

Say “No” to Bottom-Games

Anya Godwin

Parent’s guide

Keep Children Safe – Protect and Educate

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This book explores simple ways that parents, educators and caregivers can speak with their children about keeping safe from sexual abuse and gives ideas and strategies for how to do this.

Produced by Home and Family Counselling

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Say “No” To Bottom-Games: What People Say

“I welcome this new resource for parents who want to talk with their children about keeping safe from abuse”

John Angus, New Zealand Children’s Commissioner

“‘Say “No” to Bottom-Games’ is a refreshing new approach to the prevention of child sexual abuse. This family resource is based on the creation of a partnership between parents and children in which they work together to formulate keeping safe plans. The stories are appealing to children and the information in this book will give parents/caregivers confidence and the information they need to provide ongoing personal safety education throughout their children’s development.”

Caroline Witten-Hannah

Registered Child Psychotherapist NZAP

Author of ‘Ending Offending Together’

“This book is good because it has hints for parents and appropriate pictures for children to colour in. Adults aren’t always around to help, so children need to know what to do.”

Vikki Lidbetter, Parent

“Over recent years there has been a lot of work done in the area of education and prevention about sexual abuse. I think that this has, amongst other things, contributed to breaking the pattern of secrecy which offenders require to perpetrate these crimes. However, effective safety education needs a combined approach from parents as well as the agencies involved. Most parents want to work to help keep their children safe from sexual abuse but they simply do not know how, because they haven’t done this in the past. I believe that ‘Say “No” to Bottom-Games’ is an excellent resource that can help fill this gap in the education and prevention resources in our community.”

Peter Milne

Registered Counsellor

MNZAC

Introduction

Adults who are willing to tackle the topic of sexual abuse and want to learn how to discuss this with their children will find this book invaluable. Here is the opportunity for parents, educators and caregivers to learn about how they can be more aware of their responsibility to keep children safe, as well as ideas about how children can develop skills to use in their relationships with people.

It's never too late to start education about keeping safe from sexual abuse.

These books offer ideas about how families can foster an environment where children trust they can talk openly about what happens to them, and gives suggestions about how to do this. They also explain how younger children need simple and repetitive education, at an age-appropriate level, and give ideas about how to do this.

For the older child, there is the concept of a 'Partnership Approach' where adults and children discuss their ideas and work together deciding on strategies about keeping safe.

At each stage of their growing up, a child needs to have easily understood messages about their parents' or guardians' role as well as their own capabilities for keeping safe from sexual abuse.

In a creative and informative way you will find confidence to:

- Make 'Family Rules' about safety from sexual abuse.
- Teach children ways to Say and Do "NO".
- Assist children in embarrassing situations around touching.
- Teach children to trust their instincts.
- Describe touches and name feelings.
- Teach children how to know when to tell 'secrets'.
- Foster open communication so children feel free to talk.
- Respond effectively if your child discloses sexual abuse.
- Recognise what signs to look for that could mean a child is being sexually abused.

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Chapter 1

- About sexual abuse
-

A definition of child sexual abuse

“Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse in which a child is abused for the sexual gratification of an adult or older adolescent. In addition to direct sexual contact, child sexual abuse also occurs when an adult indecently exposes their genitalia to a child, asks or pressures a child to engage in sexual activities, displays pornography to a child, or uses a child to produce child pornography.”
www.wikipedia.com

For the most part, the perpetrators of sexual abuse are loved and respected members of families and communities. They are often people in positions of trust and authority and can be ordinary people who don't seem likely to bear the label of 'paedophile, sexual deviant or predator'.

Stranger-danger has been commonly taught to children for generations. While this has some validity, it is now widely understood that this message is insufficient. Over the past 30 years or so, the topic of sexual abuse of children has been studied world-wide and the recognised facts are now that sexual abuse of children is most likely to happen involving people children know.

**Both boys
and girls can
be vulnerable.**

It can be hard to believe about anybody we know in our family or community, but the facts are that it does happen – even involving people we love and trust.

Children are naturally trusting of the adults in their world. Sexual offenders use this trusting nature to manipulate them and develop close relationships. An aware child has the advantage that they may be able to see what is otherwise impossible to decipher as dangerous behaviour.

Long term effects of childhood sexual abuse

People living with the effects of childhood sexual abuse can suffer from a variety of problems. These may vary from difficulties in relationships through to debilitating physical and mental health issues.

A few common experiences are:

depression, anxiety, addictions, eating disorders, relationship and intimacy difficulties, unexplainable physical symptoms and many more.

Both males and females can be offenders.

