



Holiday Gathering Safety

Powerful Tips for Teaching Kids Healthy Boundaries
Around Friends and Family

As we visit with loved ones during the holidays, let us be intentional to prevent harm to our most vulnerable population: children.

Here are five boundary development strategies for parents to use now and year round:

NO SHAME IN NAMING

Talk to your children about using body part names as appropriate, even when others are uncomfortable. Building a sense of normalcy around talking about all body parts takes away the opportunity for kids to feel ashamed and be secretive about them.

MY BODY BELONGS TO ME

Remind your child that they have the right to refuse any unwanted touch from any person. This teaches them not to pretend to like things and it helps them to say no much easier, when needed.

NO "GOOD TOUCH BAD TOUCH"

Try "No SECRET touch". "Good" and "Bad" have too many meanings. Instead, NO ONE touches in secret, including secret games with other children. Ask your child to tell you right away if this happens.

NO SECRETS, ONLY SURPRISES!

Remind your child that you are a family that does not keep secrets, especially secrets about touching, even with other children. Inform your child that secrets come from fear and can feel uncomfortable, but surprises are kept only for a short time. This critical distinction will help your child notice red flags right away and will equip them to have a healthy boundary and response.

MODEL BOUNDARIES FOR YOUR KIDS

Navigating family can be hard, especially when your child-rearing may be different than your parents or in opposition to your family culture. Stay strong and consistent with the things that matter to you. Your children will SEE you do this and feel all the more empowered to do the same for themselves. They will also know that they have someone there to support them if things go badly when they enforce their own boundaries.

PRACTICE WITH SAFE PEOPLE!

Setting boundaries with family and friends when it comes to keeping kids safe is difficult and can often make you feel isolated as a parent. If you have even a small circle of adults around you who support empowering kids with healthy boundaries, let those people know and ask them to help you and your child practice.