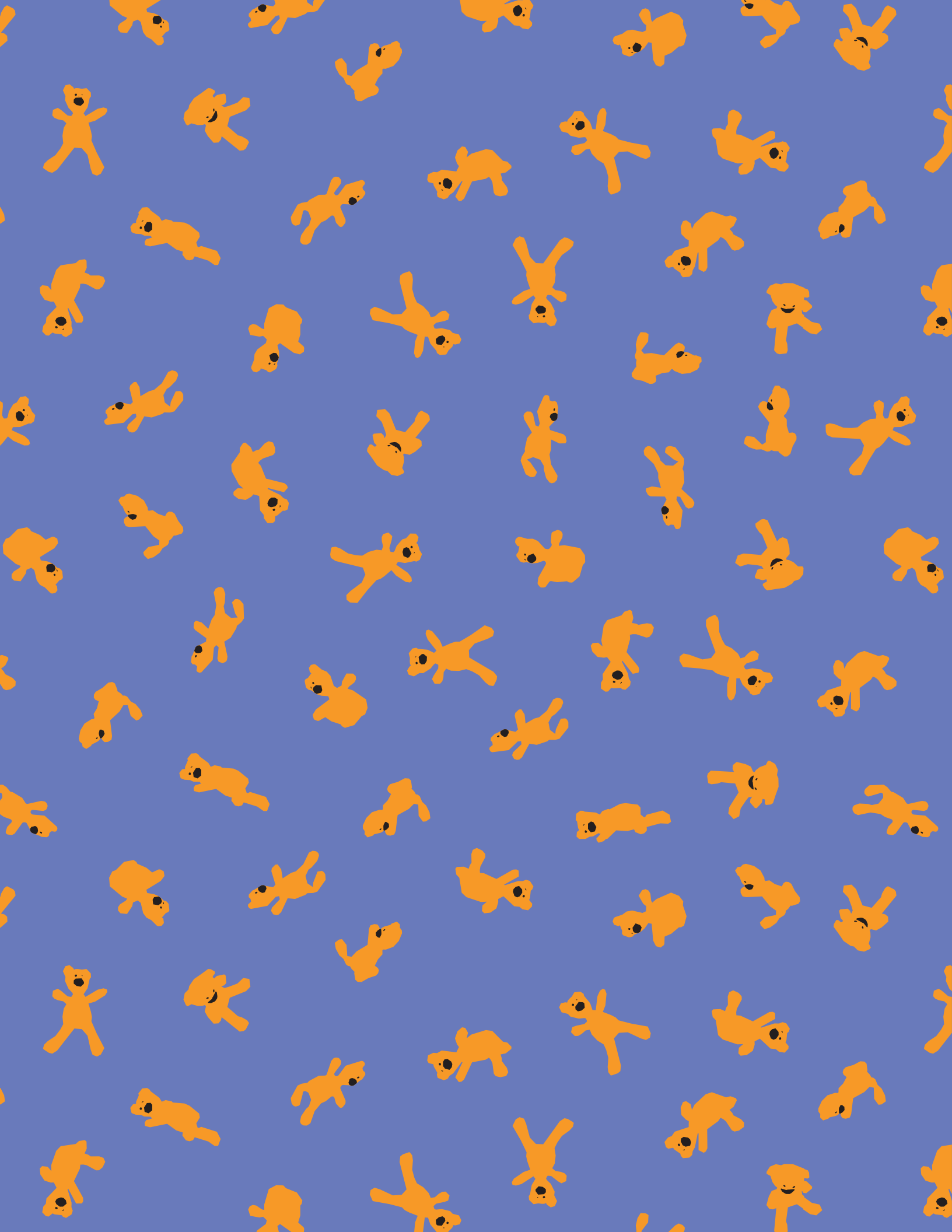


Discussion Handbook

Tell Me Everything, Marvin

**Talking about sexuality
with young children:
educating to protect!**





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with young children:
educating to protect!**



Acknowledgements

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We also thank the Public Health Agency of Canada, which makes it possible to distribute our Lanterne training and tools. The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

This second edition was the result of a precious collaboration with the Gender Creative Kids organization, and in particular with Valeria Kirichenko who accompanied us in our approach towards greater inclusiveness.

We also warmly thank the professionals who work daily with toddlers, the parents we met and the many partners in the early childhood community, without whom the project would not have been possible.

Credits

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Talking about sexuality with young children:
educating to protect!

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Introduction

The Lantern program provides tools that promote egalitarian relationships.

Tell Me Everything, Marvin is a discussion tool designed to address everything children aged from birth to 5 should know about sexuality. The content of this handbook is tailored to a young child's comprehension level, and aims to optimize their development as well as encourage them to acquire protective factors against sexual violence.

The discussion handbook is divided into four main parts:

- Sex education for young children: the basics
- Sex education for young children: special situations
- Sex education for young children: common questions from parents
- Resources and references

Sex education for young children: the basics

This part addresses all the sex education topics that are appropriate for preschool-aged children.

It is designed so that a picture associated with a topic (for example, anatomy) is shown to children while the related teaching content is written on the page facing the illustration, and an adult both reads it out loud and leads the discussion.

While this section's content was designed for easy and practical use, we recommend that the adult reads it through before presenting it to children.

This part is divided into five main sections. You don't need to follow the order of the sections. However, the order was designed to help with children's comprehension and with their gradual integration of new knowledge.

Types of content

The content includes both open-ended questions for children, invitations to discussion along with ideas to think about and answers, learning content to read to children, and ideas for how to put some of the content and skills into practice.

Once again, we encourage adults to read through the content in the intended section before addressing it with children.

Content levels

We suggest three levels of content, from 1 to 3. These do not refer to specific ages, but to the level of complexity of an answer regarding sexuality. While all levels are appropriate for preschool-aged children, their use depends on, among other things, on the adult's comfort level, their cultural or personal values, and above all, the psychosexual development stage of the children to whom the content is being presented. As such, it may be appropriate to provide Level 1 content to 5-year-old children, or to provide Level 2 content to 4-year-old children. The choice is the adult's.



Justine
5 years old



Milo
4 years old



Marvin

SECTIONS	SUBSECTIONS	AGES	PAGE
1 Me You can use the words “private parts” or “sexual parts.”	Anatomy	All ages	17
	Hygiene	All ages	19
	Body development and body diversity	All ages	21
	Self-knowledge and self-esteem	All ages	23
2 You and me	Interpersonal relationships	All ages	27
	Boundaries	All ages	29
	Personal space and privacy	All ages	31
	Self-affirmation	All ages	33
3 My heart, my head	Basic emotions	All ages	37
	Managing emotions	All ages	39
	Normalizing emotions	All ages	41
	Helpful and harmful thoughts	4-5 years old	43
4 I take care of myself*	Listening to your head, your heart and your body	Starting at age 3½	47
	Risky situations	Starting at age 3½	49
	Adults you trust	Starting at age 3½	51
	Learning to protect yourself	Starting at age 3½	53
5 Me and the world	I am me, you are you, we are equal	All ages	57
	Diversifying your activities	All ages	59
	Celebrating diversity	All ages	61

← Worth knowing

Most of the characters in the discussion handbook “Tell Me Everything, Marvin” are the same as those in the books “Milo’s Boundaries” and “Marvin Disappeared,” both of which are also part of the Lantern program. Others have been added for the purposes of cultural, gender, functional and family diversity. Consistency and repetition across the program’s different tools, particularly with regard to the characters, encourages the assimilation of knowledge in preschoolers.

* As the topics of these discussions are closely interrelated, we recommend that you present them to children over a short period of time so that they may clearly grasp the key concepts. Do not hesitate to go back over them again when need be.

Sex education for young children: special situations

This part of the handbook provides instructions to adults on various ways to work with children in certain special situations. These situations may involve the manifestation of sexual behaviours among young children in various contexts, or the presence of more sensitive questions about sexuality coming from one or more children.

Finally, some avenues for reflection are suggested as regards privacy in the childcare environment and measures to put in place to foster respect for gender diversity.

SITUATIONS	SUBSECTIONS	PAGE
6 A child self-stimulates in my group. <i>Inform the parents of your intervention.</i>	Suggestions for individual intervention with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates in front of others	66
	Suggestion for intervening with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates at naptime	67
	Suggestion for intervening with a child age 2 or under	68
7 Children in my group are engaging in sexual exploration games. <i>Inform the parents of your intervention.</i>	Suggestions for intervening with children age 3 to 5 engaging in normal sexual exploration games	70
8 A child asks me: “How are babies made?” <i>Discuss the topic with the parents before answering these questions.</i>	Conceiving babies	73
	Twins	75
	Adoption	75
9 A child asks me the differences between their family and their friend’s family.		76
10 How can I ensure children’s privacy on a daily basis in my environment?		77
11 A child in my group seems to be questioning their gender identity.		79

Sex education for young children: common questions from parents

This part of the handbook gives childcare workers some guidelines on what they can say to parents who are curious or concerned about their child's sex education.

The answers provided here are from Marie-Vincent Foundation. We encourage you to use this content to develop parent-teacher collaboration and communication strategies regarding sex education for young children, and to put into place protective factors against sexual violence against young children in a consistent and concerted way.

	QUESTIONS	PAGE
12	What are the psychosexual development stages of young children?	83
13	How should I answer my children's questions about sexuality?	85
14	Can we walk around naked in front of our children?	86
15	When should we stop washing ourselves with our children?	87
16	When should we stop washing our children together?	88
17	Can we kiss our child on the mouth?	89
18	What should we say and do if our child walks in on us as we are having sex?	90
19	Should hygiene care only be provided by the mother?	91
20	Can hygiene care be provided by a new partner?	91
21	My son likes to play with dolls and women's dresses. My daughter likes to draw herself a mustache and prefers to play with boys. Is my child homosexual or trans?	92
22	By letting my child explore and play with toys that are not usually assigned to their gender, might they become confused about their gender identity?	93

Resources and references

This part of the handbook provides three complementary fact sheets. The first summarizes all the other prevention tools included in the Lantern program. The second suggests a list of resources that can respond to the specific sex education needs of young children. The last one is the list of all the works that directly or indirectly helped us in writing the *Tell Me Everything, Marvin* discussion handbook.

	SECTIONS	PAGE
23	Complementary tools from the Lantern program	97
24	Resources	98
25	References and bibliography	100

**Sex education
for young children:
the basics**

How should we answer children's questions about sexuality?

Before beginning to address sex education with young children, we recommend that you learn a bit about the attitudes to adopt when a child asks a question about sexuality.

Here's an overview.

- **Show openness.** Reinforce the fact that the child has come to you to get information, and respect their questions.

I'm glad you came to see me to ask me your question.

- **Turn the question back to the child** to find out what they know about the subject. Then correct or add information as needed. Pay attention to the child's questions and answers because they'll tell you about the child's stage of psychosexual development.

What about you? How do you think babies are made?

- Remember, you convey your values to the child through your answers and your silences.
- **Allow yourself to say to the child that you want to think about the question** before answering.

That's a good question! Let me think about it, I will get back to you.