The ethical dilemma

The topic of bodies, touching and sex present a multitude of ethical dilemmas to our community when we consider attempts at a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. This guide may be the right approach for you and your family, and then again, it may not be. Please make use of this resource in whatever way suits your unique family. May it also serve as an invitation to create your own ideas that are a better fit for your situation and family beliefs.

Chapter 2

- Where to start – making a Family Rule
 - Your guide to age-appropriate Family Rules
 - Keeping bottoms private
 - Introducing facts
-

This guide starts by teaching children that their bodies are private and belong to them, and follows on by educating them about who can touch their bottoms and why.

Children are used to rules that are designed to keep them safe. Most families and educators teach them rules about road safety, water safety, sun safety, fire safety and hygiene. Children begin by learning these rules at home. As they go through pre-school facilities they become more accustomed to the rules, then learn about them in more depth at school.

When children are young, they stick to the rules because we teach them to. As they grow up and become more independent, they can take more of a partnership role with us to keep themselves safe. Through this, both parties can be reassured that the child has the skills to make good decisions about their safety when an adult is not with them. It is essential that while we develop children's skills to Say and Do "No", we also reassure them that they have adult support to stay safe.

You are likely to already have household rules in place, so the concept of Family Rules will not be a new idea for children and adding one about personal safety will be viewed as a normal thing to do. If this Family Rule sits alongside 'wearing sun-block' and 'helping with the dishes', it can be considered normal for everyone in the family, no matter how old they are. If you have children of varying ages you can use the different age-appropriate suggestions for them.

You could make a Family Rule that other people must not play with your child's bottom or private places; other people must not ask your child to look at, or touch, other people's bottom or private places; and your child must not look at pictures of people playing with bottoms and private places.

“That’s mine not yours!”

Small children soon understand the concept of ownership. “That’s mine” is a very commonly heard statement among two year olds! Therefore, coaching them about their bottom belonging to them, is likely to be fairly straightforward. The concept of ‘private’ is a bit more complex. At first you could explain that it means:

- Your bottom belongs to you and it’s private. That means you don’t show it to people.

It may be helpful for children to see that other people don’t show their bottoms in public. To demonstrate your message you could make up a game to see if they can find anybody showing their bottom at the supermarket!

Develop the explanation about privacy as they get older and can grasp the wider concept.

Making a Family Rule

Decide as a group how to have a safe home. Try writing and talking about a list of Family Rules or a Family Constitution and include as one of them – **‘Say “No” to Bottom-Games,**

Until a child is around three years of age, understanding the concept of rules is unlikely. Toddlers learn by example and stories rather than by their intellectual understanding. While the following sentences may be useful for them, they will have more impact if you repeat them frequently in a playful way. You could also show them what you mean by demonstrating with dolls.

Use age-appropriate language. As your child grows up, add more detail to your message by using more mature language.

Examples of Family Rules

For a young child approximately 2–4 years:

- “It’s not OK to play Bottom-Games I will Tell and Yell.”
- “I am the Boss of my Body”.
- “No bottom touches are secret”.
- “My bottom is private”.

Have a go at making up others that are specific to your situation.

For a child approximately 4–7 years:

- “It’s not OK to play Bottom-Games. If somebody does yucky feeling or touching my private parts I will Tell and Yell.”
- “I am the Boss of my Body”
- “Sometimes a doctor or an adult touches my body or my bottom to help me, but it’s never a secret”.
- “I don’t show my bottom, it’s private”.

For a child approximately 7–11 years:

- “I am the boss of my body, including my bottom and private parts. If anybody tries to touch me or show me rude pictures about bottoms and private parts, I am allowed to Tell and Yell. I will keep on telling until somebody listens and believes me”.
- “Sometimes a doctor or an adult touches my body or my bottom to help me, but it’s never a secret”.

For a child approximately 11+ years:

- “Sexual abuse is not OK and I will not be involved. I will tell an adult who will help if anything like this happens to me or to somebody I know.”
- “If I feel in danger I can call the police”.

The suggested ages are a recommendation only and some older children might respond better to the simpler messages. Be encouraged to try them and see what works for you.

Keep the Family Rules alive

Children can get tired of hearing you warn them about possible abuse, especially if they have grown up with the education about it. “Yeah Mum, I know” can become a common reply! You can keep the awareness of safety alive by saying something like:

- “Let’s remember the Family Rules when we go to the camping ground this year”.

