# Basic Assumptions

- Adults (and older children) touching young children sexually is wrong, and against the law
- CSA can happen in any community and by anyone
- CSA is a profound violation of a child
- CSA is an abuse of power
- Children have the right to be safe from abuse and need some level of autonomy



## Statistics

- 17-year-old girls reporting lifetime sexual abuse and sexual assault: 26.6%
- 17-year-old boys: 5.1%

David Finkelhor, Ph.D., Anne Shattuck, M.A., Heather A. Turner, Ph.D., and Sherry L. Hamby, Ph.D., 2013

# A SAFER FAMILY. A SAFER WORLD.

## A Resource for Parents and Caregivers of Children 0-12 on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

This booklet is for parents, caregivers and other caring adults to help them prevent the sexual abuse of children. Some of parents' worst fears are that their children might be hurt or abused. We cannot always control the way other people treat our children, and our children cannot control the way others treat them either. However, the good news is that we can always control our own behavior, and we can help our children learn to do the same. As a parent or caregiver, you are the best person to teach your children how they should be treated and how they should treat others. They see you doing it every day!

In this booklet, you will find ideas for talking about sexual abuse and safety. These talks can make your relationships stronger and can help prevent abuse. However, even when families do talk about these things, sometimes children still can be sexually abused. This booklet also talks about what to do if this ever happens.

We all play a part in creating safer families and a safer world.  
Please contact us if you need help – we are always glad to talk.

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## HOW DO I...

...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

...TEACH CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND TOUCHING

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

...WATCH FOR SIGNS OF ABUSERS

...RESPOND IF A CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

**HOW DO I...**

**...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY**

# HOW DO I...

## ...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

- ▶ It can be helpful to teach your children **the proper names of their body parts**, including their genitals. By teaching these words, you let them know that it is okay to use those terms and that they can tell you when they have a problem with any part of their body.
- ▶ Teach them that certain **parts of their body are private**. The private parts of the body are usually the same parts covered by a swim suit.



# HOW DO I...

## ...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

- ▶ Children often have questions about where babies come from, how they develop, toileting, body parts, and how to keep their bodies clean. **They need these questions answered.** It is a good idea to think ahead of time about how you want to answer these questions in a way that is straightforward and age appropriate.
- ▶ How do you know when kids are ready to talk about these things? **If they are asking, that is a good sign they are ready!** It's okay to just give a little basic information for a younger child, and wait to see if they have more questions. It's always important to make sure what you say is correct and honest.

# HOW DO I...

## ...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

- ▶ Occasional **sexual behavior and play** is common for young children, like acting out family roles or playing doctor. A child exploring and touching their own body is also common for this age group. You can set limits and teach touching rules, as discussed in the next section. If you are not sure about whether a child's sexual behavior is normal or concerning, you can call our center.
- ▶ There are lots of **great books** that families can read together about bodies, babies, and safety. Check out our website at **[www.hcsats.org](http://www.hcsats.org)** and click on "Resources" for book lists.

# Your Body Belongs to You

Cornelia Spelman • illustrated by Teri Weidner



# It's **MY** Body



A Book to Teach Young Children  
How to Resist Uncomfortable Touch

Lory Freeman

Illustrated by Carol Deach





A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

# It's NOT the Stork!

A Book about Girls, Boys,  
Babies, Bodies, Families, and Friends

For age  
4  
and up



As Seen on  
THE  
TODAY  
SHOW

From the author and illustrator of *It's So Amazing!* and *It's Perfectly Normal*  
Robie H. Harris illustrated by Michael Emberley

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FOR AGE 7 AND UP

# IT'S SO AMAZING!

A Book about Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies, and Families

NEW EDITION  
17th  
ANNIVERSARY  
\*\*\*\*



from the author and illustrator of *It's Perfectly Normal* and *It's NOT the Stork!*  
ROBIE H. HARRIS and MICHAEL EMBERLEY