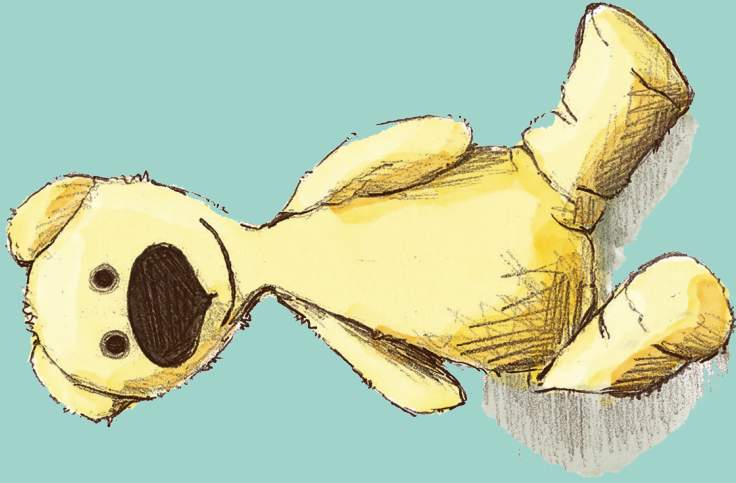
- **If you promise to answer the child, make sure you follow through.**
- **Tell the child they can trust you** and come back to see you if they have other questions about sexuality.
- Feel free to reframe or refuse to answer questions from the child if they are about your own private life.
- **Avoid prejudices about differences.**



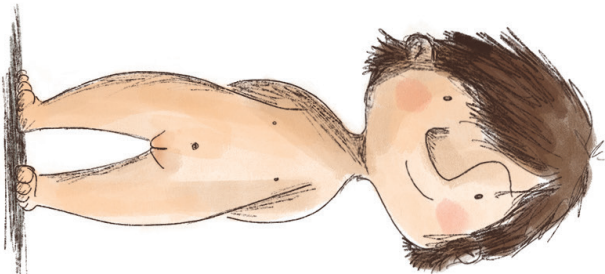
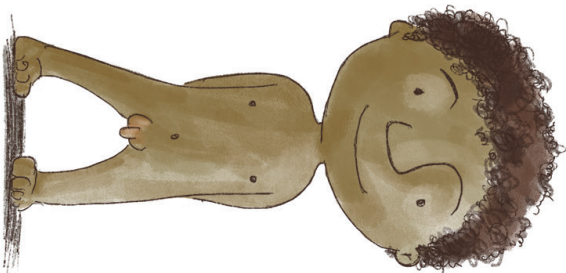
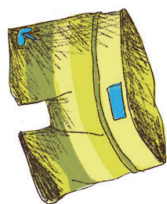
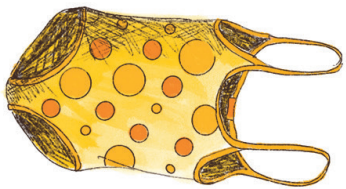
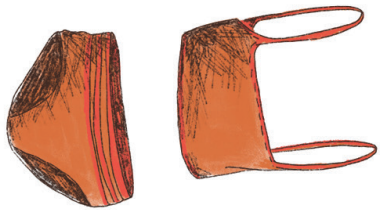
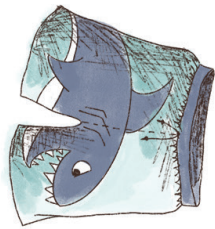
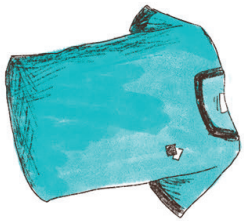
Not answering, avoiding the question or saying “we don't talk about that” are attitudes that send a message to the child that they should not talk to you about sexuality. This can lead the child to find their answers from less reliable sources, such as their friends, or, later, online. It can also lead the child to avoid telling you if they are in a risky situation or are a victim of sexual violence.



1



Me



Anatomy

1 Did you know that **all parts of your body are important** and each serves a purpose?

→ Ask the child to recognize their body parts: head (hair, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc.), shoulders, arms, hands, chest, stomach, back, buttocks, legs, feet, toes, etc.

2 Can you tell me **where your private parts are**?

Answer: They're the body parts that are covered by your underwear or your bathing suit.

Many children find it funny to talk about private parts, but **they are parts of your body like all the others!**

3 The words doctors use to name private parts are: **buttocks, vulva, penis, testicles, breasts and nipples**. All of the private parts are different. No two are the same, just as there are no two identical noses.

4 **What are your private parts for?**

Answers:

- Level 1: Your vulva or your penis let you go pee. Your buttocks help you go poo, but also to sit down.
- Level 2: Your sexual parts produce little cells, and in grown-ups, those cells help them make babies.

5 It's normal to be curious and interested in knowing the different sizes and shapes of body parts. It's also normal to discover one's own body and find out that touching the private parts is pleasurable. Remember that the private parts are precious and that they are private. Your body belongs to you, and the same is true for other people and their bodies.



Remember

You can use the words “private parts” or “sexual parts.”



Hygiene

- 1 It's important to **wash all the parts of your body**, especially the ones that are kept warm or that are warm.
 - Invite the child to identify these parts of the body: hair, armpits, behind the ears, neck, belly button, vulva, penis, buttocks, groin, between the fingers, between the toes.
- 2 Did you notice that red arrows are pointing at some of Milo's body parts on the picture? **These parts are more fragile**. They're like little doors, and germs can get into your body through them. It's important not to touch them if you have dirty hands, and not to put objects in them so you don't hurt yourself. When it comes to your private parts, it's also important to change your underwear regularly.
- 3 Did you know that, even if someone takes a bath with you, **you are always the person in charge of washing your body**? And the other person is in charge of washing **their** body?
 - Invite the children to pretend to wash themselves, one body part at a time.

Body development



Body diversity



Body development and body diversity

- 1 Your body is changing** and will keep changing all your life!
→ Ask the children to name the similarities and differences between the characters in the picture.
- Every person you know started out as a baby. When people grow, they become children, then teenagers. Later, they become adults, and then, seniors.
→ Invite the children to talk about body development, as illustrated, and to point out where they are on the chart.
- 3 When we are young**, our body can look a lot like the bodies of other children, except for the private parts. **As we grow up**, all of the body parts also grow and change; that is normal. **When we become adults**, our body stops growing, but it continues to change over time.
- Remember! Every body is different. There are people of all heights, sizes, shapes and skin colours. Some people wear eyeglasses, have a deep voice, and curly hair. Others have small feet, long hair and use a form of assistance to get around, such as a wheelchair or a cane. **Each person is unique. It is normal and it is wonderful!**
- 5 Your body is unique.** Nobody has the same body as you. Your body is yours, and my body is mine. Your body is very precious. It helps you walk, eat, sleep, play and love! Your body doesn't need to be the same as anyone else's body. It is the way it is, and that's what makes you unique and special.
- 6 It's normal to be curious about your body** and other people's bodies, to be interested by their changes over time. Remember, though, that you must never laugh at someone else's body, even if it's different from yours.
→ Invite the children to ask their questions about the body.



Self-knowledge and self-esteem

- 1 Did you know that **there's nobody else like you?**
- 2 There is only one _____ (name of a child) and one _____ (name of a child).
- 3 **You have lots of things in common with the other kids and also lots of things that are different.** You have your own family, your house, your games, your joys, your fears, your strengths, your challenges, your friends.
- 4 **There are things you like, but that other kids don't like.** There are things other kids like, but that you don't like.
 - Ask the children if they recognize themselves in the emotions, attitudes and activities of the children in the picture: giving and receiving a hug, playing blocks, reading, playing alone or with others, crying or being in a good mood, etc.
 - Invite the children to raise their hand if they like to:
 - play in the park
 - see clowns
 - play with bugs
 - get their hands dirty
 - eat broccoli
 - go swimming
 - pet a dog
 - put on a show, etc.
 - Point out what they have in common and what is different between them.

- Ask open-ended questions, such as:
 - Tell me everything about your favourite game/colours/meals/animals;
 - Talk to me about what you like about yourself;
 - Tell me about your family, your brothers/sisters/friends.

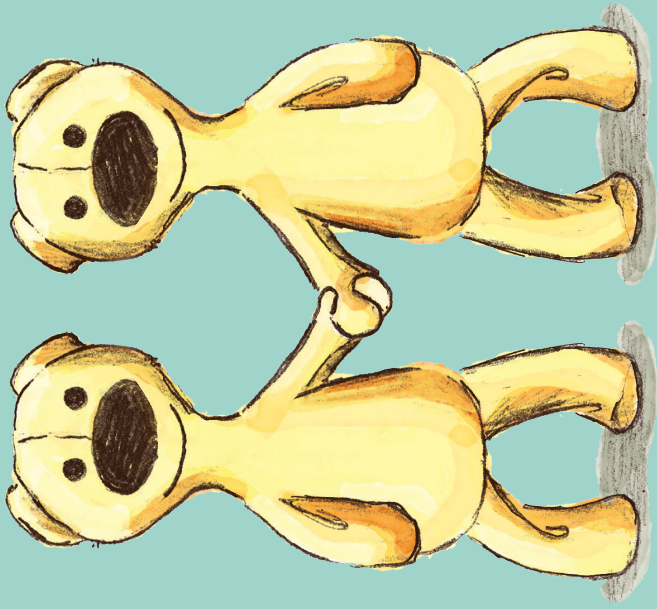
5 **There are things you find easy to do. This is what we call having strengths. There are also some things you find more difficult to do,** that take you a little more time to learn. You can rely on people you like to help you do something that is harder for you. Other people can also ask you to help them with something you are good at. Can you name one of your strengths for me? Or something that you are very good at?

- If the child doesn't identify a strength, name one for them. Emphasize the self-confidence, independence and resourcefulness shown by the children in different situations. Point out that they can count on each other in different activities or circumstances.

For example: You often help others when we're doing puzzles. You help others when they feel sad or are missing their parents.



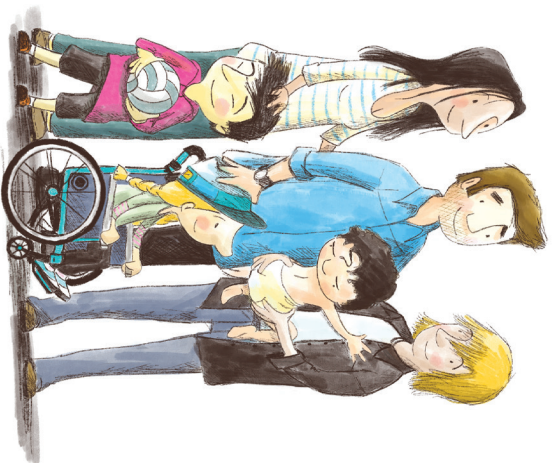
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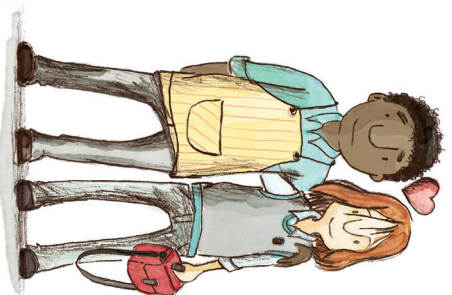
You and me



Family



Friends



Parents in love



Teacher at daycare

Interpersonal relationships

→ Invite the children to point out the different types of relationships shown in the picture.

1 We all like to be with the people we love. When we're babies, we like to be with the people we know really well, and that we see often, like our parents, our brothers, our sisters, our grandparents and so on. **That is family love...**

→ Invite the children to talk about their families:

- Talk to me about *your family*.
- What do you like to do with your brother or sister?
With your parents? With the other people in your family?