Or as you drive to the house where your child is having a sleepover:

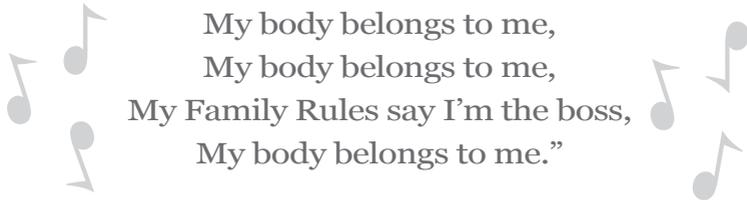
- “Let’s just recap on some of our Family Rules again – yeah, I know you know about them but let’s just recap for a minute”.

Both boys and girls can be vulnerable.

Music helps embody the message

To put a young child at ease with this kind of discussion and make it familiar to them, try turning your Family Rule into an easily-remembered musical jingle, for example:

“Stop It! Go Away! Tell On You!
My body belongs to me,
My body belongs to me,
My Family Rules say I’m the boss,
My body belongs to me.”



- Try clapping it out together or sing the words to a tune your child knows.
- Remind your children from time to time, by clapping it as a game in the car.

Introducing facts

Around the age of nine or ten your child will be ready for more direct and factual education. Around this age it could be wise to educate your child in a more literal way about sexual abuse. You could begin to ask for their opinions and ideas about sexual abuse. They will be familiar with some aspects of this topic from having learned about Family Rules etc, and may have formed questions or opinions and ideas.

Develop their education by allowing them to watch television news reports on sexual abuse. Allow them to read about it in the newspapers and hear about how the community views these crimes and how the law punishes them. Knowing these facts can help your child put the messages they are learning into perspective.

If the topic is discussed openly and in an informative way, the education about sexual abuse could keep them safe, and it could keep their friends, their children and their children's children safe too.

The more at ease your children feel discussing this uncomfortable topic and the more familiar and at ease they know you are with it, the more likely they are to come and tell you if something happens to them. Discussing these details with your children can be difficult or controversial within families. If you need support, make use of those professionals who are trained to talk about it. [see Chapter 10]



**Sexual abuse
is against the
Law in New
Zealand.**

Stories that support this chapter

For children 2+ years:

Say "No" to Bottom-Games
Lucky for Me

For children 4-9:

Fritz Is VERY Brave
Frankie Visits Froggy-Doctor-Phillip
Frankie's 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell' Rings

For children 7+ years:

Albert and Uncle Jim
Josie Knows What to Do

For children 9+ years:

Sylvia's Onto It

Chapter 3

- Growing confidence in Saying and Doing “No”
 - Boundaries – respecting a child’s “Yes” and “No”
 - The ‘Partnership Approach’
-

They won’t get into trouble for trying to stop someone hurting them.

Now your children know it’s not OK to play Bottom-Games and the Family Rules are in place, it’s time to coach your child further about personal safety.

The situation, as well as the child’s relationship with the offender, will play a big part in how easily the child feels able to respond and say “No” at the time. If your child is able to recognise which behaviour feels wrong, then they are more likely to question the abuser or be non-compliant with adults wanting to harm them.

Reassure them that when you are not around they are allowed to “Tell, tell and tell again until somebody listens and responds”.

Boundaries: respecting a child’s “Yes” and “No”

The cry of a child’s “No, No, No, Nooo” can be all too familiar when it comes to asking them to put their shoes on or get off the computer. However, in situations like potential abuse, the perpetrator is likely to be very efficient at manipulating the child so they agree to the behaviour.

Some children find it quite daunting to say “No” to adults. In this kind of situation, you will be giving them permission and skills about how to do so, but even so, for children under the age of three to four years, this will be particularly difficult.

Where children love and trust the offender, they may not want to say “No”. They may have been coerced with bribes or offered tempting rewards or issued with fearful threats to ensure they comply with the abuse. Saying “No” in these circumstances is a challenge for most children.

To give them the best chance at being confident to follow through with their “No” in abusive situations, give them plenty of opportunities to practice in everyday life.

There are many ways to give children positive experiences of saying “Yes” and “No” and being heard by you. You can show them during everyday life, that there are some situations where they can make decisions about saying “Yes” and “No” and you will listen.

Show children regularly in everyday activities that they can say “Yes” and “No” and you will listen

You could keep in mind during daily routines where there are opportunities to give your child positive experiences of saying “Yes” and “No” and being heard by you. You could choose a situation that is relatively stress-free to demonstrate to your child how you will listen when they say “Yes” or “No”, such as:

- Which food they would like to eat.
- Which clothes they would like to wear.
- Which story they would like you to read.
- Whether they want a cuddle now.
- If they are ready for you to...
- Whether they would like a bath or shower, etc.