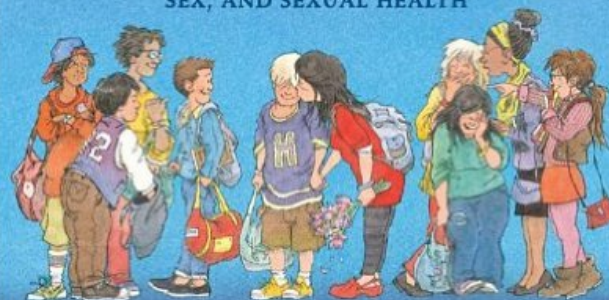
—OVER ONE MILLION COPIES IN PRINT!—

FOR AGE 10 AND UP

# It's Perfectly Normal

NEW EDITION  
20th  
ANNIVERSARY  
\*\*\*\*

CHANGING BODIES, GROWING UP,  
SEX, AND SEXUAL HEALTH



ROBIE H. HARRIS and MICHAEL EMBERLEY

# HOW DO I...

...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

**"Everybody's body is  
different and special."**

# HOW DO I...

...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

**"Your body belongs to you.  
It's important to take care  
of your body and keep it  
healthy and clean."**



# HOW DO I...

...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

**"The baby grows in  
the woman's uterus."**

# HOW DO I...

...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

**"It's okay to look at and touch your own body. You can do that in your bedroom or in the bathroom."**



# HOW DO I...

...TALK ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUALITY

**"I'm not sure how to answer that question but I'm really glad you asked me. I'm going to get us a book about that so we can learn together."**

A parent tells you that her 5-year-old son is starting to have a lot of questions about bodies and where babies come from. He also touches his penis occasionally while playing or when in bed. She tells you she does not know what to do in these situations.

**HOW DO I...**

**...TEACH CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND TOUCHING**

# HOW DO I...

...TEACH CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND TOUCHING

Find opportunities to model consent. It can be helpful for children to have the chance to decide how they want to share their body, or if they want to at all.

# HOW DO I...

...TEACH CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND TOUCHING

Teach kids how to understand language that means no, and how to recognize others' feelings.



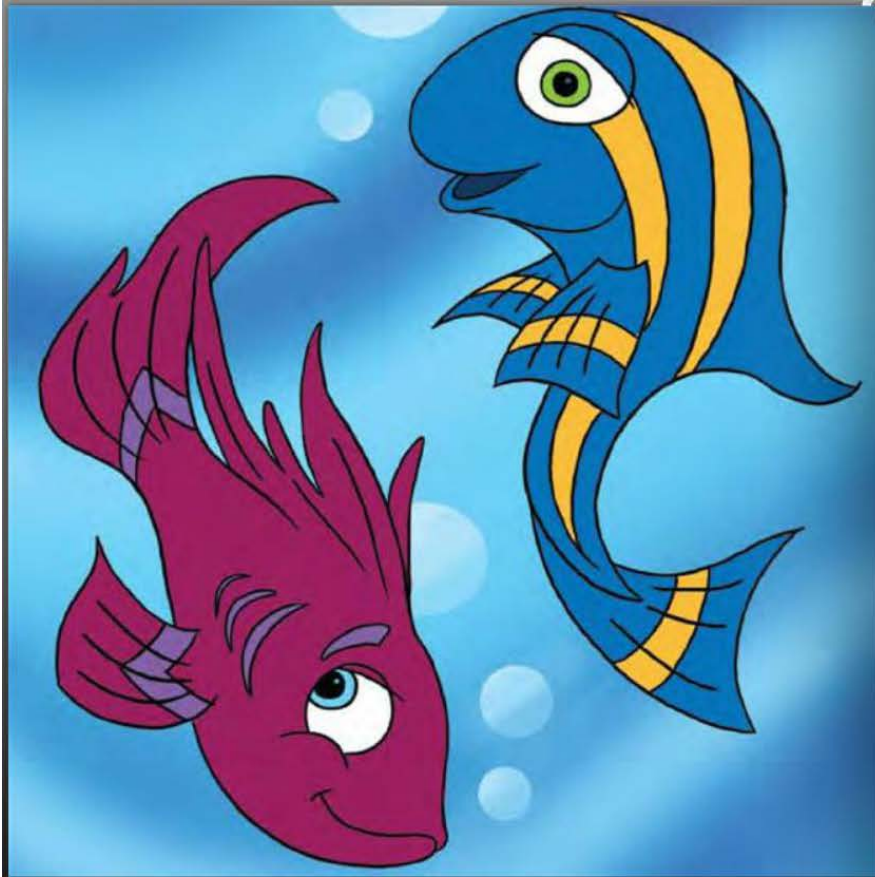
# HOW DO I...