2 When we get older, we become interested in other people around us. We like spending time with girls and boys of our own age, and in places other than at home. We like to play, talk, laugh, and do things with these people. It makes us feel happy. **That is friendship...**

→ Invite the children to talk about their friends.

- Tell me about your friends.
- What do you like to do with your friends?
What kind of games do you like to play with _____ (name of friend)?

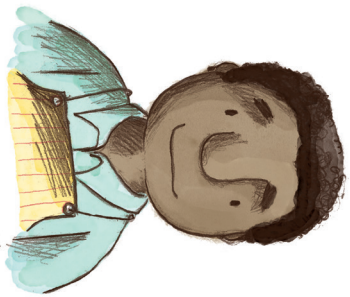
3 When we become teenagers, and then adults, we may feel a very strong feeling about another person. Our heart, our head and our body want to be close to this person. **That is falling in love... Remember, a grown-up cannot fall in love with a child.**

4 Beyond family, friends and love, you are also in relationship with other people whom you see a lot and who take care of you. All these people like to teach you new things and take care of you. **That is affection from a grown-up...**

→ Invite the children to talk about activities or moments when they were being taken care of by other people: teacher, babysitter, swimming or dance instructor, etc.
How did this person take care of them? Care, safety, teaching, etc.



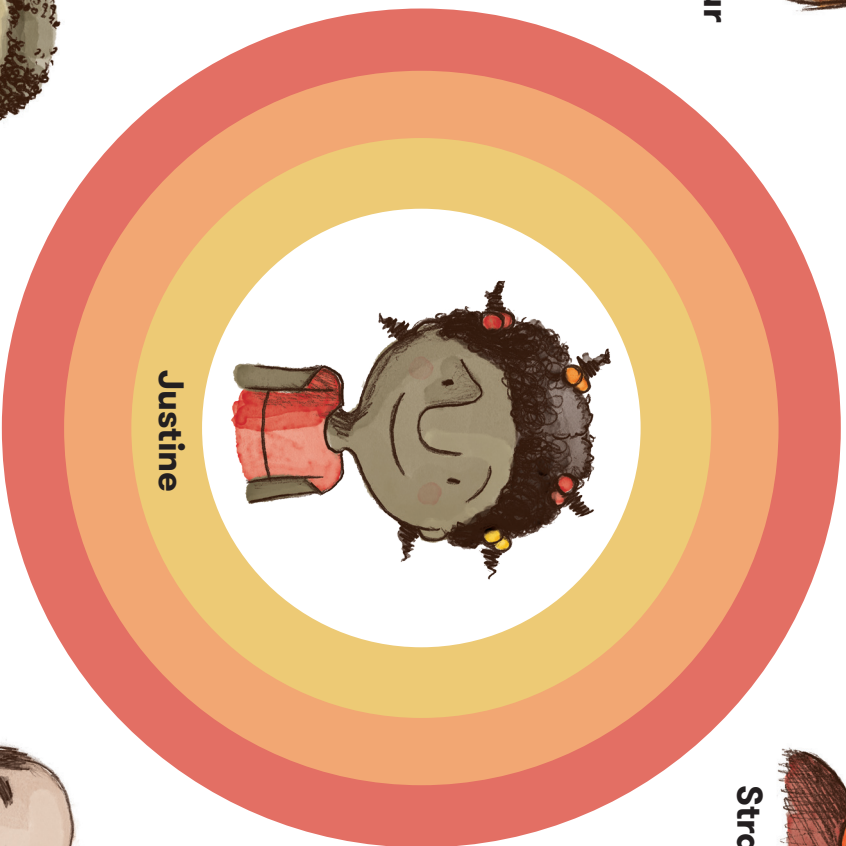
Neighbour



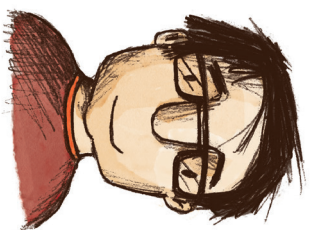
Daddy



**Friend
Ling**



Justine



Stranger



Mommy



Teacher Gabrielle



Milo



Neighbour Nassim

Boundaries

- 1 There are people **we know very well**, people **we know a little** and people **we don't know at all**. The people we don't know at all are called "strangers."
→ Invite the children to point out the people around Justine and to place them in the various colour circles:
 - *Does Justine know her mom very well?*
 - *Is she a person close to her? So she goes in the yellow circle. But the man sitting in the park is a stranger. He goes in the red circle.*
- 2 Did you notice that **the better you know a person and the closer they are to you**, the closer their circle is to yours? And that when **a person is a stranger and far away from you**, their circle is farther from yours?
→ Invite the children to talk about their coloured circles and the people close to them.
- 3 Did you know that there are things you can do with people you know really well, but you can't do with people you know less well or with strangers?
→ Discuss with the children about acts that are acceptable based on how well you know the person by referring yourself to the coloured circles.
Examples of acts:
 - Giving a hug
 - Going off alone with a person
 - Getting tickled
 - Holding hands
 - Etc.



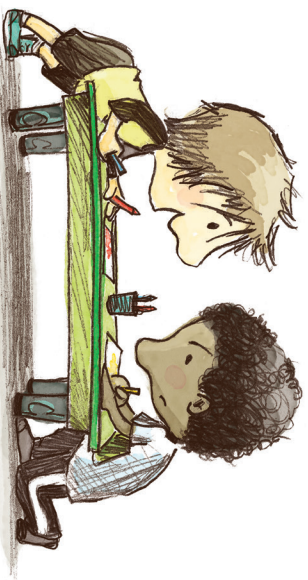
**Milo doesn't like it
when people touch his head**



**Milo only wants a hug
from his daddy**



**Milo doesn't want a hug
from his friend**



Milo wants to be quiet



Milo doesn't want a kiss

Personal space and privacy

1 Some kids **like** to get hugs or be tickled, and others **don't like** that.

2 On **some days**, you might not want to be **cuddled** or touched by anyone, and **it's okay** to say it, so that people leave you alone.

There are **people you don't want to snuggle with** or kiss, and **it's okay** to refuse to come close to them, even if they ask you a lot!

→ Invite the children to name the people they like cuddling with and the moments they would prefer that people stay outside their personal space.

3 Did you know that it is important to **always ask the other person** if they want a hug before you give one? Did you know that **if the person says no**, it's not because they don't like you, but because **they just need a little space**? It's important to listen to the person when they say no. We call this "**respecting their personal space**".

Your personal space is the space around you that you need in order to feel good. Your personal space might be big or small, it depends on each person.

→ Refer to the picture for examples where a number of people enter Milo's personal space without asking his permission.

4 Did you know that you always have to **knock on the door or ask if you can come in** before you go into the bathroom, the bedroom or anywhere else someone is changing their clothes? These places are private, so it's important to wait for the person to say yes before entering. A private space is a space where you can be by yourself, with nobody else with you.

5 Waiting before you enter a private space is called **respecting privacy**.

→ Explain to the children that they can always ask to be left alone when they are getting changed or going to the bathroom, and that nobody gets to see their private parts or their underwear.

→ Referring to the picture, check to see the children's comprehension by asking them the following questions:

- Do you have the right, like Milo, to refuse a hug?
(THE CHILDREN MUST SAY YES)
- How do you know if your friend wants a hug?
- What do you need to do if someone doesn't respect your personal space?
- Are you allowed to watch a friend when they go to the bathroom?



Stop!
I don't like that!



Self-affirmation

1 What does it mean to self-affirm?

Self-affirming means being able to say what you like and what you don't like to other people. It also means deciding what you want and don't want. Self-affirming means asking others to respect us. For some kids, that's easy; for others, it's not.

→ Referring to the picture, ask the children to talk about situations where they can self-affirm. For example:

- *When another child makes a face at you*
- *When someone pushes you*
- *When someone hurts you*
- *When someone laughs at you*

2 Did you know that **nobody can know what you're thinking in your head and feeling in your heart** if you don't say it clearly with your words and with your body?

3 If you want to say something clearly to someone, you have to:

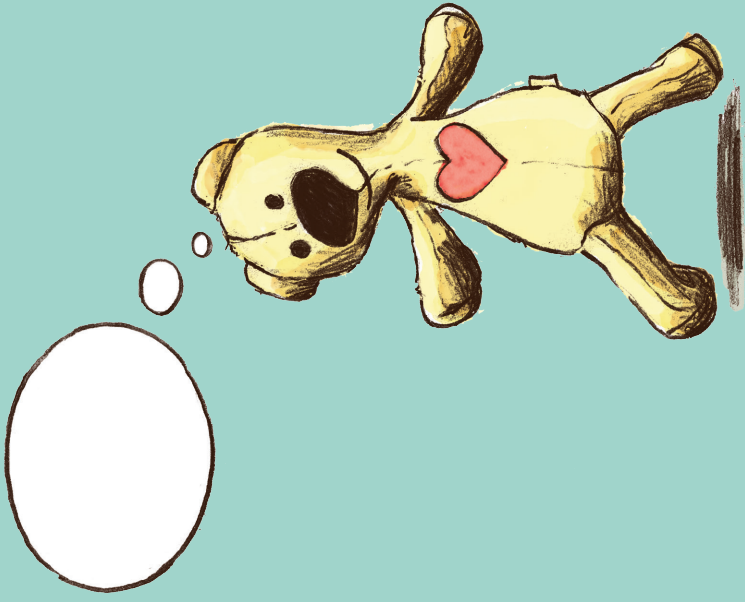
- Stand up straight, one foot forward planted on the ground, and put your hands on your hips.
 - Look the person in the eyes.
 - Inhale deeply, speak loudly and clearly so they understand your message.
- Invite the children to practise self-affirmation by taking the posture and repeating various sentences such as:
- *Back off! You're bothering me!*
 - *Stop! I don't like that!*
 - *No! I don't want to play that game!*

4 If it's still difficult for you to self-affirm, it might help to think of things that give you courage or strength.

- Ask the children to name people, characters, animals, songs and words that give them courage and that can help in their search for affirmations (e.g., a friend who is always encouraging, a superhero who gives them strength, a lion that roars), or ask them to mentally repeat phrases like: I can do it! I can make it! I am right! Etc.



3



My heart, my head



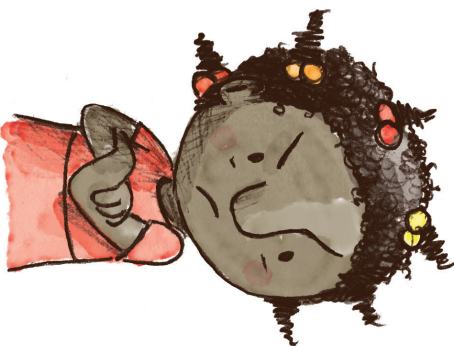
Milo
is happy



Justine
is scared



Ling
is sad



Justine
is angry

Basic emotions

- 1 Did you know **that everyone feels emotions** in their heart?
- 2 Show me where your heart is. **What emotions do you know?**
 - Invite the children to name the emotions of the characters in the picture: joy, anger, fear and sadness. Ask the children what the characters feel and why they feel that way.
- 3 Did you notice that there are nice emotions, like joy, calm, excitement and surprise? These are “sunny emotions.” There are also less pleasant emotions, like sadness, fear and anger: these are “cloud emotions.”
- 4 All children have emotions and express them using words or with their bodies.
 - Invite the children to stand up and mime the emotions one after another. Pay attention to the body language related to the emotions, and not only the faces.