“It’s not OK to play Bottom-Games. I will Tell and Yell.”

Saying and Doing “No”: ideas about what to Say to keep safe

Here are some ideas of other things you can teach your child to Say in potentially dangerous situations:

- “Stop it, I don’t like it.”
- “I’m going to tell on you.”
- “Leave me alone, go away.”
- “Ew yuck, I’m not doing that.”
- “I am the Boss of my Body.”
- “I’m not looking at that yucky stuff. It’s yucky.”
- “You’re not allowed to touch me there, my body is private.”
- Tell them they are allowed to Yell and Tell till somebody listens.

**Family Rule:
I am the Boss
of my Body!**

Ideas about what to Do to keep safe

Sometimes giving the message “No” is shown by what you Do as well as what you Say. Here are some ideas of what you can teach your child to Do in potentially dangerous situations:

- Run away to a safer place.
- Find a safe adult.
- Hide or sneak away to a safe place.
- Make loud shouting or screaming noises.
- Make excuses to go home or call a trusted person.
- Pretend that they are sick or hurt, to stall events or avoid the situation developing.
- Call the police.

You could also brainstorm ideas with your children about what they think they could Say and Do to keep safe. Remember to keep this conversation alive as they grow up.

A 'Partnership Approach'

A 'Partnership Approach' is where an older child, together with an adult, decides how to manage a certain situation. In the case of keeping safe from sexual abuse, this approach can prove especially valuable as children need to become confident at relying on their own ability to judge, gauge and figure out what to do in dangerous situations. If a child has worked with an adult to devise plans that best suit them, they are more likely to implement them if need be.

Stories that support this chapter

For children 2+ years:

Say "No" to Bottom-Games
Lucky for Me
My 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell'
Happy-Surprises and Snakey-Secrets

For children 7+ years:

Josie Knows What to Do

For children 9+ years:

Sylvia's Onto It

For children 4-9:

Fritz Is VERY Brave
Frankie Visits Froggy-Doctor-Phillip
Frankie's 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell' Rings

Chapter 4

- The embarrassing times
 - Child-to-child touching
-

The embarrassing times

Should your child have to accept physical affection from someone they don't want to, such as a hug, kiss, or sitting on another's lap? Some adults can feel embarrassed if their children do not respond favourably to a friend or family member in this situation.

If we adhere to the belief that listening to your child's cues about relational safety is important, considering these ideas could help:

- Support your child by distracting the situation so they can be relieved from having to engage in a way that they feel disinclined to.
- Ask them about their reasons for declining at a different time.
- Discuss an alternative gesture with the child that would make them feel more comfortable, such as a handshake.

If you want your child to learn that their “No” is heard and respected with a view to touching, support them to avoid this kind of encounter.

Child-to-child touching

Children are naturally curious about bodies. Playful exploration of bodies and genitals amongst young children is, for the most part, normal. There are some cultures and family beliefs where this is not acceptable at all and what may be thought of as normal in one family may not be normal in another.

There is a line between abuse and normal child-to-child exploration and it can be a challenge for an adult to recognise this line. To describe non-abusive activity we could say:

- Children of the same age and developmental level, who are playfully touching each other in a light-hearted way.
- It is key that both children are participating in a playful way and neither child is at all upset by the playing.

If you discover that your child is engaged in child-to-child touching of this nature, you could calmly ask them how they feel about it. You could say something like:

“I noticed that ...[name]... and you were ...[what they were doing]...
Did you want to be doing that?”

If they are quite relaxed about it, you could simply leave it at that and keep an eye out in the future. If they are holding back or showing signs that this is not what they wanted to happen, you could say:

“Remember our Family Rules, you are allowed to say “No” to Bottom-Games.”

“I can help you make this stop and not happen again.”

If you have any concerns about what is happening with the children in your care, it could be valuable to seek advice from someone who specialises in child behaviours.

Inappropriate child-to-child touching

Here are some indicators for when child-to-child touching is not appropriate and could be called abuse. In these situations, stopping the behaviour is required.

- When the behaviour appears to be repeated on a regular basis instead of playing other games.
- When one child forces another to participate in any way. This includes threats and punishments as well as rewards, bribery or coercion.
- When one child has more sexual knowledge, is older, or is more mature than the other.
- When one child is developmentally more mature than the other.
- When the children are not equal in the relationship and the sexual touching is a game of power.
- When either of the children do not want to participate or are hurt in any way.

