

# Parent-child handbook

## **Tell me more, Marvin:**

talking to children about  
sexuality to better protect them





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talking to children about  
sexuality to better protect them



→ **Psst!** You can add colour to this Marvin, if you want!

## Acknowledgements

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*Tell me more, Marvin: talking to children  
about sexuality to better protect them*

**Concept, content creation and copywriting:**

Joëlle Grenon and Jessica Martin

**Graphic design:** Léonie Coté

**Coordination:** Mélanie Murphy

**Translation:** I.D.COM

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### Message to adults

Dear trusted adult,

**Congratulations!** By deciding to use this handbook, you are indeed positioning yourself in this way: **as a trusted adult** who cares about the development and safety of a child. By providing sex education and promoting egalitarian relationships, you're offering a child knowledge and tools that will be useful for life and protection from sexual violence. This is a precious role.

**Thank you for being part of a protective community for children!**

## Before we begin...

**Some of the content in this handbook is intended for you only.** It involves explanations, suggestions for answers and actions, and instructions. **This content is easy to spot as it is highlighted in orange and turquoise.**

**Other content is for you to use with a child.** It has been written to facilitate communication on various topics related to sex education while being adapted to the development level of young children. **You'll also notice that the questions and instructions addressed to the child are in purple,** indicating a more active involvement.

Take it at your own pace! Many topics are covered in this handbook. They are not all intended to be covered simultaneously, nor in any specific order. Instead, use them according to your needs, what you observe, the child's questions, etc.

Above all, use this handbook to spend a pleasant, playful time with them. This experience will show them that they can discuss sexuality with a trusted adult and ask questions. Respect your comfort level and start with the topics that seem easier for you and proceed gradually.

However, if you don't know where to start, **here's the suggested order:**

1. Read the introduction
2. Take a look at the contents of the section Talking About Sexuality with a Young Child
3. Address the section Promoting Egalitarian Relationships (p. 24)
4. Move on to Emotions, Thoughts And Self-Esteem (p. 68)
5. Address the section on the use of Real Words in Anatomy (p. 56)
6. Cover the section on Danger Signs And Self-Protection Skills (p. 36).



**Why Teach  
Sex Education  
to Children?**



# Why Teach Sex Education to Children?

**1** Because this is the most effective protection factor for preventing sexual violence, especially when education starts at an early age.



 **Video**

*Why prevent sexual violence against young children?*

Video also available on [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)

**2****Because the issue of sexual violence is very real, even among toddlers.**

In Québec, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys are victims of sexual violence before the age of 18. Among victims, 13% are under the age of 5.

**3****Because toddlers are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence from a developmental point of view.**

In fact, they:

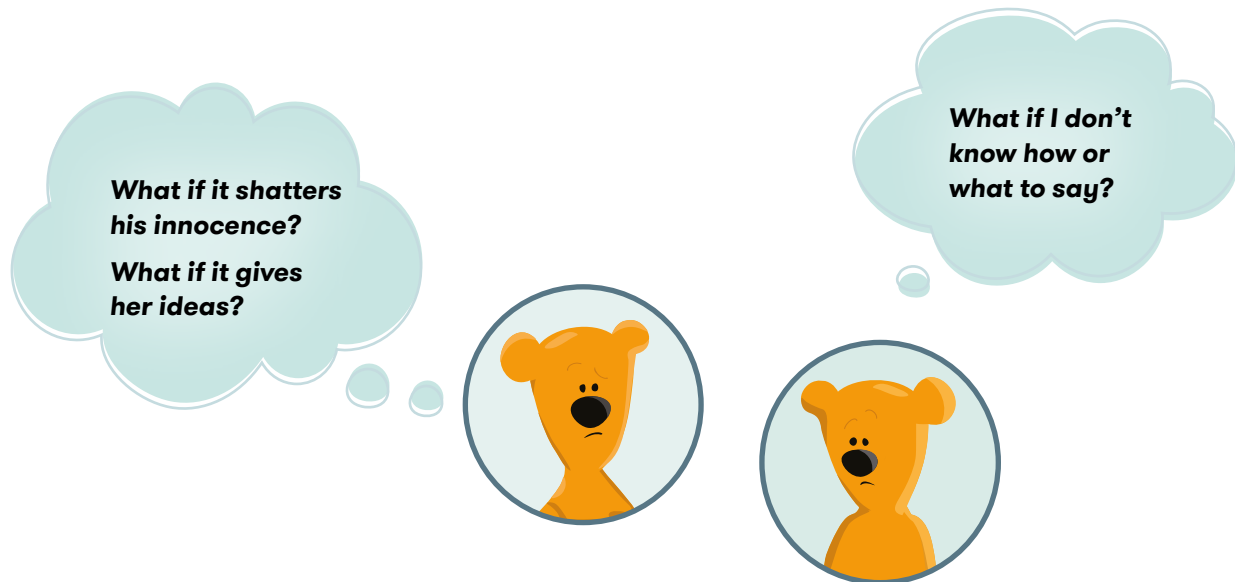
- Depend on adults to meet their needs, trust them and learn to listen to them.
- Lack knowledge about boundaries and privacy, and don't understand the difference between right and wrong.
- Can't always put clear words to what they are experiencing.