5 This is how your body speaks to you when you feel an emotion:

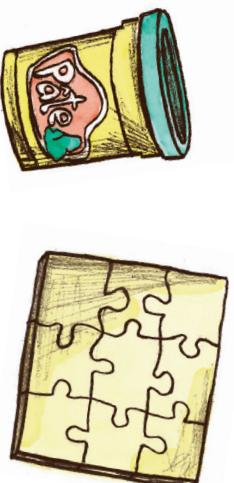
- **When you are sad**, you **might** cry, feel a lump in the throat, be bent forward and feel heavy, curl up in a little ball, want to be alone.
- **When you are angry**, you **might** grunt, frown, glare, grit your teeth, stamp a foot, clench your fists, turn red in the face.
- **When you are afraid**, you **might** jump, freeze, feel the heart beat faster, feel warm, have a tummy ache, want to hide, get damp hands, tremble or shake.
- **When you are happy**, you **might** smile, feel good, be pleased with the people around you, feel calm and light or excited and wanting to skip and jump.



**How can you bring the sun back
to your heart?**



Breathe



Distract yourself



**Talk about it with
words**

Managing emotions

- 1 It's normal to have "cloud emotions" in your heart, but it doesn't feel good. Luckily, there are lots of ways to bring the sun back to your heart, such as:
 - **Breathing** gently. To help, you can imagine that you're smelling a flower, and then, that you're blowing out a candle.
- Invite the children to pretend they're picking a flower in one hand and picking up a candle from a birthday cake with the other hand. Show them how to smell the flower **slowly** and to blow out the candle **slowly**, until they feel calmer.
- **Changing your mood** by making movements or doing activities that feel good.
- Invite the children to name hobbies that help them calm down or come out of a bad mood. For example, drawing, playing with clay, playing outside, jumping in place, etc. Use the picture for help, as needed.

- 2 **Say with words how you feel** to the person who put a cloud in your heart or to another person you trust who can help you feel better.

- Give examples to the children by saying clearly:
- _____, I feel sad when you won't let me play with you.
 - _____, I am angry because _____ took the toy I wanted.
 - _____, I was afraid when you turned out the light.

- 3 Did you know the best way to find out what someone else is feeling in their heart is to ask them, "**How are you feeling in your heart?**"

- Ask the children, one by one, how they are feeling in their hearts right now.



Normalizing emotions

1 Did you know that **you're allowed to be angry**? It doesn't mean you're not nice. Everyone feels angry: girls and boys, adults and kids. Everyone sometimes wants to yell, hit and throw things when they're mad.

- Point to Milo who is angry in the picture. Ask children:
Tell me about the last time you were angry.

2 Did you know that **you're allowed to cry when you feel sad**? It doesn't mean you're a baby. Everyone feels sad sometimes: girls and boys, adults and kids. Everyone wants to cry when they feel sad, even grown-ups.

- Point to Milo and Justine's dad, who is sad in the picture.
Tell me about the last time you were sad.

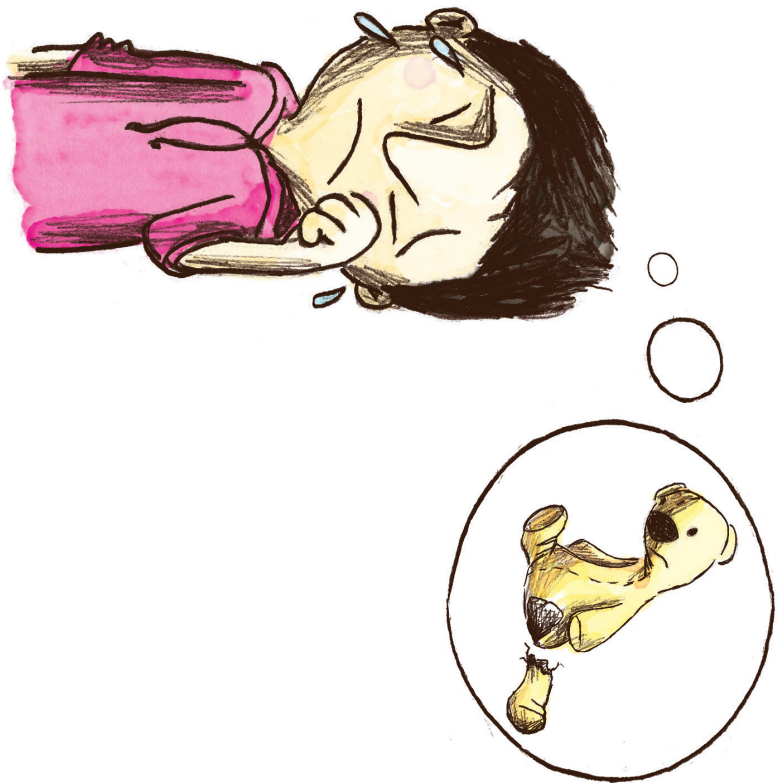
3 Did you know that **you're allowed to be scared**? It doesn't mean you're not brave. Everyone feels scared: girls and boys, adults and kids. Everyone can freeze or feel like running away when they're scared, even grown-ups.

- Point to Nassim, Justine and Milo's neighbor, who is afraid in the picture.

Tell me about the last time you were afraid.

4 Did you know that **every person around you has a heart full of emotions**, like Justine and Milo's dad on the picture? Did you know that emotions are always changing? They show up, stay a while and then leave, depending on what's happening that day.

- Ask the children to express their emotions. How were you feeling in your heart this morning? And now? Give the example of a child whose emotional experience has changed since arriving at the daycare. Emphasize that feelings pass and change over the course of the day.



Helpful and harmful thoughts

1 Did you know that **all kids and adults think about things inside their heads** all day?

→ Invite the children to say what Ling is thinking about on the first picture, and what he's thinking about in the second picture.

2 When we're thinking about something, we might say words in our head. Like Ling, who is surely saying to himself:

- "I can't wait for my birthday and to blow out the candles on my cake!"
- "Oh no! I broke my toy!"

3 **These words we say in our heads are thoughts.**

We say them in our heads, but we don't say them with our mouths.

- Invite the children to recognize what they're thinking about in various situations by having them raise their hands if they're thinking these words in their heads:
- When you taste something you don't like at lunch, who thinks in their head: "Ew! I don't like this!"
 - When you wake up in the morning, who says: "I'm hungry! I want my breakfast!"

- When you have to pee and it's getting urgent, who says: "I have to go to the bathroom, quick, quick!"
- In the afternoon, when the day is almost done and parents start arriving to daycare, who thinks in their head: "I can't wait to go home!"

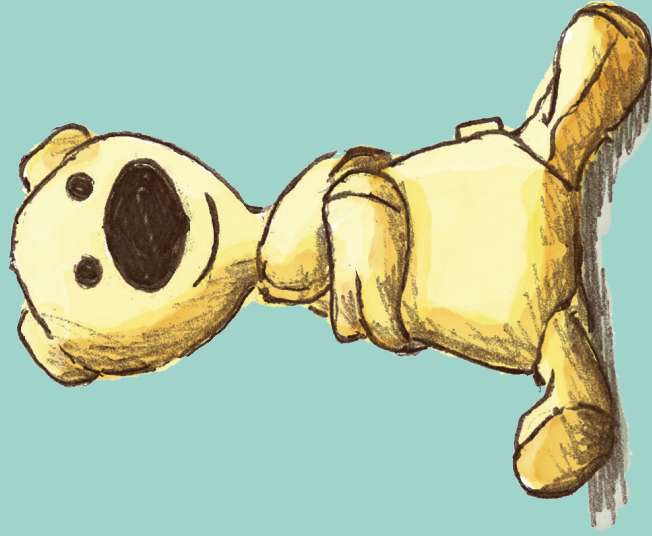
4 These thoughts are always there, in our heads. At night, they turn into dreams.

5 Did you know that nobody, not even your parent's, can know what you're thinking in your head?

6 **The only way to know what someone is thinking is to ask them:** "What are you thinking about?"







I take care of myself

* This section addresses sexual violence. As the topics of these discussions are closely interrelated, we recommend that you present them to children over a short period of time so that they may clearly grasp the key concepts. Do not hesitate to go back over them again when need be.



**I feel good.
My heart is happy!**



**I don't like this.
I want to leave**

Listening to your head, your heart and your body

1 (WHILE POINTING TO EACH OF YOUR BODY PARTS, EXPLAIN)

Your head, your heart and your body send you messages all day long.

It is very important to listen to what your head, your heart and your body say, and that you trust them.

2 (POINTING TO THE PICTURE OF HAPPY JUSTINE, EXPLAIN)

There are acts that can bring sunshine into your heart and your body. They help us feel calm, happy, joyful, comforted, etc. **These acts often bring sunshine into your thoughts,** like when we say in our heads: “I feel good,” “I want to stay here,” “My heart is happy,” etc. Tell me about acts that make you feel good in your heart, in your head and in your body.

→ Ask the children what makes them feel good, for example:

- A hug from your grandmother to console you when you feel sad.
- A high-five from your friend when you did a good thing.
- When your parent's stroke your head or your back before you fall asleep.

3 (POINTING TO THE PICTURE OF SCARED JUSTINE, EXPLAIN)

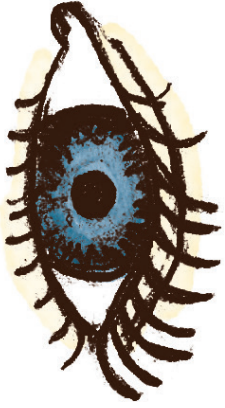
There are acts that bring clouds into our hearts and our bodies, like when we feel angry, sad, scared, etc. **These acts often bring clouds into our thoughts,** like when we say in our heads: “I don't like that,” “I want to leave,” “My heart is angry,” etc. Tell me about acts that make you feel **not** good in your heart, your head or your body.

→ Ask the children what makes them feel bad, for example:

- When another person pushes them.
- When someone gives them a hug they don't want.

4 Trust yourself. If an act brings clouds into your heart, your head or your body, it's because something's not right, and you need to self-affirm and say, “**Stop, I don't want this!**”





Risky situations

- 1 Did you know that there are some things grown-ups are **not allowed** to do to children? What are they?
- 2 It is **very important** for you to remember that:
 - (POINT TO THE HAND PICTURE)
Nobody is allowed to **touch** your private parts
 - (POINT TO THE EYE PICTURE)
Nobody is allowed to **look at** your private parts
 - (POINT TO THE MOUTH PICTURE)
Nobody is allowed to **kiss** your private parts
 - (POINT TO THE TELEPHONE PICTURE)
Nobody is allowed to **take pictures of** your private parts
- 3 Can you tell me what your private parts are?
Answer: They're the parts of your body that are covered by your underwear or your bathing suit.
- 4 **Nobody is allowed to ask** you to touch, look at, kiss or take pictures of **their private parts**.

Nobody is allowed, **even if:**

- You find it funny
- You are told it's a secret or that you can't talk about it
- It's with someone you love
- You are told it is a game

5 (MAKE A VOICE AND, IF NEEDED, USE THE MARVIN PUPPET WHO'S COVERING HIS EARS.)