Deciphering if what you have seen or heard falls into this category or not may be quite difficult and complicated, If you are not sure, don't be afraid to ask for professional help. See Chapters 7, 8 and 9 for more guidance.

Stories that support this chapter

For children 2+ years:

My 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell'
Happy-Surprises and Snakey-Secrets

For children 4-9:

Frankie's 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell' Rings

For children 7+ years:

Josie Knows What to Do

For children 9+ years:

Sylvia's Onto It

Chapter 5

- Developing self-awareness and recognising instinct as a guide for keeping safe – our ‘Trusty-Alarm-Bell’
 - Personal space
 - Describing touch and describing feelings
-

When our children are young they clearly can't look after their own safety needs and we are very aware that they are relying on bigger people to look out for them. However, as children grow older and have more independence, there are times when adults are not around to implement the safety rules. If children have skills that can help them look after themselves, they may avoid being targets for abuse.

In addition to Saying and Doing “No”, a child can gain self confidence by learning to read and trust their internal signals correctly. Knowing how to pick up on their own internal signals or instincts could alert children about potential danger in their surroundings.

Trusting feelings and instincts

Being able to name feelings and recognise instincts is a helpful skill for children. Help them develop their instincts to become effective barometers for danger. You could teach your child to name uneasy feelings as their ‘Trusty-Alarm-Bell’.

It is a good idea for children to become familiar with words that describe their feelings so they can talk easily about what happens to them.

Describing feelings

- During everyday life, praise them for trusting their feelings, such as when they are suspicious, scared, or confused. Use your own experiences as examples to name your feelings and model how you manage them.

- To help demonstrate examples of feelings, you could make a game of naming TV characters' feelings as they appear on screen. Help your child in a playful way to become skilled at guessing how people are feeling and see if they can relate what they observe to feelings they have experienced themselves. As they progress with this understanding, you could look for examples where there is incongruence between what characters are saying and the expressions they have.

Describing touches

If your child has experiences of healthy and enjoyable touch as a reference, they may realise that abusive touching is different, and that they should talk to a trusted adult about it.

You may like to coach your child to identify which kind of touch they enjoy, and recognise which kind of touch makes them feel uncomfortable and raises their 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell.'

You could:

- Experiment together using different types of touch such as stroking, tickling, pinching or getting in their personal space to give them experiences so they can name their feelings. Use your own feelings as examples too. Use examples of touch you enjoy as well as touches you don't enjoy.
- Make up a game about personal space and demonstrate how it feels. Play games that use different examples of being in close proximity and talk about how it feels when you are:
 - Sitting too close to them on the couch
 - Talking too close to their face

Help them to notice when their 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell' is ringing and praise them for recognising this. Remember that young children learn by example, so be sure to use your own experiences to model this concept.

Use age-appropriate language to give ideas about different types of touch

Using age-appropriate language is the key to children understanding concepts that help keep them safe. Here are some age-appropriate examples of words to describe touch. You could use these ideas or some families could even make their own words!

Use your own experiences as examples to name your feelings and model how you manage them.

Ages 2–4 years

'Yucky touches' 'Smiley touches' 'Nasty touches' 'Yummy touches' 'Happy touches' 'Naughty touches'

Ages 4–7 years

'Yucky touches' 'Feel-good touches' 'Go away touches' 'Naughty touches' 'Nice touches' 'Gentle touches' 'Loving touches' 'Mean touches'

Ages 7+ years

'Loving touch' 'Gross touch'

As your child grows up, add more detail to your descriptions by using more mature language.

Stories that support this chapter

For children 2+ years:

Lucky for Me
My 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell'

For children 4–9:

Frankie Visits Froggy-Doctor-Phillip
Frankie's 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell' Rings

For children 7+ years:

Albert and Uncle Jim

For children 9+ years:

Sylvia's Onto It

Chapter 6

- Happy-Surprises and Snakey-Secrets
 - Bottom touches are never secret
 - Grooming
-

Abuse relies heavily on secrecy.

Educating children about secrets can help steer them away from keeping the secret of abuse. It is very likely that once the abuse has happened, the abuser will have made arrangements to avoid their behaviour being talked about.

Some sexual offenders have groomed the child for years before the sexual abuse occurs. This can mean they intentionally develop relationships of love and trust; develop strategies for having time with the child alone; take advantage of fragile family structures; set the stage for abuse by desensitising the child to low level sexual contact and generally groom the child so that a dependency on the relationship develops.

In some cases they may have offered the child rewards for their compliance during the abuse as well as for keeping the secret. Some offenders ensure the child keeps the secret through bribery or other manipulative behaviour, while others use threats and force to abuse the child. Whichever method of compliance the offender uses, it will be very important to them that the child keeps the behaviour secret.