**4****Because sexual violence is difficult to prove, and there are still many barriers to disclosure, especially among the very young:**

- Toddlers are not always conscious of being victims of sexual violence, which can be brought in as a game, an educational moment, etc.
- Their disclosure is not always clear, so their narrative is frequently challenged. Moreover, their allegations are often harder to substantiate due to a lack of details.
- Unlike physical violence, sexual violence rarely leaves visible marks. In fact, fewer than 5% of medical examinations of children or teens will show specific signs of sexual contact.
- Toddlers fear negative consequences for themselves or their family (sometimes as a result of threats or blame) or for the abuser, who may also be someone the child loves and is attached to.

## Barriers That Persist

### Among Adults



As a parent, it's perfectly normal to have certain fears or misgivings about sex education. After all, you want the best for your child, and you want to do the right thing. And this isn't always easy, because we know that the subject of sexuality is still taboo today. You may not even have benefited from this kind of education when you were younger. So it's legitimate to feel you may not be properly equipped today.

*So why talk about sexuality to such young children? Let them have their childhood, and this subject will come up soon enough in their lives. For now, we need to protect them from it!*

These are common statements that may have already crossed your mind. And yet, it's precisely to protect children that we need to address the issue of sex education from an early age, adapted to the development of toddlers. With this in mind, it's not their innocence that we aim to break, but their ignorance. In fact, by providing them with the knowledge and tools they need to understand the world around them, children will be more likely to detect risky situations and turn to us, the adults, to protect them.

As for fears of giving children ideas (and therefore losing a little control!), it turns out that the opposite is generally true. In fact, by responding appropriately to their questions and opening up communication on the subject, we dispel some of the taboos and appease the curiosity of toddlers that sometimes leads them to engage in certain sexual behaviours to get answers to their questions. Consider the example of road safety prevention. A child who frequently hears that crossing on a red light is dangerous will not be more inclined to cross on a red light. The same goes for teachings about sexuality.

## What is Sex Education in Early Childhood?

It can be hard to imagine teaching sex education to children aged 0 to 5. Indeed, when we hear the term “sexuality,” our adult understanding naturally categorizes it in the box as “something we do.” The words that come to mind are “sexual relationship,” “genitalia,” “sexual desire,” and other expressions linked to adult sexuality.

From this perspective, it’s obvious that the terms “sexuality” and “early childhood” seem impossible to reconcile. However, when we talk about a child’s sexuality, it’s important to contextualize the term according to the child’s age and needs.

Therefore we need to expand our view of sexuality and see it as part of each individual’s overall development. When we refer to sexuality in early childhood, we’re talking about “who the child becomes.”

For example, a child’s psychosexual development contributes to the development of **attachment** relationships with caregivers, **identity** development, **self-esteem**, **body image**, **social skills** and so on. Children aged 0 to 5 are already learning important things, having experiences and acquiring knowledge related to sexuality.



# Psychosexual Development in Children

Like other spheres of development, psychosexual development evolves throughout life. The pace is different for each child and influenced by various factors.

Therefore, these markers indicate what can be observed according to age range. Still, it's entirely possible that your child displays these behaviours a little earlier or later or doesn't exhibit them at all.

## Here's an overview of the phases of psychosexual development in toddlers:

### Children aged 0-2 years:

- enjoys physical contact with others
- enjoys exploring the immediate environment by putting everything in the mouth
- enjoys playing with one's own genitals from the first year of life and feels physical pleasure when the genitals are stimulated (erection and lubrication reflexes\*); this is **not** associated with adult sexuality (e.g., sexual fantasies and desires)
- shows curiosity and takes pleasure in recognizing all parts of the body (examples: "Where's your nose?" "Show me your ears!")
- becomes aware that there are different genders in society, but doesn't necessarily identify with any of them yet
- learns to use the potty (around 2 years old). Controlling sphincter muscles brings new sensations, particularly in the anal region.