...TEACH CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND TOUCHING

**Include body safety rules in your other family safety rules.**



Free e-book online: <http://www.dpub.us/Books/Touch.html>

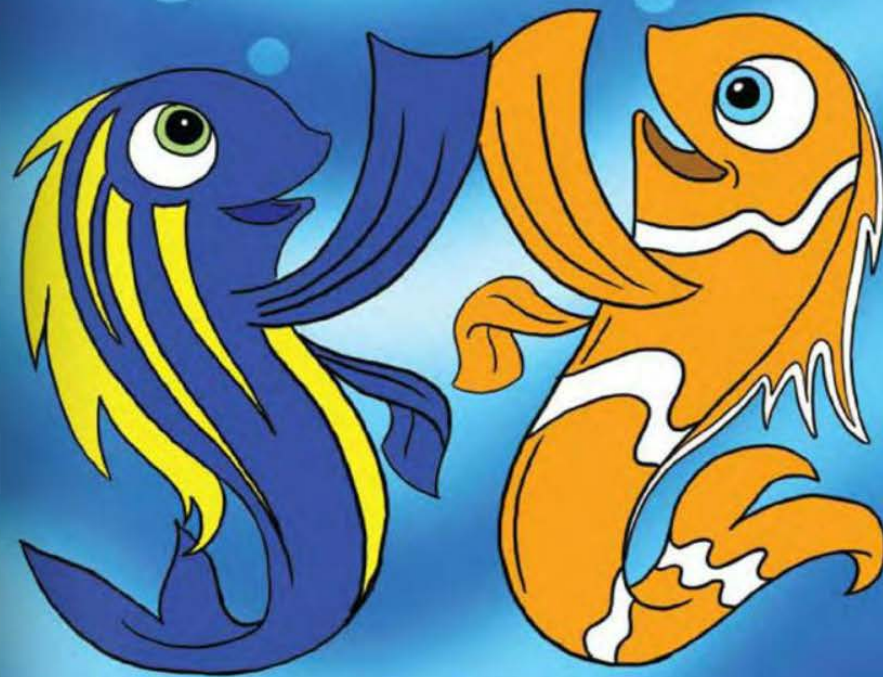


Everyone has a body.  
Even fish have bodies.



Some parts of our bodies we share  
with others.

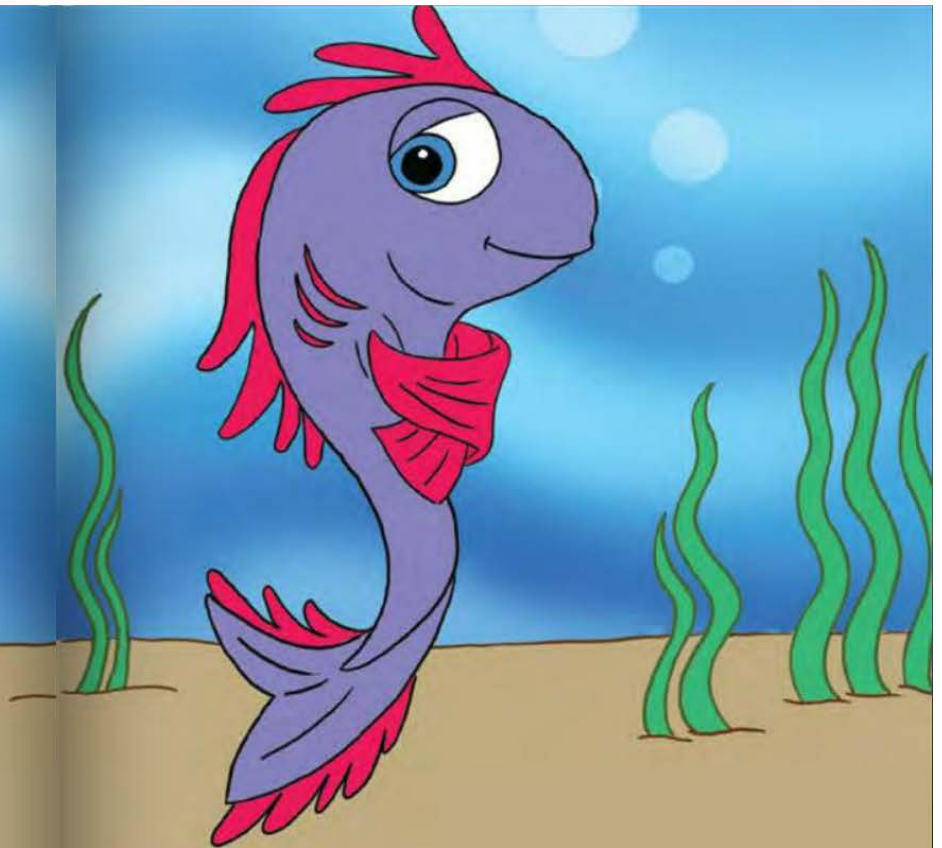
For example our hands when we  
high five someone