If these things happen to you, **your heart, your body and your head need to say, "Uh-oh, that's not right."**

- 6 The **only** times where a grown-up **can** touch and look at your private parts is when:
 - You go to the doctor and your parent is with you
 - You need help to wipe yourself in the bathroom
 - You need help washing in the bathtub
 - Your parent needs to look when your private parts are itchy or sore
 - You seem to have a fever and your parent needs to take your temperature





**An adult who can help you
when you have a problem**



An adult you feel good with

Adults you trust

- 1 A trusted adult is someone **you feel good with**. It's someone you **like to see**, who **makes you smile** and who can **help you when you have a problem**. It's also someone who **respects your personal space**.

→ Invite the children to remember what their personal space is.

Answer: Your personal space is the space around you that you need in order to feel good. Your personal space can be big or small; it depends on the person.

→ Ask the children: *When do you need to talk with a trusted adult?*
- 2 You need to talk to a trusted adult when:

 - A person does something or asks you to do a thing they are **not allowed** to do.
 - Your heart, your head or your body say: *“Uh-oh, this isn't right.”*
 - Your head says: *“I don't like this,”*
 - *“I'm not sure this is okay,”* *“I want to leave.”*
 - You are scared of a person or don't want to be near them.
 - A grown-up you don't know asks you to come with them or go somewhere with them.
 - You have a problem, even if the problem happens in your family or with a person you love.

- 3 “Tell me about the **adults you trust in your life**.”

Possible answers: My mom, my dad, my grandparents, my aunt, etc.

You can talk to **people other than your parents**. Who are the adults you trust, other than people in your family?

Possible answers: Police officers, nurses, teachers, etc.

4 (POINT TO THE PICTURE OF MILO AND HIS TEACHER)

Did you know that I am always here for you, to listen if you come and talk to me? My job is to listen to **how you feel in your heart**, to **help you when you have problems** and to **answer your questions**. I am a trusted adult for you, and you can talk to me whenever you want!



No!
Stop!



1 Self-affirm by saying



2 Go away



3 Talk to a trusted adult

Learning to protect yourself

It is **very important** to know **what to do** if:

- A person **does something or asks you to do something they are not allowed to do**.
- Your heart, your head or your body say: **“Uh-oh, that’s not right.”**

① **You need to self-affirm.**

Self-affirming is when you are able to tell others what you like and don’t like. It also means deciding what you want and don’t want. Self-affirming means asking others to respect us.

With your body

- Stand up straight, one foot forward planted on the ground, and put your hands on your hips.
- Look the person in the eyes.
- Inhale deeply and yell so they understand your message.

With your words

- Yell: “**NO!**”
- Yell: “**STOP!**”

② **You need to leave and...**

- get out of the room;
- go to a place where there are other people;
- go find your parent, your teacher or any other trusted adult.

③ **You need to talk about what happened with a trusted adult.**

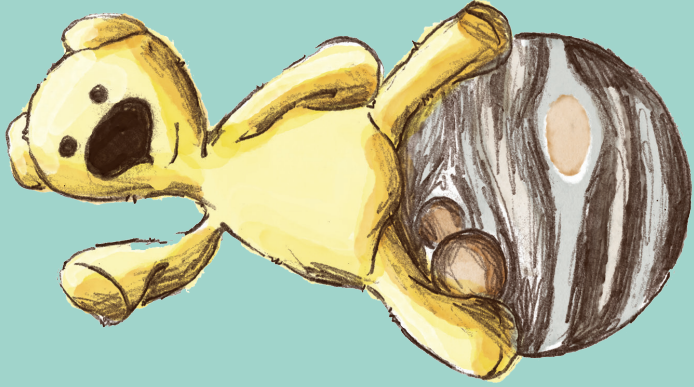
Did you know that when you speak with an adult about what’s wrong, **they have to help you**? If they don’t help, **talk to another adult**, until one adult you trust believes you and helps you.

It can happen that you weren’t able to say “**NO!**” or “**STOP!**” or that you weren’t able to leave the room. If that happens, it is **not** your fault. You need to talk about it so that it doesn’t happen again. You are brave for being able to talk about it.

- Invite the children to practice each step so they can integrate the self-protection skills. Some children may hesitate to yell or self-affirm. It is all the more important to regularly repeat these skills with the children.







Me and the world



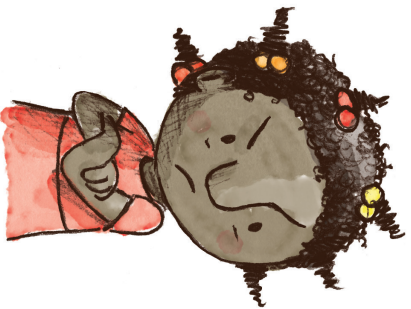
Ling, the master chef who is feeding his baby



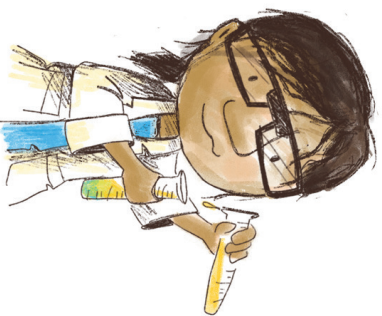
Enzo, danseur étoile



Miro is sad



Justine is angry



Ali, scientifique en herbe



Billie, pilote de course



Justine, the super-heroine, is flying her plane!

I am me, you are you, we are equal

1 Did you know that there are many different ways to be a child? Have you ever heard someone say that certain colours, certain clothing, certain activities, or even certain emotions are only for girls or only for boys? Do you think that's true?

→ Encourage the children to talk about their favourite colours and clothes.

Tell me about a piece of clothing that you like a lot.

2 **Each colour is beautiful and different, and you have the right to like them all and wear them all if you want.**

You can choose the clothes you wear because you think they look good, but also because you feel good in them. For example, your teacher might love her green pants, but maybe she wears them because they are also super comfortable for sitting on the floor playing with you. The cook at your daycare might love that apron with cartoon cats on it, but also wears it for protection from spills and stains!

→ Encourage the children to talk about their reality at home.

Who cooks at your house? Who takes care of tucking you in at night? You see? Everyone is able to cook and take care of children.

3 **Did you know that all people, adults and children alike, experience the same emotions:** anger, fear, happiness and sadness? Did you know that there are no emotions just for girls or just for boys? Everyone has the right to cry, to be angry, to laugh and to be afraid.

→ Encourage the children to talk about their emotions.

Tell me about a time when you were sad.

Tell me about a time when you were afraid. Etc.

4 Do you know that no matter who you are, you can become anything you want? A teacher, a police officer, a cook, a scientist, a ballet dancer, a professional athlete or a lawyer. **You can choose the trade or career that interests you. Every child can be intelligent, strong, excited, emotional, noisy, creative and brave.**

→ Encourage the children to talk about their qualities and accomplishments.

Tell me about a time when you had courage. Tell me

about a time when you finished a very hard puzzle.

Tell me about a time when you drew the best picture ever.

Tell me about the time when you ran the fastest.

What you love to do, wear, eat, what you feel in your heart and how you express yourself, all of those things make you who you are. Nobody can decide who you are and what you are able to do. Only you can!



Diversifying your activities

1 Have you ever done a picture puzzle? The pieces all look similar, but each one is different. When you put all of the puzzle pieces together, they create a beautiful image. But that image would be very different if it was missing any of its pieces.

It's the same with people in a group. They have many things in common and are all different. They can be interested in the same activities or toys. They can all play together. They can also like things that the others do not like. For example, a child could be the only one in their class who likes doing puzzles! Another child could love ball games with friends who also love playing ball, then drawing some pictures with different friends who like to draw.

→ Ask the children to tell you about activities they do with friends.

Tell me about a friend you like a lot. In what ways are you alike? What things do you enjoy doing together?

2 **Kids can do all sorts of activities: quiet activities, activities that make you think, activities that get you moving, activities that enable you to build fantastic objects.**

→ Ask the children to raise their hands if they enjoy an activity as you name them.

Who likes dancing? Who likes hockey? Who likes

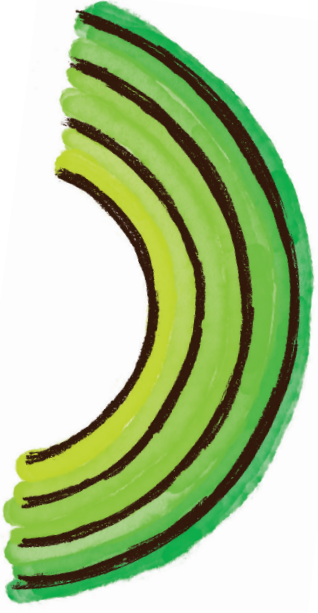
drawing? Who likes to play a music instrument?

Who likes building things? Who likes to play dress up?

Who likes singing? Who likes running races?

3 Maybe you haven't tried the activities I just named because you thought you weren't supposed to practice them. **Remember: it's only by trying new things that you will know if you like them! Take food, for instance.** When you see a new food on your plate, you must try it to see if you like it or not. The same applies to activities! **The more new things you try, the more you'll be able to say "I like this!" or "I don't like this game!"**

If a child says, "That's for boys!" or "That's for girls!" ask them this: What if I said "pizza is for girls" or "fish is for boys"... would you believe it? Why? The same goes for games and activities. The only person who can say a game or activity suits you is YOU!



Celebrating diversity

1 Have you ever seen a rainbow! Did you know that **rainbows are very rare?** They form when the light from the sun shines on tiny drops of water in the sky. A rainbow is like a miracle of nature.

→ Ask the kids to talk about the picture of the rainbow. Ask them what they like about the picture, what they find beautiful: the colours, etc.

2 Tell me, if the rainbow was just one colour, all yellow or all green, would you find it as beautiful and fun to look at? **What makes a rainbow unique is the presence of all the colours at the same time.**

3 The same goes for children! **You are not exactly like your friend. You and your friend have differences. You each have your own colour. Have you noticed that there are lots of people around you and they are all unique?** Your family, friends, people you see at the park, in stores, walking by...

Not all of these people have the same skin colour. They were not all born in the same country and do not all speak the same language. They are not the same age and their families are not all alike.

→ Ask the children to place their hands side by side and see that the shape and skin colour are all different.

→ Ask the children to talk about the uniqueness of their family (language spoken, particular foods, traditions, family members, etc.).

Tell me something special that you like a lot about your family and that makes you feel unique.

4 All these people around you have families, people they love and who love them. They have dreams. They also all need to eat, sleep, have fun, be safe and be loved. All these people around you have names and they are each unique. They are human beings just like you. **We are all unique and that is what makes all different!** If we were all the same, it wouldn't be as much fun, just like the rainbow!



**Sex education
for young children:
special situations**

A child in my group is self-stimulating

6

Preamble

Sometimes, very young children have quickly discovered the physical sensations linked to the stimulation of their genitals. At this age, the need for sensory stimulation occupies a large place in children's development. Toddlers use different strategies to meet this need, such as putting the objects in their mouths, or stimulate their genitals. As they are not yet aware of social norms, it may happen that children stimulate themselves in public. That may cause discomfort in adults witnessing this behavior. That said, self-stimulation of the genitals is a healthy behavior in humans, regardless of age. Preschool aged children are only seeking the soothing and pleasant physical sensation that comes with stimulating the nerve endings in their genitals, and the general relaxation of their body.