Another ploy that is commonly used in an attempt to keep the behaviour from being discovered is to insist the child promises they will not tell. This can be a particularly difficult dilemma for children, as most will have been taught that it is important to keep their promises. It may be helpful to explain to your child that a promise that makes them feel bad or 'yucky' is really just a 'Snakey-Secret'.

Abuse relies heavily on secrecy.

Happy-Surprises and Snakey-Secrets

When teaching your child to tell of any abuse, making a distinction between 'Snakey-Secrets' and 'Happy-Surprises' can be helpful.

- A 'Happy-Surprise' can be described as a fun secret that is not to be told quite yet, but will soon make someone happy.
- A 'Snakey-Secret' can be described as a promise that they keep inside and don't tell people because they are worried it might get them in trouble or make someone angry. It can also be something they are scared to tell or something that makes them feel 'yucky' in their tummies and they don't know why.

While speaking about these concepts use examples – if the child learns what a Snakey-Secret feels and sounds like, and knows that they have permission to tell these kinds of secrets, they are more likely to recognise if it happens. In some cases the child can feel confused because they know an adult's touch or closeness is not OK, yet they enjoy the nice relationship or even the physiological stimulation. Often it is the fact they are asked to keep the behaviour secret, that alerts them that this is something they need to tell about.

You could demonstrate by making a 'Happy-Surprise' for someone in your family and talking about how it feels.

- For example: "Lets make Grandma a lovely necklace this afternoon and take it to her on Saturday. Don't tell her today though, lets keep it a Happy-Surprise until Saturday."

You could demonstrate a 'Snakey-Secret' to a young child and see if they can imagine how it would feel.

- For example: "If I broke our friend's toy and told you to not tell them it was me, this would be a 'Snakey-Secret'."

For an older child try, "If you were shopping with a friend who stole something, then said they would hurt you or stop being your friend if you told on them, this would be a 'Snakey-Secret'". You could also give an example of an abusive situation to demonstrate 'Snakey-Secrets'.

You may have an example of keeping a difficult secret in your own life and could tell them about how it affected you.

Offenders hope for compliant children

Remember offenders are likely to be very 'Snakey' themselves when it comes to making the child keep their secret.

Give your child permission to repeat the Family Rule over and over again if somebody tries to insist they keep a 'Snakey-Secret'.

If a potential offender gets the message that your child is not an easy target, they may be put off continuing with their plan.

Bottom touches are never secret

Most children have to experience someone they are not used to touching their bodies at some stage. This can be anything from putting on shoes, to helping them if they are hurt. You can have conversations with your child about this kind of touching, being clear that any kind of touching that happens is never secret. If someone asks them not to tell, that is a 'Snakey-Secret' and they can tell you.

As well as naming the usual people who will touch your child, explain that sometimes their bodies need to be touched by medical professionals. Health professionals are aware these days of being respectful about how they touch us when they need to do an examination. When a child knows that respectful touch is to be expected during an examination, they are more likely to tell you about it if something different happens.

For young children use the simple Family Rules to explain what to do. For an older child you could say:

- "When a doctor or nurse or another adult has to touch your bottom or private places, even if you don't really like it, it should be done respectfully."
- "People who care for you, who need to touch your body, will never ask you to keep it a secret."

Stories that support this chapter

For children 4–9:

Frankie Visits Froggy-Doctor-Phillip
Frankie is VERY Brave

For children 9+ years:

Sylvia's Onto It

For children 7+ years:

Albert and Uncle Jim
Josie Knows What to Do

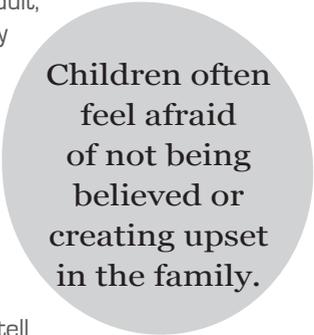
If someone asks
you not to tell
about touching,
that's a 'Snakey-
Secret' and you are
allowed to tell.

Chapter 7

- **Telling about abuse – how to foster an open family environment, so children will talk to you about abuse**
-

If your child believes that you will listen to them without having a big reaction, they will feel more confident confiding in you about abuse. You can foster this trust with the way that you respond to their everyday mistakes, such as when they break things. By listening to them and responding rationally it could help them trust you when they need to tell you something really important. As well as this, children whose opinions are listened to and valued are more likely to trust themselves.