\*

These reflexes are the body's natural reactions to certain touches. They can be compared to other common reflexes, such as crying when cutting onions or sneezing when smelling pepper!

### Children aged 3-5:

- is a period conducive to the manifestation of sexual behaviours
- shows curiosity about the anatomical differences between people, particularly concerning the genitals
- takes pleasure in exploring body parts with other children ("playing doctor," looking at self naked in the mirror, looking at others when they are in the bathroom or undressing)
- takes pleasure in undressing and showing off naked in front of others
- explores genitals (self-stimulation) and becomes aware that touching them is pleasurable. They will try to reproduce the feeling (but it is still not associated with adult sexuality)
- experiments with different gender roles through imitation games (household chores, jobs, etc.)
- starts asking questions about urination ("Where does peepee come from?"), conception ("how do we make babies?"), pregnancy, birth, genitalia, etc.

# Sexual Behaviour in Toddlers

Many sexual behaviours are healthy when they are prompted by curiosity, exploration and sensory pleasure-seeking and when they are aligned with the child's psychosexual development level. The period between three and five years of age is when these behaviours are most common.

However, children of this age are not yet aware of social norms relating to acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviour in public places (boundaries) and behaviour reserved for intimacy. You must teach them these norms without making them feel guilty. It's also an opportunity to teach them sex education.



Here are the best ways to encourage healthy sexual behaviour among young children.

## Normalize

Normalize behaviour and curiosity about the body and how it feels.

"It's okay to discover your body, to enjoy its sensations, it can relax you or make you feel pleasure."

"It's normal to be curious about body parts and to ask questions."

## Reframe

Reframing boundaries and intimacy.

"You shouldn't touch your genitals in front of others. This should be done in private, for example, in the bathroom at home or in your bedroom."

"Don't show your genitals to others. They're private."

## Educate

Take the time to respond to your child's curiosity about the body or to address certain concepts specific to the rules around sexual behaviour (privacy boundaries, unacceptable acts, etc.).

"Let's look at a book together about body parts, you can ask me your questions if you like."

## Sex Education

### Essentials

Sex education is part of every family's lifestyle, and it helps prevent sexual violence in the early years.

**Did you know that every day, as a parent, you educate your child about healthy sexuality? You are doing it by :**

- answering their questions, including those about sexuality
- promoting gender equality
- teaching them to respect their personal space and those of others
- teaching notions of privacy, for example, when using the toilet or changing clothes
- helping them to recognize and correctly name their body parts, including their genitals
- helping them to identify and express their emotions.

**These are the essentials to prevent sexual violence.**

To help you remember, they're illustrated here under the acronym **SECRET**, thanks to Marvin, Marie-Vincent's iconic little bear, who lent us his paw.

**S**

**Speaking about sexuality while telling children about...**

**E**

**Egalitarian relationships**

**C**

**Clues about sexual violence and self protection skills**

**R**

**Real names for sexual parts and the concept of privacy**

**ET**

**Emotions and Thoughts, including self-esteem**



## Self-Observation on Sex Education

- |   | Yes                   |
|---|-----------------------|
| <b>1</b> I help my child recognize emotions and manage conflicts.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>2</b> I teach my child privacy, especially when changing or going to the bathroom.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>3</b> I talk to my child about friendship and love.  | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>4</b> I don't force my child to give or receive kisses or hugs, even from people who are liked.                            | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>5</b> I value my child's individual traits and skills.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>6</b> I teach my child to be assertive every day.  | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>7</b> I teach my child the different parts of the body and answer questions about them.                                    | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>8</b> I don't judge my child for touching their genitals, but I do teach the concepts of private parts and private places. | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>9</b> I show my affection to my child in different ways when it is asked for or needed.                                    | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>10</b> I take the time to listen when my child wants to talk about a difficult situation.                                  | <input type="radio"/> |

If you answered “**Yes**” to one or more of these questions, you’re already involved in sex education! In addition to what you’re already doing, find out how and why to open up communication on the subject of sexuality with young children. →



 **Video**

**Sex education  
for young children**

Video also available  
on [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)



**Talking About Sexuality ...**



# Talking About Sexuality With a Young Child: Why And How?

▶ Video



*The sexuality education  
needs of young children*

Video also available  
on [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)

Answering questions and opening up communication about sexuality with children is the main defense against sexual violence among young people, so it's clear that this practice needs to be promoted. Despite this, adults still report obstacles and barriers to providing appropriate sex education for children.