Suggestions for individual intervention with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates in front of others

It's normal to explore your body. I noticed that, for a little while now, you have been touching your private parts in front of others in the group. Private parts are the parts covered by your underwear or your bathing suit. Sometimes, when you touch your private parts, it feels tickly, and that can feel nice. It's normal and it's okay to do this. But private parts are special parts of the body. They're just for you, and other people shouldn't see you touching them.

We don't touch our private parts in front of other people.

You can do this in private. Do you know what the word "private" means? It means when you are alone, and nobody else is with you.

Normally, a 3- to 5-year-old child should be able to gradually stop the behaviour with these explanations. It is important to keep a calm tone and not moralize. Above all, it is important to normalize their need and, if necessary, offer alternate solutions for their behaviour. For example, they could spend a little time in a quiet corner with objects that stimulate other sensory spheres, turn their attention toward another activity they love, expend their energy or do a relaxation activity, etc.



The following are cause for concern!

The child does not stop the behavior within a reasonable time frame* despite the interventions.

The child's behaviour intensifies.

The child seems to be feeling unpleasant emotions linked with the behaviour (such as anxiety, sadness, anger, aggressiveness, etc.).

The child complains of pain in their sexual parts or you see redness or unusual secretions coming from their sexual parts.

The child involves other children in their sexual behaviours.

* Note about reasonable time frame

In some cases, and depending on context, a child may be able to stop their sexualized behaviour after a single intervention. But in most cases, the child will need reminders, time and help in finding alternate strategies to modify their sexualized behaviour. As a general rule, the time it takes to change a behaviour often matches the time the child took to develop it.

Suggestions for intervening with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates at naptime

Some children like to touch their private parts as they fall asleep at naptime. The tickling sensation helps them relax and fall asleep. But you know, when you touch your private parts at naptime, there are other children around you.

The nap room is not a private space.

It would be better if we could find another solution to help you fall asleep without touching your private parts.



Depending on the child, a range of strategies may be used.

- **Directed at the child:** Ask the child to lie on their belly. Occupy their hands with a sensory object. Apply light pressure on the child's joints—ankles, knees, hips, shoulders and wrists—to help them relax in a different way.
- **Directed at the group:** Hold a short yoga session before the nap. Do muscle relaxation exercises or deep breathing exercises.

While it's based on good intentions, we do not recommend taking the approach of creating a private space for the child at naptime by isolating them from others so they can touch their sexual parts. While self-stimulation is a normal behaviour that meets a need, nonetheless, just like any other behaviour in young children, it must be explained, normalized and redirected. Isolating a child does not teach them to find other strategies when they feel the need to self-stimulate in a group setting. This could adversely affect their social interactions when they start school or in other contexts that may be less tolerant than the daycare.

Suggestion for intervening with a child age 2 or under

At this age, it is useless to talk about the concept of privacy with the child. It is preferable to tell the child to stop the behaviour and to redirect them, as much as possible, toward another activity that will produce a pleasant physical sensation, or fully distract their attention. We do not recommend taking a punitive approach.

When you are changing their diaper, it may be useful to occupy the child's hands with an object to prevent them from touching their private parts. You can put an attractive picture on the wall near the child's face, sing a funny song, and so forth. Collaboration with the parent is essential, because it is highly likely the child is showing these behaviours at home as well. We recommend a consistent approach.



When should you be concerned?

If the child's sexual behaviours intensify.

If the child seems to be in distress during these behaviours or when you intervene.

If the child seems to have pain in their sexual parts, or redness or unusual secretions.

Children in my group are engaging in sexual exploration games

7

Preamble

It is entirely normal for preschool-aged children to explore their bodies and show curiosity about others' bodies. Every child is different. Some will be more curious about sexuality than others, regardless of their gender. This curiosity may lead them to engage in sexual exploration games with other children. Most of the time, sexual exploration games between young children can be summed up by saying they voluntarily show each other their private parts in a friendly context. They may also touch one another's sexual parts to discover new bodily sensations or to observe their similarities and differences. In all cases, it is not unusual to come upon preschool-aged children in the midst of their sexual exploration. That being said, it is important to teach children various concepts related to privacy when this happens.



Suggestions for intervening with children age 3 to 5 who are engaging in normal sexual exploration play

Above all, keep your tone calm and neutral. Often, the simple fact of surprising children in their exploration makes them feel momentarily uncomfortable and guilty. Ask the children to stop their behaviour and get dressed. Explain to them that it's normal to want to explore their bodies and each others' bodies, but it's best to keep their private parts for themselves and not to show others or touch others' private parts. Explain to them that private parts are not for games. Mention that this exploration should not happen between children or between grown-ups and children. Redirect the children toward another game and carry on with your activities.

While these situations are a normal part of psychosexual development, that doesn't mean we shouldn't intervene. In fact, not intervening send the children the message that this type of game is tolerated and can happen in other contexts, such as with a grown-up. Failing to intervene opens the door to poor understanding of sexual victimization or to the manifestation of sexual behaviour problems.



If you come upon one or more children with sexual behaviour problems, refer to the Lantern Guide *What Should I do, Marvin?* to learn how to intervene.

A child asks me: “How are babies made?”

8

Preamble

Children under the age of 5 are often curious about everything to do with pregnancy and the arrival of a new baby in the family. It is important to remember that young children, even if they don't understand everything that's happening around them, are very sensitive to changes in their routine and in their immediate environment. They are fine observers and it is naïve to think they don't notice the physical, emotional and familial changes surrounding pregnancy and the arrival of a new child in the family.

Some children will react to this change through their behaviours, while others won't hesitate to ask the well-known questions: “*How are babies made?*,” “*How did the baby get into Mommy's tummy?*” and so forth. These questions may sometimes make adults uncomfortable, because they think they need to explain adult concepts about sex to the young child. However, the preschool aged child who asks these questions only relates their observation of the facts and expresses a rational reflection: “*Mom told me that there is a baby in her womb, but the only babies that I know are in the daycare, in the nursery. I do not understand. How is it possible?*” Or “*Why is Momo's belly growing nonstop? Their body is changing and I don't understand why.*”

This thinking is in reality an attempt to give meaning to a new situation that may be making them feel anxious about change. The young child needs to be reassured or have their curiosity satisfied about an unusual situation. As adults, it is our responsibility to provide answers.

With this in mind, this section provides a framework for how to answer questions from young children age 3 to 5 about conception and birth. Various levels of response are suggested. Regardless of which one you decide to use, all the following information is appropriate for young children. That being said, we strongly encourage you to consult with the parents before answering the child, and ask if they want to personally handle the situation, or what level of answer they want you to provide.

Remember that it is more damaging for the child if you don't answer or if you invent an answer to their question, rather than replying frankly with a short response.



Reminder →

Different content levels can be suggested, ranging from 1 to 3.

They are not specific to particular ages, but rather to the level of complexity of an answer with regard to sexuality. Although all levels are appropriate for preschoolers, their use will depend mostly on the degree of comfort of the adult, cultural or personal values and, above all, on the level of psychosexual development of the children to whom the material is being presented. With that in mind, it might be appropriate to teach Level 1 material to five-year-old children or Level 2 content to children who are 4. The choice is left to the adult's discretion.

Inspired by:

- *Responding Simply to Children's Questions by the LGBT Family Coalition.* familieslgbt.org
- *What Makes a Baby* by Cory Silverberg

Conceiving babies

The first step is to ask the child:
“How do you think a baby is made?”

Level 1

“Required materials”

It takes two very important ingredients to make a baby: an egg and a sperm. Some adults have eggs and some have sperm. When an egg meets a sperm, each shares the history of the body it came from with the other, and together they form a new baby. This new baby needs a place to grow. That place is the body of an adult. At first, it takes up a very small space. Then it grows for several months. This is called pregnancy. That's when you can see that the adult's belly is growing, because it's making room for the baby to move. When the baby is ready, it is born. This is what happened to you too! The day of your birth is then celebrated every year: it's your birthday.

Level 2

Conception and birth

To make a baby, it takes two very important ingredients: an egg and a sperm. Some adults have eggs and some have sperm. There are many different ways that the egg and sperm can come together. For example, when two adults are in love, sometimes they want to be very close and press all their body parts together, and at that time they can decide that the egg and the sperm should meet. Sometimes the doctors also help them to meet. When an egg meets a sperm, each one shares with the other the history of the body it came from, and together they form a new baby, also called an embryo. This new baby needs a place to grow. That place is called the womb, and it is in the body of some adults. At first, the baby takes up only a tiny space. Then it grows for several months. This is called pregnancy. This is when you can see that the adult's belly is getting bigger, because it is making room for the baby to move. When the baby is ready, it is born. Sometimes it is born by itself, other times it needs help from doctors. Once out of the womb, the baby is born and can join its family, the people who have been waiting for it all this time!

Continued on
the next page →

Level 3

Conception, the diversity of births and the diversity of families

To make a baby, it takes two very important ingredients: an egg and a sperm. Some adults have eggs and others have sperm. There are many different ways that the egg and sperm can come together. For example, when two adults are in love, they may want to get very close and press all their body parts together, and at that time they can decide that the egg and sperm should meet. It is also possible that a single adult, or two adults in love, have no egg or no sperm. Then, another adult may share an egg or sperm to create this encounter. Sometimes doctors help the egg and sperm meet. When they meet, each shares the history of the body it came from, and together they form a new baby, also called an embryo. This new baby needs a place to grow. That place is called the womb, and it is in the body of some adults. At first, the baby takes up a very tiny space. Then it grows for several months. This is called pregnancy. This is when you can see that the adult's belly is getting bigger, because it is making room for the baby to move. When the baby is ready, it is born. Sometimes it is born by itself. It must emerge from the genitals of the adult who carried it in the womb, through a place called the vagina. Other times, it needs the help of doctors. To get the baby out, the doctors make an opening under the belly button of the adult carrying the baby. Then they close the opening after the baby is out. Once out of the womb, the baby is born and can join its family, the people who have been waiting for it all this time!

Twins

Sometimes two sperm meet two eggs at the same time and it creates two babies! They are called “twins”. Twins can also be made when one egg and one sperm make two babies instead of one. That’s just the way it is, and we don’t really know why. In all cases, the family will have two babies at birth. Sometimes those babies will look the same, and other times they will look completely different.

Adoption

Sometimes parents want to have a baby but can’t make one with their own eggs and sperm. This is just how things go sometimes... it can happen for many reasons. Those parents can then adopt a child.

“Adopting” means taking care of and raising a child that was made with the egg and sperm of two other people who cannot give it all the love or care it needs. The story will be different for each child. Sometimes, adopted children are born here in Quebec and grow up with their adoptive parents here. Sometimes, adopted children are born in another country and their parents go get them to live with their new family. No matter where the children come from, or how old they are when they arrive in their new family, it in no way changes the love that the parents feel for their children.

A child asks me the differences between their family and their friend's family.

For example:

Why does my friend have two mommies, but I have just one?

Why does my friend have two homes?

Why doesn't my friend have a daddy?

Family diversity

There is a great diversity of families, and all are equally beautiful. No families are better than others, as they are all unique. Some families have one, two, three or many more children! Some families stay up later, eat different foods, speak a different language at home... In some families, one parent works and the other stays home. In other families, the older children take care of the little ones. Each family organizes itself as best it can to give all the love that the children living there need and that is what's important.