Depending on their age and personality, some children will find it easier to stand up for themselves than others. It can be a frightening task for children to 'tell on' an adult, even if they know they need to tell somebody about the abuse. They may be silent to protect their offender's secret, or out of fear that they may upset the adult they tell. Reassure them and explain in an age-appropriate way that telling a safe adult is the right thing to do, and that they will not get into trouble.



Children often feel afraid of not being believed or creating upset in the family.

To encourage a young child, consider saying:

- "You are being a very good girl/boy if you tell me if anyone ever does "yucky touches."

An example for an older child could be:

- "It might be a bit hard to tell me if something like this happens but I want you to know that telling me about it is the right thing to do."

If the subject of keeping safe from sexual abuse is openly discussed in your family, your child is more likely to trust that you will listen to them if something happens.

Children, who are given permission by adults to keep safe, and trust they will be listened to, are more likely to put what they have learned into practice. They have confidence in themselves as well as confidence that their parents will support them.

Help them trust you will listen when they need to tell you something like this that really matters.

Stories that support this chapter

For children 2+ years:

Lucky for Me

My 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell'

For children 7+ years:

Albert and Uncle Jim

Josie Knows What to Do

For children 4-9:

Frankie is VERY Brave

For children 9+ years:

Sylvia's Onto It

Chapter 8

• What to do if your child discloses sexual abuse

Try to remain calm. Disclosure comes in many different guises. Some children just drop it into the conversation randomly, while others might hint. Some children start enacting what happened to them through their play or show unexplainable knowledge about sex. Others tell you straight and some don't tell at all. If your child is telling you... remaining calm gives them confidence to tell.

In the moment...

When your child discloses sexual abuse:

- Stay calm and try not to get too upset yourself.
- Offer comfort and say you are glad they told you.
- Listen to the story without interrupting.
- Believe them – these stories are more likely to be true than false.
- Reassure them that what happened is not their fault.
- Say you need time to think things through before deciding what to do next.
- Offer assurance that you will soon know what to do and that things will be OK.

Then... ask for help

If you are not sure what to do or how to proceed, here are some ideas:

- A** If a child discloses to you that sexual abuse has been happening to them or someone they know, the first step after calming the child and yourself, is to call Child, Youth and Family and ask for advice. They are trained to know what to do and will help you with the next steps to take.
- B** If you discover the abuse happening, remove the child to safety immediately. If the perpetrator leaves the situation either call Child, Youth and Family first or call the police straight away. There are people in the police force who are specially trained to deal with this situation and will help you through the correct steps so that everyone involved is given the help they need.

- C If it's neither of the above but you have some concerns, a good first step is to call Child, Youth and Family and ask for their advice.

It is likely that your children will blame themselves for what has happened. Children tend to believe that 'they are the world,' and anything that happens to them is the result of something they 'are' or 'have done'. This is another reason why telling can be very scary, because they may consider that they are the ones at fault.

You could tell your child something like:

- What happened is NOT your fault.
- That person was older and bigger than you and should never do this to children.
- You are NOT bad because of what happened.
- You might feel bad about what happened but it is definitely NOT your fault.
- You can feel better about what happened and believe it's NOT your fault. If you need help to do this we can find ways to help you.
- I want you to know that I know it's NOT your fault even if you find it hard to believe me just now.

A note for adult survivors of sexual abuse – It may be particularly difficult for you to hear your child disclosing any sexual abuse. Try to remain calm and ask for professional support for yourself if you need it.

Phone numbers for support are on page 40.

Stories that support this chapter

For children 2+ years:

Say "No" to Bottom-Games
Lucky for Me
My 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell'

For children 4–9:

Fritz Is VERY Brave
Frankie's 'Trusty-Alarm-Bell' Rings

For children 7+ years:

Albert and Uncle Jim
Josie Knows What to Do

For children 9+ years:

Sylvia's Onto It

Chapter 9

- **Being watchful and aware –signs that may indicate sexual abuse**
-

Possible signs of sexual abuse

It is often difficult to pick up signs of sexual abuse in children, if they do not tell us directly. If your child discloses in some way that they have been abused, you may look back to see if they have shown any signs this has been happening. There may be behavioural changes that you have observed and there may not.

It is often difficult to pick up signs of sexual abuse in children if they do not tell us directly.

For example, a child that is well 'groomed' by the offender may enjoy the relationship and not show obvious signs of distress. They may also have been offered rewards that they are looking forward to and consider the adult favourably because of this.

For other children who are being abused, their distress is more obvious. If your child is being abused, it is possible you will notice some changes in their behaviour, attitudes and their usual demeanor, but you may not.

