Helpful phrases for teaching the right to feel safe, consent, boundaries and body autonomy

Use the phrases in this guide during everyday routines, play and interactions. Ask, check, listen and respect children's verbal and non-verbal responses whenever it is safe to do so.

Helpful phrases for nappy changes, dressing, feeding and rest time



Nappy changes

"I'm going to change your nappy now to keep your body clean, is that okay?"
"I'm wiping your body to keep you clean and safe, is that okay?"
"This is your body. Your body belongs to you. I'll tell you what I'm doing."



Choice

"I'm going to wipe your face now, is that okay or would you like to try yourself?"
"I'm helping you change your clothes because they're wet. Would you like to try or have me help?"
"Would you like to walk to the changing area, ot would you like me to carry you?"



Dressing

"Would you like help with the zip?"
"Your socks are a bit twisted. Would you like me to fix them?"
"You can have a go at putting your shoes on, and I'll help if you need me."



Picking up

"I'm going to pick you up and put you in your highchair. Are you ready?"
"I'm going to pick you up now, is that okay?"
"I'm going to pick you up now to help you get to the change area. Are you ready?"



Rest time

"I'm going to help you lie down for your rest time, would you like me to sit nearby?"
"Would you like your comfort item, blanket or a book before you rest?"
"I can see you're finding it hard to settle. Let's take some slow breaths together."



Feeding time

"I'm going to feed you now, is that okay?"
"You don't have to eat everything. You can listen to your tummy."
"You can take your time."



Reassurance

"Let me know if you want me to stop or take a break."
"Thank you for telling me how you feel."
"You're safe. I'm here with you, and I'll help you."

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Use calm, respectful language during everyday care routines to explain what is happening, ask for permission, and respond to children's cues.

Body autonomy

Use simple, consistent language.

- "This is your body. Your body belongs to you."
- "You can say yes or no."
- "It's okay to say no if something doesn't feel right to you."
- "You can tell me what you need."
- "You can tell me if something doesn't feel right."
- "You can stop if you don't like that."
- "You can move your body away if you feel uncomfortable."
- You don't have to do something if it doesn't feel okay."
- "You can have space if you need it."

Boundaries and space

Help children notice their comfort levels.

- "You can choose how you'd like to say hello."
- "Which one feels okay for you?"
- "What if someone says no?"
- "What can we do if we change our minds?"
- "Tell me to stop when it feels uncomfortable."
- "Tell me to step back if it feels like I am standing too close."
- "It looks like you need some space so I'm going to move way. I'm here if you need anything."
- "I'm going to sit here quietly. You can let me know if you need help."

Try a personal space bubble

Invite children to imagine an invisible bubble around their body. They can stretch their arms out to show their personal space, then talk about what happens when someone comes too close.

Prompt: "What can we do if someone comes too close and we don't feel comfortable?"

Helpful phrases for modelling consent and supporting safe interactions

Teaching consent

Support children to ask, check and respect each other's responses.

- "We ask before we touch someone else's body."
- "Let's check if they are okay with that first."
- "We always listen when someone says stop."
- "Everyone is different, we all get to choose what feels okay for us."

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Responding to children's cues

Show children that their words, body language and behaviour are respected.

- "You're telling me to stop, I'm listening."
- "You don't have to do that right now."
- "I'm listening to what your body is telling me."
- "It looks like you have changed your mind, that's okay, we can stop now."
- "I can see you're not ready, we can wait."
- "We can try again later."
- "You're crying, I can see you don't like that."
- "I can see you don't like that, I will stop."

Supporting peer interactions

Guide children to ask, listen and respond to each other's boundaries.

- "Let's use gentle hands with each other."
- "It looks like they don't like that, so we must stop."
- "You can move your body away or find another spot is you're not feeling comfortable."
- "Let's ask first before joining in."
- "We need to listen to our friends."
- "It looks like Sarah needs a little bit of space, let's step back a bit so they feel more comfortable."
- "Let's find another way to play."

Adults must create safe environments, notice verbal and non-verbal cues, and respond in ways that show children they are heard, supported and safe to speak up.

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