Some families have two parents, while others have just one. Sometimes there is a mother and a father, other times there are two mothers or two fathers. In all cases, the parents wanted to have one or more children and to give them all the love they need. Sometimes, the parents who loved each other no longer feel the same way, and they decide to separate. When that happens, the children can have two different homes and the parents continue to want to give the children all their love. Sometimes, grandparents can also live in the same house as the parents and children. Sometimes, a separated parent will meet another person who also has children, and they will decide to live together and form another, bigger family. As you can see, there are many ways to be a family!

Inspired by

Responding Simply to Children's Questions by the LGBT Family Coalition.
familieslgbt.org

How can I ensure children's privacy on a daily basis in my environment?

Privacy in the daycare context is indeed possible!

Spatial organization in childcare settings can present some obstacles to ensuring that children have the privacy they need. It is not always easy, for example, to change a diaper away from curious eyes, and some daycares must share bathrooms with other users on the premises. Those difficulties could be linked to accessibility, and the need to supervise children who are learning to be independent.

Furthermore, transition periods in the daily routine – times when children are taken to the bathroom as a group – while more efficient and faster, lead to less respect for the personal space of each child. The same is true of the times when children are changing into bathing suits in a room before heading out to play in the water.

Of course, it's not always possible, or feasible, to restructure the entire daycare organization. But there are ways to rethink the layout and make improvements to better meet children's needs and to send a consistent message about respect for their boundaries. Here are some avenues for reflection in that regard:

- Move the changing table to a location where the child is not exposed to the gaze of others (parents, users, visitors, other children, etc.)
- Delineate private areas for the bathroom and changing room using objects that will still allow you to keep an eye on the children and ensure their safety (e.g., curtain, folding screen, item of furniture)
- Avoid putting potty chairs in the room where children play. Make sure there is a delineation between areas for hygiene and bathroom and common areas.

Continued on
the next page →

- Ensure children’s privacy in public spaces; parks and outdoor play areas are places where children can be involuntarily exposed to the eyes of strangers. Exposure of this kind should not be trivialized, no matter how young preschoolers are.
- Ask parents to collaborate by establishing personal measures, such as: a hooded towel for clothing changes, avoidance of onesies that require a child to be completely naked to go to the bathroom, encouraging shorts under dresses or comfortable clothes for games, etc.)
- It could be a good idea to have a quiet spot where a child can be alone in their “personal space bubble” when they feel the need and encourage children to affirm this right and respect it in others.
- Show respect for signs of discomfort and modesty in some children and find alternative solutions that take their individual needs (which vary with different children) into consideration.

A child in my group seems to be questioning their gender identity.

11

Your professional and legal obligations regarding gender diversity.

In your work, you should keep in mind a few legal aspects that apply to the respect for gender diversity and its expression.

- 1 According to the Educational Childcare Act, services provided to children must “promote the child’s overall development by enabling the child to develop all aspects of his or her person” (s. 5). In keeping with the logic behind the importance of exploring gender identity and expression, it is your professional duty to ensure that your practices promote optimal development.
- 2 Furthermore, discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression is prohibited under section 10 of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. An intentional or persistent refusal to respect a child’s gender identity or expression, as well as a refusal to take the necessary measures to ensure an environment conducive to adequate development and growth, may therefore be considered a form of discrimination and may even lead to legal consequences within your establishment.

In your practice, you may come into contact with a child whose name or gender has been changed. Whether the change is legally recognized or not, according to the Charter, a child should not be forced to make the change legal in order to be respected and recognized by the adults around him/her. Finally, it is important to understand that parental authority does not relieve you of your legal obligations. If a parent objects to the respect of their child’s gender identity or expression in your childcare setting, the recommended path is to engage in an open discussion and work with them. On the one hand, dialogue will allow you to explain the legal framework within which your practice is carried out as well as the importance of this exploration phase in the child’s development. On the other hand, it will give you the opportunity to ensure that the child can enjoy a safe home environment. If you have any doubts about a child’s well-being or safety, including gender identity or expression, do not hesitate to call to the local Director of Youth Protection for advice (see contact information for the DYP in the Lantern guide).



**Sex education
for young children:
common questions
from parents**

What are the stages of psychosexual development for young children?

At birth, sexuality is an intrinsic part of the overall, continuous development of every human being. In children, sexuality is tied to the development of personality, identity, and the needs for emotional attachment and interpersonal relationships (tenderness, friendship, love). As such, their learning in relation to sexuality is essential to overall smooth development, and it is best for children to accomplish this learning within the family, through their environments and their bodies.

To develop in a harmonious way, children must integrate various dimensions of human sexuality as they grow up.

Just like other spheres of development, psychosexual development changes quickly and at a different pace for each child. The child learns about their sexuality through observation and imitation, just like they do when learning to walk, talk and play. As such, a child's psychosexual development is a fundamental aspect of their self-actualization, just like the other areas of their development.

Here is an overview of the various stages of psychosexual development in preschool-age children:



- **likes physical contact** with others.
- takes pleasure in exploring own environment by putting everything in their mouth.
- enjoys games involving exploration of own genitals starting in the first year of life.
- explores own body with curiosity and **feels physical pleasure** when genitals are stimulated (orgasmic reflex): this is **NOT** connected to eroticization or sexual fantasies.
- **enjoys recognizing all parts of own body** (example: “Where is your nose?” and “Show me your ears!”)
- becomes aware of the fact that there are gender categories and characteristics typically associated with them.
- **learns to use the toilet** (around age 2). Sphincter control results in new sensations, particularly in the anal area.



- This is a **period conducive to the emergence of sexual behaviours**.
- shows **curiosity about anatomical differences** between people, primarily with regard to the genitals.
- takes pleasure in exploring body parts with other children (playing doctor, looking at oneself naked in the mirror, looking at others in the bathroom or when they undress)
- takes pleasure in undressing and being naked in front of others.
- **explores own genitals** (self-stimulation) and learns that touching them results in pleasure (but this is not always associated with eroticization or sexual fantasies).
- **experiments with gender role-play** through imitation games (playing house, pretend trades, etc.).
- is **able to identify with a gender** (girl, boy, girl and boy, neither of those, etc.) and becomes aware of stereotypical gender-based expectations.
- can present a stable gender identity at this age but can also change it in later years.
- **starts to ask questions** about urination (“Where does peepee come from?”), conception (“Where do babies come from?”), pregnancy, birth, the genital organs, etc.

How should I answer children's questions about sexuality?

“How should I answer children's questions about sexuality?” is a fundamental question for parents. It applies to everything that's discussed in the section about parents' common questions. With that in mind, we have made a point of repeating the content provided in the first part of the Discussion Handbook for caseworkers.

- **Show openness.** Reinforce the fact that the child has come to you to get information, and respect their questions.

I'm glad you came to see me to ask me your question.

- **Turn the question back to the child** to find out what they know about the subject. Then correct or add information as needed. Pay attention to the child's questions and answers because they'll tell you about the child's stage of psychosexual development.

What about you? How do you think babies are made?

- Remember, you convey your values to the child through your answers and your silences.
- **Allow yourself to say to the child that you want to think about the question before answering.**

That's a good question! Let me think about it, I will get back to you.

- **If you promise to answer the child, make sure you follow through.**
- **Tell the child they can trust you** and come back to see you if they have other questions about sexuality.
- Feel free to reframe or refuse to answer questions from the child if they are about your own private life.
- **Avoid prejudice about differences.**



Not answering, avoiding the question or saying “we don't talk about that” are attitudes that send a message to the child that they should not talk to you about sexuality. This can lead the child to find their answers from less reliable sources, such as their friends, or, later, online. It can also lead the child to avoid telling you if they are in a risky situation or are a victim of sexual violence.

Can we walk around naked in front of our children?

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This is a question that refers to lifestyle choices particular to each family. In some families, people walk around naked and it causes no problems. These behaviors can be motivated by many reasons, including the belief that it's essential to feel free in one's own home or that it's good for children to see other people's bodies at different ages to put their own body image into perspective, and so forth. In other families, people walk around naked only when they're going from the bathroom to the bedroom to get dressed; they simply don't feel the need to cover up to move from one room to the next. And in other homes, nobody walks around naked. Nudity only happens alone or between the couple, for instance in order to give the children clear understandings of privacy or because modesty is an important value. Note that **even within the same family, members may have different relationships with nudity. It depends on their own history, their culture and their values.** In short, it's important, above all, to be comfortable with your values and for other family members to be comfortable with them as well. With all this in mind, can you walk around naked in front of your children? The answer is yes, as long as it respects your family, cultural and personal values, **as long as it does not make your children uncomfortable, and as long as your child doesn't have difficulty understanding the concept of boundaries and privacy in other spheres of their life.** If that's not the case, you may wish to rethink your practices.

When should we stop washing ourselves with our children?

The answer to this question is practically the same as for the last one. In some families, the parents may at times bathe with the children. This may be a time for laughter, relaxation or even learning by imitating how to wash. **There is no age when you need to stop washing ourselves with your children. However, as part of psychosexual development, there comes a time when the child may be more conscious of their own privacy and their body, and gradually develops a sense of modesty around others.** This may be expressed, among other things, through comments like “Gross! Mom, I don’t want to see you naked!” or “Hey! I’m changing, close the door!” **You need to pay attention to these kinds of comments, because they indicate the child needs their privacy.**

At that point, the child will probably not enjoy bath time together. As well, the parent may begin to feel uncomfortable if the child asks embarrassing questions about the adult’s body, such as “What does daddy have between his legs?” or when the child touches the parent’s sexual parts out of curiosity. **These moments of adult discomfort are examples of indications that may make the parent want to stop bathing with the child.**

When should we stop washing our children together?

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Giving a bath to several children together helps save time and energy while spending some pleasant time together as a family. That being said, it is also possible that parents prefer to give baths to each child individually for reasons related to their family, personal or cultural values. For families that give baths to several children at once, there isn't really an age where you need to stop doing it. **It's more that the comfort level of one or more children may change or the child may feel a need to have their modesty and privacy respected; these indicate you must stop the practice.** For example, even if the children have taken their bath together for three years, if the oldest child wants to take their bath alone or seems annoyed in the presence of the younger child, **it is important to respect that need. Another indication that you may want to change your practices is if a child begins to engage in sexual behaviours**, such as touching another child's private parts, becoming excessively excited about seeing the other child's private parts, etc., and if these behaviours **persist over time despite your interventions.** In short, the bath should remain a pleasant experience, often while getting ready for bed, and free of conflict or discomfort related to modesty and privacy.

Can we kiss our child on the mouth?

17

This depends once again on each family's lifestyle and family, cultural and personal values. **It also depends on the parent's personal reference points for what they consider to be affectionate and tender gestures toward their child.** Note, however, that it is forbidden to kiss a child on the mouth with the tongue in the way that two consenting adults might do. This last point illustrates the complexity of this answer. Some parents may give a close-mouthed kiss on their child's mouth that lasts a fraction of a second, particularly when saying goodnight or goodbye. **As long as it has no sensual connotations and the child understands the difference between this act and a kiss between lovers, this practice remains acceptable.** However, it is important to remain attentive to the signs that could indicate that it is necessary to stop this behavior. For example, if the child shows discomfort, or has difficulty understanding to whom and under what circumstances it is appropriate to kiss on the mouth. **In all cases, it's important to be very clear with your child about what is acceptable and unacceptable contact by an adult toward a child.**

What should we say and do if our child walks in on us as we're having sex?