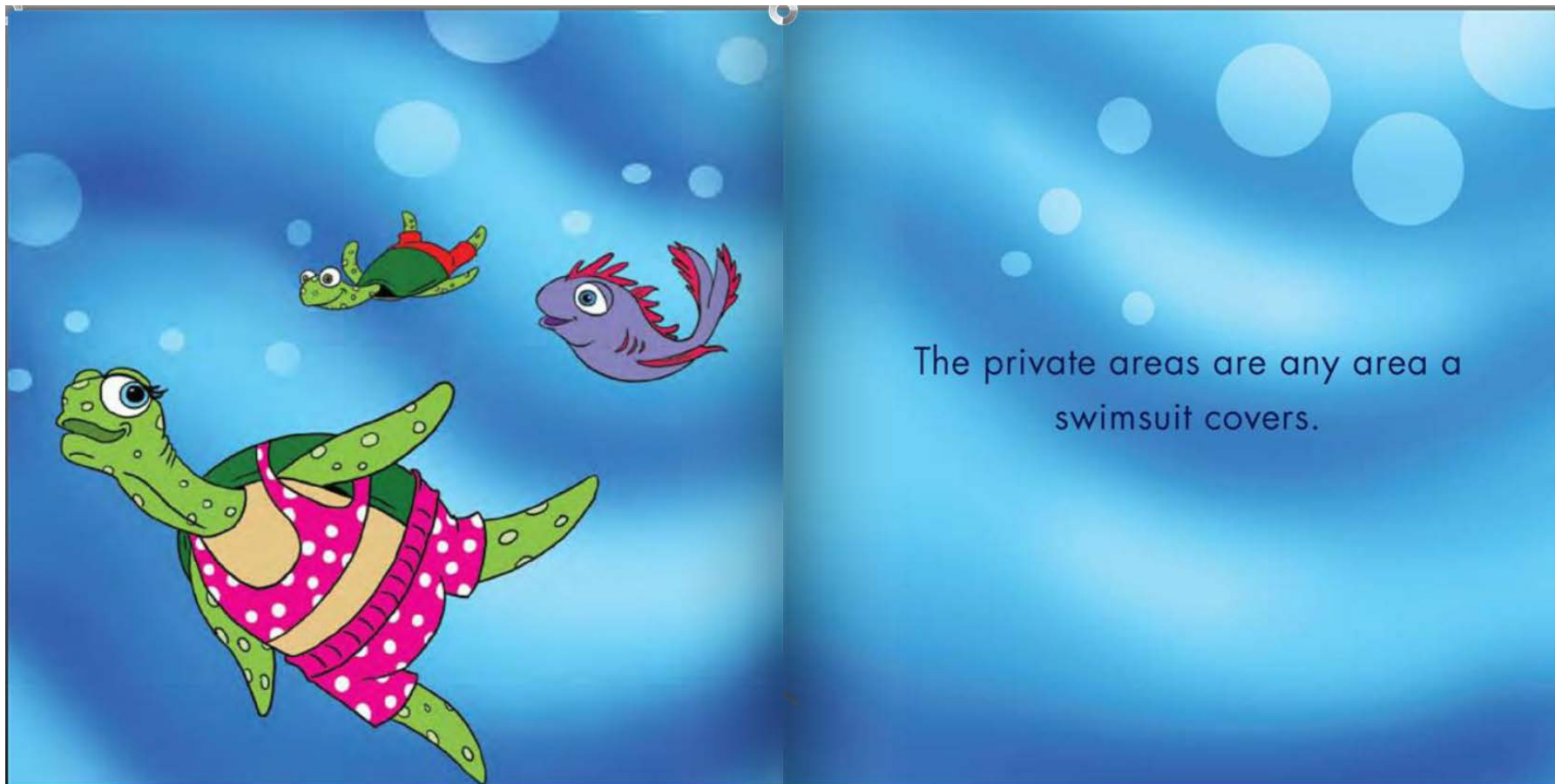


or shake their hand.

We share all of the parts of our  
bodies except the private areas.