It's not always easy to know how to go about it. Children's questions can arise at an unexpected time and confuse them. For the adult who tends to associate the word sexuality with sexual relations between adults, it may also make taking questions from a child uncomfortable. Yet it has been shown that there are needs tied to the healthy psychosexual development of young children.

Therefore, children need to understand the world around them, particularly when it comes to sexuality. They need to identify the rules and norms transmitted in the living environment on this subject and understand what behaviours are expected.

They need to know that they have the right to ask questions and get appropriate answers and that this subject can be discussed with trusted adults. They need to be able to rely on these trusted adults and know that if the situation requires it, they will be able to get help from them. Maintaining the taboo, unfortunately, leads child victims not to want to talk about what they're experiencing because they feel shame, guilt, or even because they are afraid of being scolded for talking about something "forbidden" or "uncomfortable" involving sexuality.

**Indeed, not answering, avoiding the question, or saying "We don't talk about that" are attitudes that send the message that the child shouldn't talk to you about sexuality. This can make them look for answers from less reliable sources, such as friends, older siblings, or later on, the Internet. It can also make them avoid you if they are at risk or are being victimized by sexual violence.**

As a trusted adult, you'll be able to answer the child's questions appropriately, ensuring that they receive the right answers in a safe and caring environment.

This handbook is packed with developmentally appropriate topics. You'll be able to find the right words to talk about sexuality and, at the same time, prevent sexual violence. If you receive any further questions, there are a few basic attitudes to remember.



# Key Attitudes to Focus on When a Child Asks a Question About Sexuality

## 1 Be open-minded

Underscore the fact that the child comes to you for information and respect questions being asked.

**Example: I'm glad you came to me with your question.**

## 2

### Ask the child

In addition to revealing what he knows about the subject, you'll be able to pay attention to vocabulary, better situate the stage of psychosexual development, etc. It also helps you ensure you've understood the question and the need with which it's associated and, therefore, better adapt your response.

**Example: How do you think babies are made?**

## 3 Allow yourself to tell the child that you want to think before answering

It's normal not to have all the answers to all the questions, or the circumstances might not be ideal for discussion. You can take the time to prepare yourself by asking the right questions and offering the right answers. However, if you promise to answer later, be sure to do so.

**Example: That's a really good question, and you were right to ask it. Let me think about it and I'll get back to you with an answer.**

## 4

### Mention to the child that he can trust you and come back to see you if there are any further questions

You position yourself as a trusted adult to whom questions can be asked, and with whom certain subjects can be discussed that might otherwise be taboo.

**Example: If you have any other questions, I'm always here to listen and answer them.**

## 5

### Avoid prejudice about differences

Remember that you transmit your values through your answers... and your silences!

## Questions From Children...

### And Parents

You're now convinced of the benefits of opening up communication with children about sexuality, and you're well prepared to have the best attitude when answering questions on the subject. But at some point, you might get questions that annoy you a little and that you don't quite know how to answer: How are babies made? Why does my friend have two moms? Why doesn't my friend have a dad? We must admit that some questions can take you by surprise!

You may also have questions as a parent about your family practices regarding intimacy, among other things.

For example, it's common for adults to wonder whether it's appropriate to kiss their child on the mouth or to walk around the house naked. Others seek to know up to what age it's okay to bathe with their child or to bathe several children simultaneously.

To answer these questions from children and parents (and many others!), we suggest that you visit Marie-Vincent's website, where you'll find a wide range of suggestions and answers about intimacy, sex education, sexual behaviour, and more.



To consult the **discussion handbook**, which contains answers to all these questions and much more or visit [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)





# **Egalitarian Relationships**



## How can promoting egalitarian relationships help prevent sexual violence?

Gender stereotypes are prevalent in early childhood; transmitted consciously or unconsciously, they are found in the messages repeated daily to children by their families, teachers and peers, in films, television and advertising, in toys and clothing, and so on. Yet these stereotypical messages, which sometimes go unnoticed or seem harmless, are also associated with prejudice.

They lead us to make value judgements about masculine and feminine genders and even to rank these categories, often downgrading what concerns women. This creates inequalities that have a significant impact on the development of children's full potential.



