

Private parts and personal space

Teachers delivering this session should also deliver the activities around sending any pictures online, which are in the “being safe” section.

Learning Intention:

- To have considered personal space, touch and my body.

Learning Outcome:

- To know that my body belongs to me.
- To have considered touches that are okay and those which are not okay.
- To have thought about who should see the private parts of our bodies, even in pictures.
- To have identified people we can talk to if we are worried.

Resources:

- Tray of common tactile objects such as cotton wool, tinsel, rice, a scouring pad, a teddy bear, velvet, a pine cone and sandpaper.
- NSPCC “Pants” rule resources from www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule
- Images of animals touching – eg elephants touching trunks, giraffes twining necks, a mother cat licking kittens.
- Printed signs saying “Me,” “Hug,” “High Five,” “Wave,” and “Nothing” (one word per sign).
- Printed signs saying “Family,” “Friend,” “People I know” and “Strangers” (one word per sign).



Resources note:

Teachers will be aware that this is a sensitive issue and one which may prompt disclosures, particularly about online activity. The NSPCC offers the following advice about dealing with disclosures:

- If the child discloses something that has happened online, treat this as seriously as you would if it was offline.
- Actively listen, do not look shocked or disbelieving.
- Stay calm.
- Take what the child is saying seriously.

- Do not ask for detail.
- Reassure the child that they are doing the right thing.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Tell the child that you will have to share this information.
- Explain what will happen next.
- Be familiar with your safeguarding procedures. Record the information as quickly as possible – keeping to facts, not opinion.
- Sign and date everything you record.
- Get support for yourself.

If you're unsure of the procedures speak to your designated safeguarding lead, local social services or the NSPCC.

Activity 1:

Show the children the animal pictures. Ask if they can think of any other ways animals touch each other (be prepared for the answer that dogs sniff each other's bottoms).

Explain that touch is very important and one of the ways we can show that we like or don't like another person.

Discuss ways that people touch each other and scribe a list. Include both positive and negative touch, such as hugging, kissing, pushing, and scratching.

Ask the children which touches they like and which touches they do not like. Tick the liked touches and put a cross by the disliked ones.

Ask the children if they feel differently depending on who is touching them and why they are doing so, using safe examples to direct the conversation. For instance we might not like our mum combing our hair because she pulls, but our best friend might do it gently so it feels nice. Emphasise that everybody will like different touches. If we don't like the way someone is touching us, we have the right to say so and the other person should stop at once. If they don't, we need to tell an adult we trust.

Also useful for: UE, FP, CF, RR

Activity 2:

People use lots of different things to warn of danger. Ask the children to make a list of things they think can be used to signal that something is wrong, for example smoke alarms or ambulance sirens. Write down which senses these alarms use – for instance the smell added to gas tells us that the oven has gone out, or a flashing lights that can mean a police car is driving past and we need to make sure we get out of the way.

Ask the children if they can think of any other ways they might be warned that something is wrong. They might list things like scary music in a film, warnings on the weather forecast etc.

Give each child a piece of paper and ask them to draw a body outline. Then encourage them to think about their physical reactions to threat, such as their heart beating faster or butterflies in the tummy – the “Oh-oh” feeling – labelling the outline to show where they feel these reactions.

Put the images on the wall and use them to remind the children that it’s always a good idea to listen out for the oh-oh feeling as this can tell us we need to be careful. This applies when we are online as well as when we are in the real world.

Also useful for: UE

Activity 3:

Introduce the idea of personal space. Explain that we all have an invisible space around us, which we call our “personal space”.

We feel safe when people stay outside our personal space, although we can all feel different about how much space we need. We might not like it when other people come into our personal space when we don’t want them to. Most of the time we only let people we like and trust into our personal space.

Show the children the printed signs relating to forms of contact (hug, high five, wave and nothing). Put the “Me” sign on the floor or wall.

Give the children the other contact signs. Ask them to put them in a continuum according to how intimate they think each kind of contact is, with the most intimate nearest the “Me” sign and the least intimate furthest away.

Then give the children the “relationship” signs (family, friend, people I know, strangers). Ask them to say which form of contact they would expect from each time of relationship. The aim is to help them arrange the signs as follows:

- Me
- Family – hug
- Friend – high five
- People I know – wave
- Strangers – nothing (no touching or talking).

Discuss the children’s ideas, especially if they at first create different pairs to the answer above. Be sensitive to cultural differences that may become evident, but help the children to understand the idea that only those we know and trust should have intimate contact with us.

It is important that children understand the concept of “strangers.” Children may struggle to recognise that someone they only know online is not a friend, even if they play games together regularly. If they are not sure whether someone is a friend they should check with an adult they trust.

Also useful for: FP, CF, RR, OR

Activity 4:

Building on activity 3, ask the children whether it is all right for anyone else to go into their personal space. Scribe ideas on who and why would be appropriate – for example, a nurse who was putting a bandage on our knee.

Explain that even someone we love or trust, like a parent or doctor, might make us feel they are too close. Remind the children that feeling like this is okay and they are not being silly or rude if they feel uncomfortable. Go back to the “oh-oh” feelings and ask the children for some top tips on what to do if they get the “oh-oh” feeling about someone in their personal space.

Suggested responses are:

- Politely ask the other person to step back
- Step back yourself and move away
- Tell an adult they trust
- Tell another adult if the first doesn't believe them

Ask each child to identify some adults they could talk to. This can be family, friends, community leaders or adults at school.

Ask them to draw their special people and display them on the walls. *Note: ensure that school-based adults named have been given appropriate information about how to respond to a child's raising this type of concern or making a disclosure.*

Also useful for: FP, CF, RR, OR

Activity 5:

Teachers may also wish to download free resources from the NSPCC that focus on specific aspects of child protection:

- The PANTS rule reminds children that those parts of the body covered by their underwear are private and they shouldn't let anyone look at or touch at them.
- Share Aware is an internet safety resource that helps children to understand the dangers of taking and sharing images of themselves. Teachers can also display posters from Child Line and explain that children can phone, email or webchat this charity to talk to someone who can give them advice and help when they are worried.

Plenary:

Remind the children what they have learnt:

- That we all like and dislike different touches.
- That everyone has different personal space and this changes depending on who we are with.
- How to recognise their early warning signs that they do not like something – the “oh-oh” feeling.
- That there are people they can talk to if they are anxious or concerned.
- That taking and sending embarrassing pictures of ourselves is not a good idea.

Debriefing activity:

Remind the children that there are lots of people who can help them if they think they are worried about how someone touches them or if they are not sure about how to react to their friends. Allow a moment's quiet reflection on how we can always ask for help, then end the lesson.

Differentiation for SEND:

Some children may require intimate care such as changing incontinence products. Ensure that these children know that they are able to report any worries and that they will not get into trouble or be stigmatised for their physical needs. Equally, ensure that these children are helped to understand that whilst sometimes we need touch in private places to help us, there are rules to make sure that everyone is safe. Providing a child-friendly copy of the school's intimate care policy will be useful in these circumstances.

Children on the autistic spectrum may find touch an area of hypersensitivity, or others may have obsessive behaviours around touch (such as rubbing garment labels or ribbons). Children with ADHD may associate touch with de-stressing strategies such as twiddle toys.

Autistic children may also struggle with the concept of personal space. Some simple rules like "always stand an arm's length away from someone if they are not in your family" can offer ways for these children to understand and copy social norms.