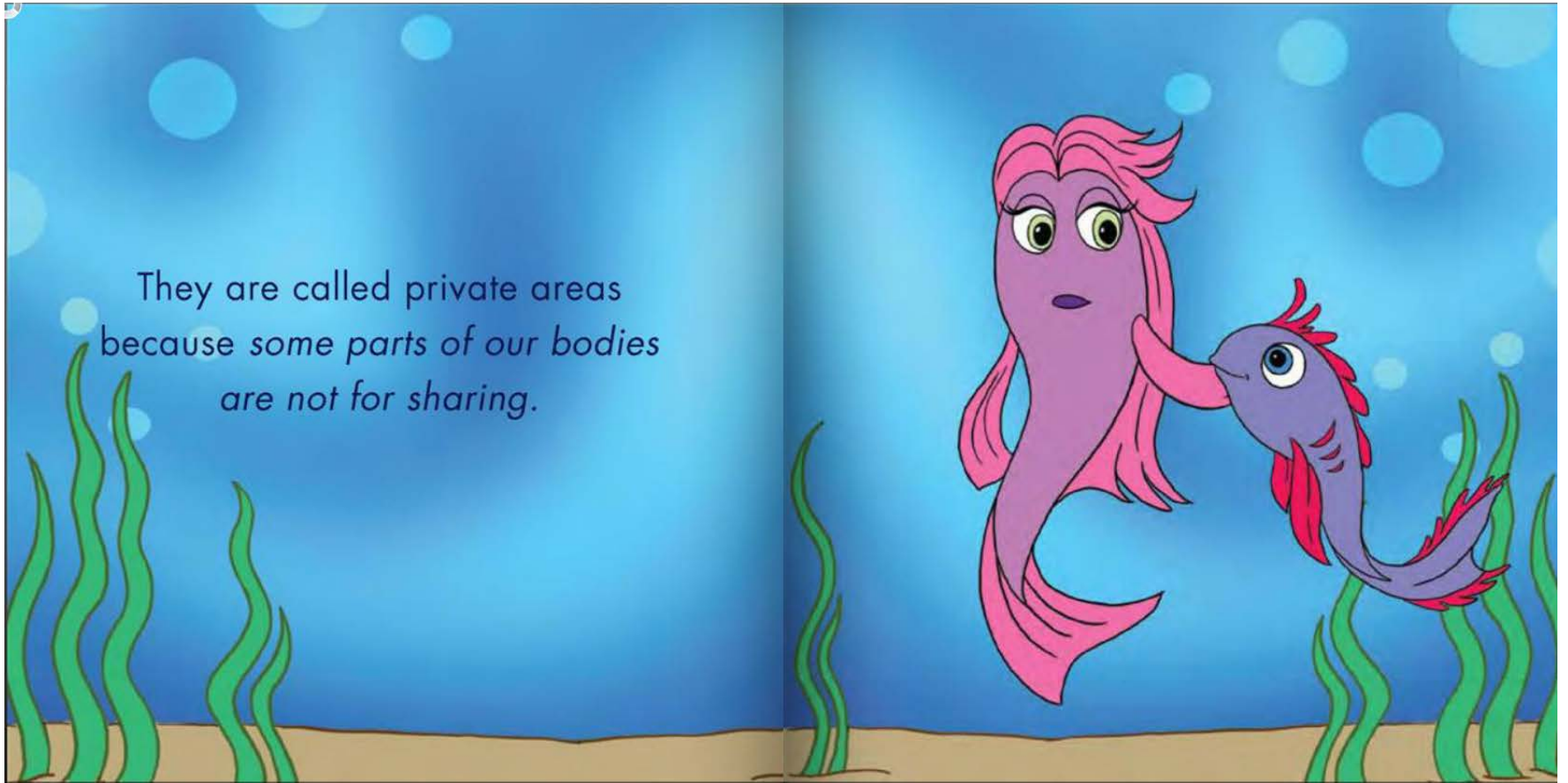






The private areas are any area a swimsuit covers.

They are called private areas  
because *some parts of our bodies*  
*are not for sharing.*



# HOW DO I...

...TEACH CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND TOUCHING

Leave the  
conversation  
open for kids  
to report.

# HOW DO I...

...TEACH CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND TOUCHING

**Tell others what you are teaching your child. Share this information with other parents, your child's teachers, daycare providers, babysitters, grandparents, and relatives.**



## Discussion

While visiting with a family, you notice that one of the children, Jayla, frequently touches her siblings and tries to hug and kiss them. When the other children are touched, they pull away from Jayla. The caregiver tells you she does this all the time and they don't like it.



HOW DO I...

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

# HOW DO I...

## ...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

Children hear many things outside the home that influence the way they think people should act. Some of the things they hear are unhealthy, and **can teach children to treat others badly**. You can talk to kids about what they are seeing on TV or hearing from friends. You can **challenge ideas about gender roles** and **children's lack of power**. It is important that children don't hear adult and teen sexual comments. Children should also not watch TV or movies with adult sexual content.

It's important to treat boys and girls equally, with the **same rules and expectations**. Some harmful messages about boys are that they should always be powerful, in charge, and can't show emotions. Harmful messages about girls are that they are weak, too emotional, and their looks are most important. Sexual abuse may be more likely to happen in communities that believe strongly in messages like these.