 **Video**

***The construction of inequalities between the sexes***

Video also available on [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)

**In the short, medium and long term, gender inequalities resulting from differentiated socialization have multiple consequences since they:**

**1**

**Impose limits**, and confine children to a gender role, which rarely considers their uniqueness and diversity. Yet there are more differences between women in the same group and between men in the same group than between the women's group and the men's group. These limits prevent them from discovering who they really are and lead them to have **fields of interest** and make **choices** that are **guided by the stereotypical** expectations of those around them and of society. Later on, these limits can impact their **academic success** or even **career advancement**, among other things.

**2**

Impact **self-esteem** and **self-affirmation** by generating **devaluation** when children transgress the norms usually associated with their gender or even a **presumption about their sexual orientation**. This limitation of assertiveness will also have effects on the **expression of emotions**, where girls and women can allow themselves to experience sadness but little anger, while boys will be discouraged from expressing their vulnerability and grief but will be valued in a position of power when they assert themselves with strength and anger.

**3**

By creating an **imbalance of power in relationships**, they **fuel violence**, including sexual violence.



# Self-observation of the promotion of egalitarian relationships

- |  | Yes                   |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>1</b> I support my children, regardless of gender, in speaking up and expressing themselves, but also listening to what others have to say.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>2</b> I ask my children for help with tasks, regardless of gender, and support them in carrying them out.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>3</b> I allow my children to explore all aspects of their personality by proposing different activities, regardless of gender. I encourage and support them in activities they are not used to doing. | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>4</b> I encourage my children to dress in a variety of colours.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>5</b> I speak up and challenge my children when they convey gender stereotypes like, "This is a girl movie."  | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>6</b> I encourage my children to develop their qualities even if they are not typically associated with their gender. I reinforce and name these qualities with them.                                 | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>7</b> I encourage my children to recognize the diversity of emotions (both pleasant and unpleasant) and to express them in words, regardless of gender.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>8</b> I ensure that the materials I use with my children (games, books, etc.) reflect diversity, including skin colour, culture, body diversity, and physical abilities.                              | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>9</b> I encourage my children's open-mindedness, respect and acceptance by celebrating diversity at various levels.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>10</b> I am a role model by being respectful and maintaining egalitarian relationships with people of a different gender.   | <input type="radio"/> |

**Video**



**Promoting  
egalitarian  
relationships**

Video also available  
on [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)

In the context of prevention among toddlers, it's about ensuring that all children grow up with the same abilities to recognize themselves, assert themselves, express their needs and emotions, develop their own identity, stand up for themselves and seek help. These are essential skills to develop in order to prevent sexual violence, both the fact of being subjected to it and the fact of perpetrating it.



## I am me, you are you, we are equals

Did you know that there are many different ways to be a child? Have you heard people say that certain colours, certain clothes, certain games or even certain emotions are just for girls or just for boys? Do you think that's true?

**Each colour is beautiful and different, and you're allowed to like them all and wear them all.** You can choose the clothes you wear because you think they are nice, but also because they make you feel good.

→ **Ask your child to talk about their favourite clothes and colours.**

**Did you know that everyone - adults and children - experience the same emotions:** anger, fear, sadness and happiness? 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.

→ **Ask your child to talk about their emotions at different times of the day, and talk about your own emotions, too.**



Did you know that whoever you are, you can become whatever you want? A teacher, a police officer, a chef, a scientist, a ballet dancer, a professional athlete or a lawyer. You can choose the profession that interests you the most. **Every child can be intelligent, strong, excited, emotional, noisy, creative and brave.**

→ **Ask your child to talk about their qualities and accomplishments and point out their strengths.**

→ **Talk with your child about chores done around the house.** Show them that each person does their share of the household chores, keeping things clean and tidy, and taking care of the children.



What you like to do, wear, eat, how you feel in your heart and how you express yourself... all of these things make you who you are. **Nobody else can choose who you are or what you can do. Only you!**



# Self-knowledge

→ Draw something you like doing

→ Draw something you are good at

Did you know that there's **nobody else like you**?

**You have lots of things in common with the other kids, and also lots of things that are different.**

**There are things you like, but that other kids don't like.** There are things other kids like, but that you don't like.



→ Tell me about you. Do you like playing in the park? Eating vegetables? Playing with bugs? Swimming in a pool?

→ Tell me about a kid who doesn't like the same things as you. The kids are all different, they all have qualities and strengths.

