

Sexual Integrity



Wait a minute. A conversation guide about sexual integrity for toddlers and preschoolers? Do parents really need this? Actually, there are many reasons to help a child feel comfortable talking with you about their body. That's why it's important that you start the conversation early.

Your role during this phase is to...

Introduce them to their body, so they will discover their body and define privacy.

This guide is designed to help you connect with your child in the phase they are in, by giving you some words to say to navigate the critical issue of sexual integrity. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep

this end goal for your preschooler in mind: Sexual integrity is guarding my potential for intimacy through appropriate boundaries and mutual respect.

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Tips to Help Preschoolers Understand Sexual Integrity

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future.

In the new baby phase...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"God made your strong little legs."

"God made your elbows."

"God made your vagina/penis." (Use correct names of body parts as you bathe and change your child—experts suggest that learning proper words can protect your kid from potential harm as well as create a positive view of their body.)

In the following preschool years...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"That's your nose. Those are your eyes. That's your vagina/penis."

"No, girls don't have a penis."
(If your child notices that someone's body is different than their own, talk about the differences.)

"Close the door when you go to the potty."

"Babies grow inside their mama until it's time to be born."

"It's okay to tell someone 'NO' if you don't want them to touch you."

"It's polite to look away when someone is changing their clothes."

"Your penis/vagina/bottom/nipples are private, and we don't show them to people."

"If someone touches your private parts, come and tell me right away."

"Sometimes the doctor might touch a private part to make sure you are healthy. It's okay when I'm with you."

Remember

The preschool years are the years you want to embrace their physical needs, so include lots of hugs and cuddle time as you talk.

This conversation is the perfect opportunity to inspire a healthy self image, so answer their questions honestly and encourage them to keep asking them. This is the beginning of great conversations in the years to come.

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Enhance the Conversation

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities your family can try to make a potentially awkward subject more natural:

During bath time, as you wash each body part with a cloth or sponge, call it by its correct name. Then, talk about what that body part helps us do.

When dressing or undressing your preschooler, review their body parts with them—again, using the appropriate terms. But this time, ask them who has permission to see or touch that body part.

Grab some crayons and a sheet of paper. Go ahead and draw the outline of a human body and sit down with your preschooler. Then, using the crayons, help your preschooler fill in all the details that make them them—pointing out all their unique qualities—the color of their skin, hair, eyes, and lips. From head to toe, talk about how special and wonderful God created them.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to understand this phase, check out the Parenting Your... book series at parentcuestore.org.

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