# HOW DO I...

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

## Boys can...

- be sad
- be sensitive to others' feelings
- talk things out
- take care of others
- be polite
- be a good friend
- play with whatever toys they want to

# HOW DO I...

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

## Girls can...

- play rough
- be angry
- be strong
- rescue people
- be leaders
- make the rules
- play with whatever toys they want to



# HOW DO I...

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES



All Kids  
Can Do All  
of These  
Things!

# HOW DO I...

## ...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

Parents have the right to create rules and expectations for their children. It is also important for children to know that **sometimes they can say no**, and that **their voice will be heard**. This may protect them from abuse. An abuser might take advantage of a child who doesn't know how to say no to adults. You can show your child you respect their opinions even when you enforce rules. Allow your children to sometimes disagree with you, to practice saying no, and to make choices for themselves. It's important for children to be able to speak up if someone is being unsafe.

# HOW DO I...

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

**"I made a mistake and I'm sorry.  
I didn't realize that embarrassed  
you. Thank you for telling me  
how you were feeling."**

# HOW DO I...

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

**"I respect what you are saying and I will stop because you asked me to."**



# HOW DO I...

...CHALLENGE SOCIETY'S MESSAGES

**"What can you do if someone touches you in a way you don't like? What about if someone asks you to do something that is against the rules?"**

The children you work with are role playing a superhero game. You hear a child say: “You can’t be a superhero! He’s a tough fighter. You can be the girl!”