*What I like best about you is...*  
*What I like doing with you is...*

**There are things you can do easily. We call that having strengths. There are also things you find less easy to do,** things that you must take the time to learn how to do. You can rely on the people you like to help you accomplish something that you find more difficult. It is also possible that someone else will ask for your help to do something you are good at!

→ At daycare, who do you ask for help when you need it? And who asks you for help? How about at home?



## Diversifying my activities

Have you ever put together a puzzle? Puzzle pieces often look alike, but each is unique. When you put all the pieces together, it creates a beautiful picture. But that picture would be very different if pieces were missing.

The same goes for a group of people. They have a lot in common, and they're all unique. They may be interested in the same activities, the same toys. They may all play together. They may also like things that others don't.

For example, a child could be the only person in the class who loves doing puzzles! Or, a child could play ball with friends who like to play ball, and then sit down to draw pictures with different friends who like drawing.

- ➔ **What do you like to do alone?**
- What do you like to do with your friends?**

Maybe you've never tried the activities I've just mentioned because you thought you couldn't do them. **Remember, you need to try something first to know if you like it or not.** Take food, for example.



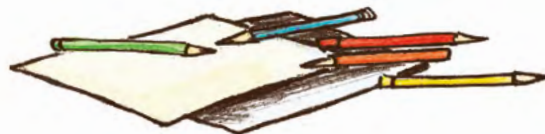
When you see a new food on your plate, you need to taste it to see if you like it or not. The same goes for activities! The more new things you try, the more you will be able to say "I like this!" or "No, I don't like that game."





## Activity

- Draw a heart around the activities you enjoy.
- Draw a circle around the activities you hadn't thought of and would like to try.





→ Colour in the Marvin who likes to play soccer,  
and the one who likes to play music.





# Celebrating diversity

→ **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 a bit like nature doing a magic trick!

→ **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.

Just like children! **You are different from your friend. Your friend is different from you. You each have your own colour.**

→ **Have you noticed that there are many different people around you, and that each of them is unique?**

Your family, your friends, the people you see at the park, at the store or when you're taking a walk...

All these people have different skin colours. They weren't all born in the same country and they don't all speak the same language. They are not the same age, and their families are not all the same.

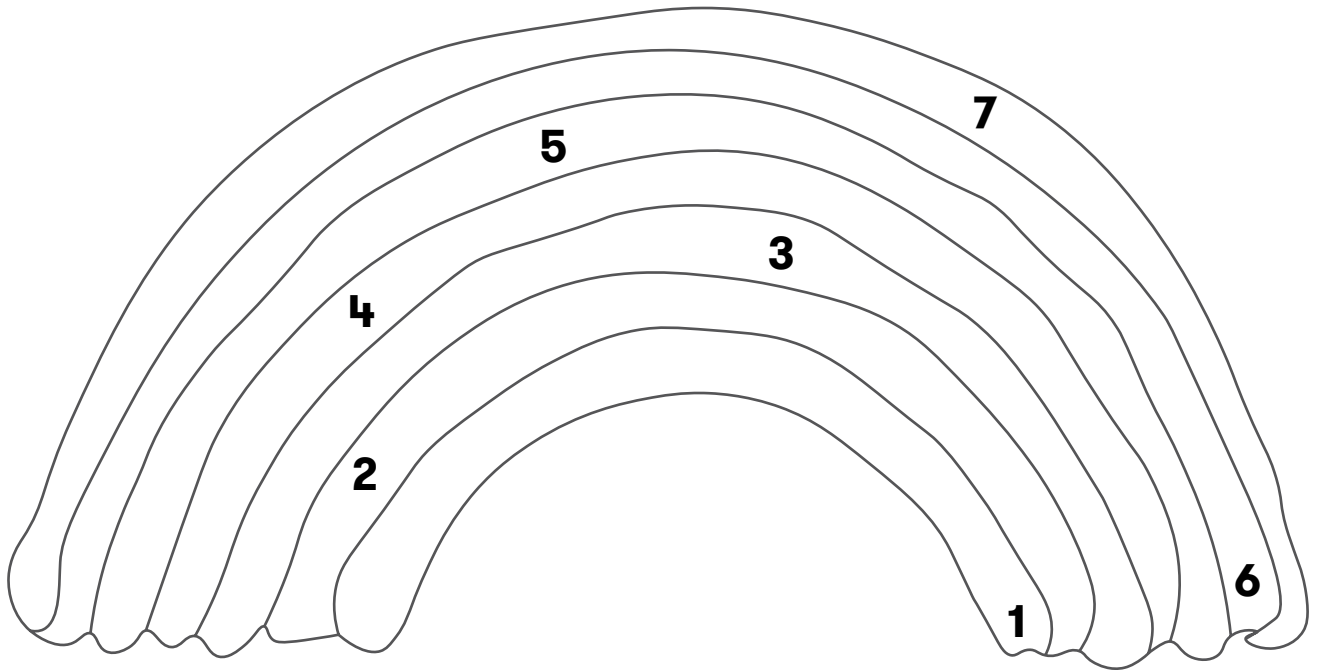
All these people around you have families, people they love and who love them. They have dreams. They also all need to eat, sleep, have fun, be safe and be loved. All of these people around you have a name and are human beings like you...