It may be particularly embarrassing for parents when their child walks in by surprise as they are having sex. That being said, a child can feel just as mixed-up from witnessing to their parents' sexual relationship or from seeing their parent with a new partner, or with a person they don't know. You may make the personal choice to not talk about the situation with your child, but **your child may have questions and struggle to understand what they have seen, which could cause them anxiety**. For example, some children who hear their parents cry out during sexual intercourse may get the idea that the other parent or partner was hurting them. Depending on the situation, the child may have flashbacks about what they saw and experience behaviour or concentration problems. **It is also reassuring for the child when the parent or parents bring up the situation with them.**

You can first ask what they saw or heard. You can explain that you and your partner love each other very much and that sometimes, grown-ups who love each other want to be close to one another with their whole bodies. These moments of love and tenderness are very enjoyable and give the adults lots of pleasure. **In all cases, it's important to tell the child you are sorry about what they saw, to remind them that only grown-ups can make love, and that a child should not see them doing it.** It would be good to say that **you'll be more careful next time, because normally this should be done in private and not in front of others.** The child may ask other questions. As needed, use a book intended for young children (see the *Resources* section on Page 98) to get some distance and normalize the situation.

As an adult, it is **important to remember that it's unacceptable for a child to regularly witness sexual relations between adults.** In some cases, the child may end up having more serious problems, such as sexual behaviour difficulties that may lead to unfortunate consequences, sometimes very serious ones, for which they are not initially responsible.

Should hygiene care be provided only by the mother?

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When it comes to hygiene for young children, care may be provided by all parents. There is no counter-indication when it comes to a father changing a child's diaper or giving them a bath. Quite the contrary, **sharing everyday tasks helps create bonds between the child and their parent in different settings, and this encourages and promotes egalitarian relationships.**

Can hygiene care be provided by a new partner?

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There is no right or wrong answer here. It depends on the context and the people involved. That being said, it is important to remember that **hygiene care for young children is unfortunately a time that may lend itself to sexual violence, particularly during baths, changing diapers and bedtime.** As such, when a new person comes into your life, it is important to be present as much as possible or to keep watch if you let them provide hygiene care to your child. Without becoming suspicious of everyone, you must be especially vigilant if a new partner shows too much enthusiasm regarding hygiene care for your child, or wants to take care of them too much.

My son likes to play with dolls and women's dresses. My daughter likes to draw herself a mustache and prefers to play with boys. Is my child homosexual or trans¹?

No. Just because a child is interested in toys, activities or accessories that do not conform to gender stereotypes (that do not fit with what is typically expected of girls and boys according to societal gender stereotypes) does not mean that they will identify as a queer or trans person in the future. **While some children are comfortable with gender expression that is more in line with stereotypes, others simply prefer to express themselves in more creative ways, without necessarily questioning their gender identity.**

In fact, it is perfectly normal for a child to explore all types of toys. **Exposure to different games and activities help children discover their own interests and develop their full potential.** Exploration is part of the healthy and normal human course of development for all children. As such, it is important to support the child by providing them with the means and space to explore all facets of their self and allow them to develop optimally. This means not assuming a child's gender identity or sexual orientation based on their interests. To assume someone's (and even a child's) gender identity or sexual orientation is to assign a gender identity or sexual orientation solely on the basis of appearance, attitudes or choices, without asking the person. Just as we would not ask a child about their sexual orientation, we should not assign one based on our observations. In any case, assuming a child's gender identity or sexual orientation based on how they present themselves to the outside world is not only wrong, but also inappropriate.

If you still have questions or doubts, a wealth of information and resources is available to help you learn more about gender identity exploration in children, and just as much information about sexual orientation. Be sure to check out the resources on pages 98 to 99.

1. The word "trans" refers to any person whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned that person at birth. For example, a trans girl was assigned a boy at birth, and a trans boy was assigned a girl at birth. Note that the word "trans" is an adjective.

By letting my child explore and play with toys that are not usually assigned to their gender, might they become confused about their gender identity?

No. Letting children explore their interests and their gender expression will not confuse them about their gender identity.

Generally speaking, the development, and even the consolidation, of gender identity takes place in early childhood¹. Indeed, early childhood is a time to explore one's interests, identity, and gender expression.

It is therefore important to let young children develop and assert their own needs, thus allowing them to better know themselves and develop their full potential. When a child explores their gender identity, it is actually more of a challenge for adults. Indeed, adults may feel that their usual points of reference, which are often influenced by gender stereotypes and the binarity² put forward by society, have been disrupted. **In any case, it is not up to adults to determine a child's gender identity and sexual orientation, but rather to the child, who will affirm it when the time comes.**

1. Ehrensaft, 2018; Olson et al., 2011.

2. La binarité est une construction sociale qui limite l'identité de genre à deux catégories (homme-femme) auxquels sont associées des stéréotypes de genre dits masculins ou féminins (Dubuc et FNEEQ-CSN, 2017).

Continued on
the next page →

The journey of gender-fluid or trans children

Many factors influence how each child becomes aware of their gender identity and how they express it. This awareness and the path taken represent a trajectory that can vary greatly from one child to another. Individual and social factors can facilitate the journey or, conversely, make it difficult for the child concerned³. One of these factors is the presence or lack of acceptance and recognition of identity within the family. For example, a child who feels that their identity differs from what is perceived by others, but is prevented from honestly expressing it, will only hide it. **Accordingly, preventing a trans child from wearing the clothing of their choice or participating in activities that they enjoy only delays the inevitable while hindering their development, mental health, and self-esteem⁴.**

The important point is that a trans child is not fundamentally confused. In fact, many studies have shown that trans children are entirely comparable to their cisgender⁵ peers in their awareness and perception of their gender identity⁶. The confusion stems primarily from the adults around the child, who have difficulty understanding, if not to say accepting, what the child is communicating to them⁷. On the other hand, **being open-minded and letting a child explore their different options will not encourage them to become trans⁸ but rather to become who they really are, according to their own personality.** Furthermore, in addition to the developmental benefits, diversifying children's activities while celebrating diversity **helps to promote egalitarian relationships among all children.**

3. Katz-Wise et al., 2017; Medico et al., 2020; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020.

4. Ehrensaft et al., 2018; Kirichenko, 2020.

5. « Par opposition au terme « trans », le terme « cisgenre » réfère aux personnes qui s'identifient au genre qui leur a été assigné à la naissance ». Familles LGBT, le Guide, 2015.

6. Fast et Olson, 2018; Gülgöz et al., 2019a, 2019b; Olson et al., 2015.

7. Kirichenko, 2020

8. Olson et al., 2019

References and resources

Complementary tools from the Lantern program

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Because preschool-aged children do not all progress at the same pace in the various spheres of their development, and because it is important to repeat teachings using a diverse range of methods to reach the maximum possible number of children depending on their areas of interest and their abilities, here is the full list of Lantern tools aimed **at children** and that may be facilitated by their parents or the workers in their lives.

TOOLS	AGE BRACKETS	FACILITATED BY	TOPICS	COLLABORATION STRATEGY WITH PARENTS
Board picture book You as Me	Birth-2 years 2-3 years	Parents Workers	<i>Egalitarian relationships</i>	
Book Milo's Boundaries	2-3 years 3-5 years	Parents Workers	<i>Personal space and privacy</i>	
<i>with discussion suggestions</i>	3-5 years			
Book Marvin Disappeared	2-3 years 3-5 years	Parents Workers	<i>Gender stereotypes</i>	
<i>with discussion suggestions</i>	3-5 years			
Game Marvin, What Should We Play?	2-3 years 3-5 years	Workers	<i>Sexual violence and self-protection skills</i>	
Discussion handbook Tell Me Everything, Marvin	3-5 years	Workers	<i>Education about sexuality, egalitarian relationships and sexual violence</i>	X

Resources

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A number of teaching guides, storybooks, books for parents and websites address the topics addressed by the Lantern program. Here are a few! The reference information is listed further down.

THEMES	Storybooks	
SEX EDUCATION (body, pregnancy and birth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Baby Tree</i> • <i>What Makes a Baby</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where Willy Went</i>
SEX EDUCATION (emotions and self-esteem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Happy</i> • <i>Red: A Crayon's Story</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Color Monster</i> • <i>The Crayon's Book of Feelings</i>
EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS (stereotypes and egalitarian relationships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beautiful</i> • <i>Big Boys Cry</i> • <i>Cinderstella: A Tale of Planets Not Princes</i> • <i>I Love My Purse</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lucy Tries Hockey</i> • <i>Princess Kevin</i> • <i>The Cranky Ballerina</i> • <i>You Can Be</i>
PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My body, my rights</i> • <i>Some parts are not for sharing</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>YES! NO!</i>
DIVERSITY (gender creative Kids - gender exploration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Being You: A First Conversation About Gender</i> • <i>From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea</i> • <i>Julián Is a Mermaid</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress</i> • <i>Riley Can't Stop Crying</i>

THEMES**Storybooks**

DIVERSITY
(sexual
orientation)

- Maiden & Princess
- Prince & Knight

DIVERSITY
(families)

- A Family Is a Family Is a Family
- And Tango Makes Three
- Otis and Alice
- The Girl with Two Dads
- We Are Family

DIVERSITY
(cultural)

- Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race
- Rosa Parks
- Ten Little Fingers & Ten Little Toes
- What's My Superpower?

DIVERSITY
(body)

- Abigail the Whale
- Me and You
- Not all Animals Are Blue

THEMES**Educational Guide**

EGALITARIAN
RELATIONSHIPS

- Challenging gender stereotypes in the early years
- Gender equal play in early learning and childcare.
- Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood: A Literature Review.
- Improving Gender Balance Scotland: An action guide for early learning and childcare practitioners.
- UNLIMITED POTENTIAL: Report of the Commission on Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood.

PREVENTION OF
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Prevention: It Works!
- Teatree Tells: A Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Kit

DIVERSITY

- Inform Children During the Early Childhood Period on Issues Related to Gender, Gender Identity and Gender Expression
- Supporting Children's Awareness During Early Childhood to Explore, Understand and Accept Gender Diversity, Gender Identity and Gender Expression
- Hi Sam: Sensitizing Youth Through Play

THEMES**Books for parents**

SEX EDUCATION

- *Sex positive talks to have with kids*
- *The Sex Education Answer Book*

EGALITARIAN
RELATIONSHIPS

- *Parenting Beyond Pink & Blue: How to Raise Your Kids Free of Gender Stereotypes.*
- *The swedish way to parent and play : advice for raising gender-equal kids*

PREVENTION OF
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- *Child Sexual Abuse: It Is Your Business*
- *Preventing All Forms of Violence Against Children: Practical guide for parents*

DIVERSITY

- *Social and Emotional Learning to Help Children with the Process of Identity Affirmation*
- *The gender identity guide for parents*

THEMES**Websites**

SEX EDUCATION

- *Amaze Jr.*
- *Planned Parenthood - Preschool*
- *Sex Ed Rescue*
- *Teaching sexual health*
- *Understanding psychosexual development*

EGALITARIAN
RELATIONSHIPS

- *Effects of Stereotypes on Personal Development*
- *Let Toys Be Toys*
- *Strategies for equality in school retention: early childhood*

PREVENTION OF
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- *Canadian Centre for Child Protection*
- *CPIVAS*
- *Regroupement des organismes ESPACE*

DIVERSITY

- *Gender creative kids*
- *Jasmin Roy & Sophie Desmarais Foundation - Early Childhood*
- *LGBT+ Family Coalition*



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