**HOW DO I...**

**...WATCH FOR SIGNS OF ABUSERS**

# HOW DO I...

## ...WATCH FOR SIGNS OF ABUSERS

Talking to kids about these topics is just one part of prevention. Another important part of prevention is watching out for **concerning behaviors from adults and teens**. It's important to always know who your child is with, where they are, and who else will be there. Avoid having older children watch younger children for long periods of time with little supervision. **Abuse usually happens by someone the child knows**, and usually happens in secrecy. Be aware that children can be abused by other children and by adults, including people living in your home or even people working at schools and youth programs. If someone's behavior makes you uncomfortable, **trust your instincts** and don't let your child spend time alone with that person. Abusers often seem very nice, so that they can develop a close, trusting relationship with a child.



# HOW DO I...

## ...WATCH FOR SIGNS OF ABUSERS

### Examples of concerning behaviors in adults:

- ▶ **Special attention:** giving affection and compliments to one child (or a small group of children)
- ▶ **Special treatment:** giving children gifts and special privileges, or letting them break the rules
- ▶ **Child-focused:** touching them frequently while playing, seeming to relate to children better than adults, developing a close relationship with a child without including the parents/caregivers
- ▶ **Poor boundaries:** not stopping when child looks uncomfortable or when asked to stop; talking about sexual things or personal relationships
- ▶ **Secrecy:** asking the child to keep secrets, looking for places and situations to be alone with the child

# HOW DO I...

## ...WATCH FOR SIGNS OF ABUSERS

### How to talk to someone who has concerning behavior and boundaries with children:

- ▶ "It looks like he is not really enjoying that game anymore."
- ▶ "I feel uncomfortable when you talk to the kids about \_\_\_\_."
- ▶ "Please have the door open when you are playing. Even though you are here I still need to see him."
- ▶ "It really bothers me when you talk about their bodies and call it 'flirting.'"

# HOW DO I...

## ...WATCH FOR SIGNS OF ABUSERS

One way to prevent sexual abuse before it happens is **to speak up when you see concerning behaviors.** This can be a great example for your child to see you do this. Most people will be understanding and will stop the concerning behavior. On the other hand, an abuser might get defensive or say you are being too sensitive. They might continue the behavior despite your concerns, or get more secretive. If this happens, watch this person if they are around children. Talk to a friend or family member. Call our center (or your local sexual abuse program) for advice.

Two parents come to you and report that one of the volunteers at your program makes them uncomfortable. They report that he asks the kids if they have boyfriends. The volunteer frequently takes pictures of the children with his phone.



**HOW DO I...**

**...RESPOND IF A CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED**

# HOW DO I...

## ...RESPOND IF A CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

You can start **NOW**. Show your children you are there for them any time they have a question or a concern, no matter how small. Listen and hear them. When they do come to you with a concern or problem, tell them first that you are glad they told you. They may feel more comfortable going to you with a big problem if they felt you heard them in the past with little problems.

Despite our best efforts to protect children, sexual abuse can still happen. Your response and support is very important. Children can and do recover from sexual abuse. There is help for your child, and for you too.

# HOW DO I...

## ...RESPOND IF A CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

- ▶ If you suspect your child has been sexually abused, but you are not sure, supervise them closely. Watch for changes in their moods. Try to leave the conversation open: "you can always talk to me if anything is bothering you." Call our center (or your local sexual abuse program) to get advice.
- ▶ If your child tells you that they have been sexually touched or abused, it's normal to feel upset or in disbelief. It's important to stay calm and believe the child. You can tell them that you are glad they told you.
- ▶ When abuse has been reported by a child, do not allow unsupervised contact with the abuser. You can call local police or Child Protective Services to make a report. You can seek a medical exam to make sure the child's body is okay and to collect evidence. You can call our center for support.
- ▶ If you are worried about your child acting out sexually or touching others inappropriately, seek professional help. Talk to the child about the body safety rules and what kinds of touch are OK and not OK. Teach and enforce the rules as you would with any other rules about safety and respect. Call our center (or your local sexual abuse program) to get advice.

Carlos tells you that his coach was touching him and he did not like it.

Carlos says that she told him if he told anyone, he could not play basketball anymore.



# HOW DO I...

## ...RESPOND IF A CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

### Additional Resources:

- Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs: [www.wcsap.org](http://www.wcsap.org)
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)
- For more information, check out our website at [www.hcsats.org](http://www.hcsats.org). Click on "Resources"

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