**We are all unique and that's what makes each person different! If we were all the same, it wouldn't be as much fun, just like the rainbow!**





→ Add colour to this rainbow by following these numbers:



-  **1** Violet
-  **2** Indigo
-  **3** Blue
-  **4** Green
-  **5** Yellow
-  **6** Orange
-  **7** Red

**Psst!!!**

You can also decide to use the colours you like and make a rainbow with your own colours!





To continue promoting egalitarian role models to a child, we invite you to visit [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org) to find the books **You as me** and **Marvin disappeared**. These books are also available in bookstores across Quebec and most municipal libraries.



## You as me

An all-cardboard picture book for toddlers aged 0 to 2.

To view the PDF version →



## Marvin disappeared

An album for children aged 2 to 5.

To view the PDF version →



For more discussion prompts after reading the album →

or visit [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)





**Clues about sexual  
violence and self  
protection skills**



## What signs of danger and self-protection skills should children be aware of?

But first: true or false?

1

To qualify as sexual violence, there must be physical contact.

True

False

2

The child victim of sexual violence does not know the abuser.

3

To improve young children's knowledge and self-protection skills, it's important to use simple, concrete vocabulary and to repeat key concepts several times.

Answers: 1- False 2- False 3- True

Notions of intimacy form the basis of many social skills programs. Talking about intimacy helps children recognize different interpersonal relationships, identify their personal space (the bubble) and learn how to enforce it, what parts are intimate and what places are private. This is also part of sex education. However, it's important to be aware of the particularities of sexual violence so that we can tailor our prevention messages to young children.

For example, we need to recognize that **sexual violence doesn't always involve physical contact, so we need to keep in mind that children need to be able to spot ALL forms of sexual violence, including those that don't involve direct touching** (exhibitionism and voyeurism, incitement to touch, making sexually explicit material accessible, etc.). Messages should therefore not be limited to "Don't let anyone touch you."

It's also essential to **avoid overly abstract terms** such as "right," "safety," "freedom" or even "secrets" with the little ones, but rather to stick to naming unacceptable acts that are easy to detect and concrete (touching, showing, looking at genitals, kissing genitals, or watching videos that show genitals).

**The majority of alleged perpetrators of sexual offences are known to their victims. Many of these offenses are also committed in private homes. Yet many people tell young children to beware of the stranger in sunglasses in the park who invites a child to pet the little dog or take a piece of candy. These situations are highly unlikely and relate more to the prevention of kidnapping than sexual violence.**

That said, it's important to explain to young children the different types of relationships and acts that are permitted depending on the relationship with the child, as well as the acts that are never permitted regardless of the relationship. This can be done by talking about boundaries, the bubble and intimacy, and then the notion of the **trusted adult, who in addition to being someone with whom we're comfortable and who helps us in case of problem, is also someone who respects our bubble.**

Finally, beyond encouraging children to listen to their little voice and recognize situations in which they are comfortable or not, it's crucial to **practice assertiveness skills**, then teach them ways to protect themselves in this context, i.e. to walk away and find a trusted adult. This element is, in fact, a key concept in prevention messages.



## Discussion

### Interpersonal relationships

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

→ **Tell me what you like doing with your family.**



When we get older, we become interested in the other people around us. We like to spend time with kids our 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 inside. **That's friendship.**

→ **Tell me about your friends.**

**What do you like to do with your friends?**

Along with family and friendship, when we become an adolescent, and then an adult, we can feel a strong emotion for another person. Our heart, our head and our body want to be close to that person. **That's falling in love.** Remember, a grown-up can't fall in love with a kid.