A word of caution

Identifying if a child is being sexually abused by assessing their behavioural symptoms, can be very difficult. Deciphering what has happened to a child by assessing their description of events, as well as other symptoms, is a job for trained professionals. It is important to note that the behaviours listed do not necessarily indicate that your child has been sexually abused. If your child is exhibiting any of the following symptoms, there may be a need to offer help and some questions could be asked, but you cannot presume that sexual abuse has occurred.

Behaviours can include:

- Sudden shifts in personality: such as being more withdrawn, anxious, violent or more emotional than usual.
- Unusual difficulty with sleeping/nightmares/bedwetting.
- Being uncharacteristically anti-social or cruel to animals.
- Being unusually obsessive with cleanliness or taking risks.
- Tendency to wear clothing that covers them up, especially out of season.
- Inappropriate sexual posturing; unexpected knowledge and preoccupation with sex or body parts.
- Sore bottom areas or repeated urinary tract infections.
- Inappropriate touching of their or another's genitalia or excessive masturbation.

Children can exhibit emotional and behavioural problems when other things are not right in their world e.g, parents separating, discord at school, grief/loss and social problems.

Confirming that a child is being sexually abused can be very difficult, especially if the child is not able to speak about what she/he is experiencing. The symptoms touched on here may indicate sexual abuse but they may also be indicators of your child being distressed for other reasons.

Ask a professional for help if you have concerns.

**Keep them safe
– protect and
educate.**

Chapter 10

- **Help is at hand**
-

Reach out to your community

Community police, Child, Youth and Family, and other agencies have experience dealing with the effects of sexual abuse. They have teams of people who are skilled at asking children the right questions about their experiences without putting ideas in their mind. There are also trained professionals to help those who are sexual offenders themselves, or who know about it happening in their family.

You will not be alone with the difficulties surrounding families in this situation.

There is help available for victims and families involved in the many varied ways they are affected, as well as for offenders.

**Sexual abuse
of children is against
the law in New Zealand.
We are duty-bound
to report child
sexual abuse.**

Community support

See the following page for agencies that can help your family to educate your child.

This guide is designed to give you tools to educate children yourself, but if you are concerned, feel unsure what to say and need support: **Ask for help from a professional.**

Agencies in Auckland that assist families with education about sexual abuse and its effects

- **SAFE Network**, phone: 09 3779898, website: www.safenz.org
- **Net safe**, phone: 09 3530971 or 0508 638723, email: queries@netsafe.org.nz
- **Cybersafe**, website: www.cybersafety.org.nz
- **SHINE – Safer Homes in New Zealand Everyday**, phone: 09 5184601 or 0508 744633, email: enquiries@2shine.org.nz
- **Auckland sexual abuse help**, phone: 09 6231700
- **Te Puawaitahi**, phone: 09 3072860
- **Home and Family Counselling**, phone: 09 6308961 or 09 4199853
- **Waitakere Abuse and Trauma Counselling**, phone: 09 8371695
- **Child Youth and Family**, phone: 0508 326 459
- **Rape Prevention Education**, website: www.rapecrisis.org.nz
- **Counselling Services Centre**, phone: 09 2779324
- **Auckland Central Police**, phone: 09 302 6400

While these agencies may not be in your area, you can be proactive and find the phone numbers that are relevant in your community.

Home and Family Counselling offers education

If you would like to learn how to talk to your child about sexual abuse you can book a session with a Home and Family Counsellor who is experienced in educating and working with children. During this session parents and/or children will learn how to talk about this subject with ease and be given ideas and confidence to handle potentially difficult situations in a creative and informative way.

Ethical note

You will see in the Children's Stories and Workbook that some of the genders in the stories are clearly male and female. However, there has been emphasis placed also on gender-neutral characters to avoid stereotyping offenders and parents that nurture children.

Biography of the Author – Anya Godwin

Anya Godwin is a Counsellor with Home and Family Counselling Agency. She began her training as a counsellor in 1991 and over the past 20 years she has been practicing as a counsellor in a variety of settings such as mental health, domestic violence, eating disorders, as well as general private practice.



Anya has trained in Psychosynthesis Counselling as well as Expressive and Art Therapies, allowing her to incorporate art and music into her work with clients. Anya now specialises in counselling children and working with their families.

Say "No" to Bottom-Games was a concept Anya created in 2008. Through her work with children and families Anya recognised that parents were struggling to know what to say to their children about this difficult topic. Anya wrote this book as a guide for parents, offering simple ideas about how to teach children about abuse through both education and story telling.