Beyond family, friends and love, you're also in relationships with other people you see often and who take care of you. All these people like teaching you new things and taking care of you. **That's the affection of a grown-up.**

→ **Tell me about times when adults took care of you.**

**Examples: teachers in a daycare setting, a babysitter, a swimming coach, a dance instructor, a soccer coach, etc.**



# Boundaries

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."

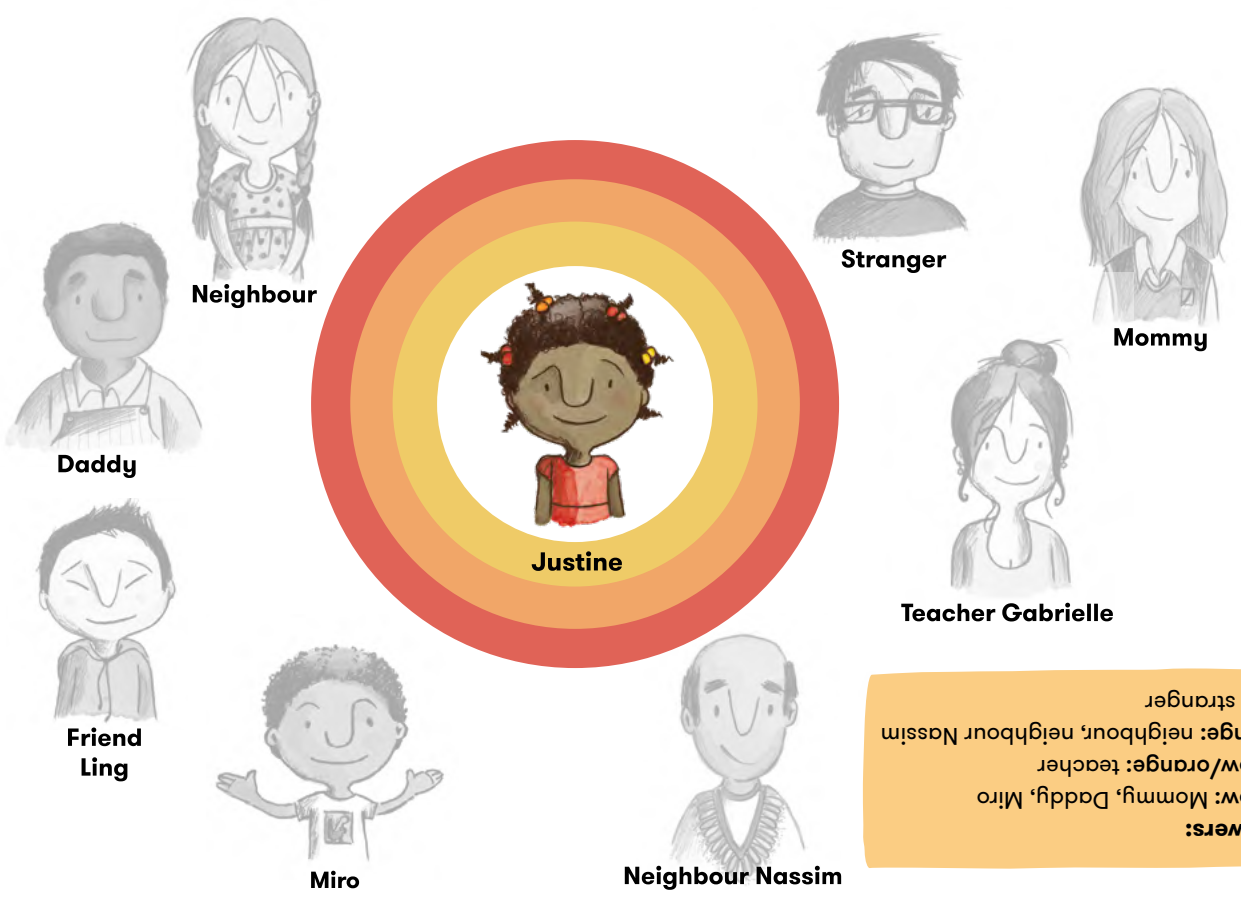
Did you know that we can do some things with people we know really well, but we can't do those things with people we don't know so well or with strangers?

- ➔ **For example, do you think we can hug someone we don't know? Is the neighbour allowed to tickle you? Can you hold hands with your teacher? Can you go somewhere alone with a stranger?**



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 the more someone is a stranger and far away from you, the further their circle is from yours?

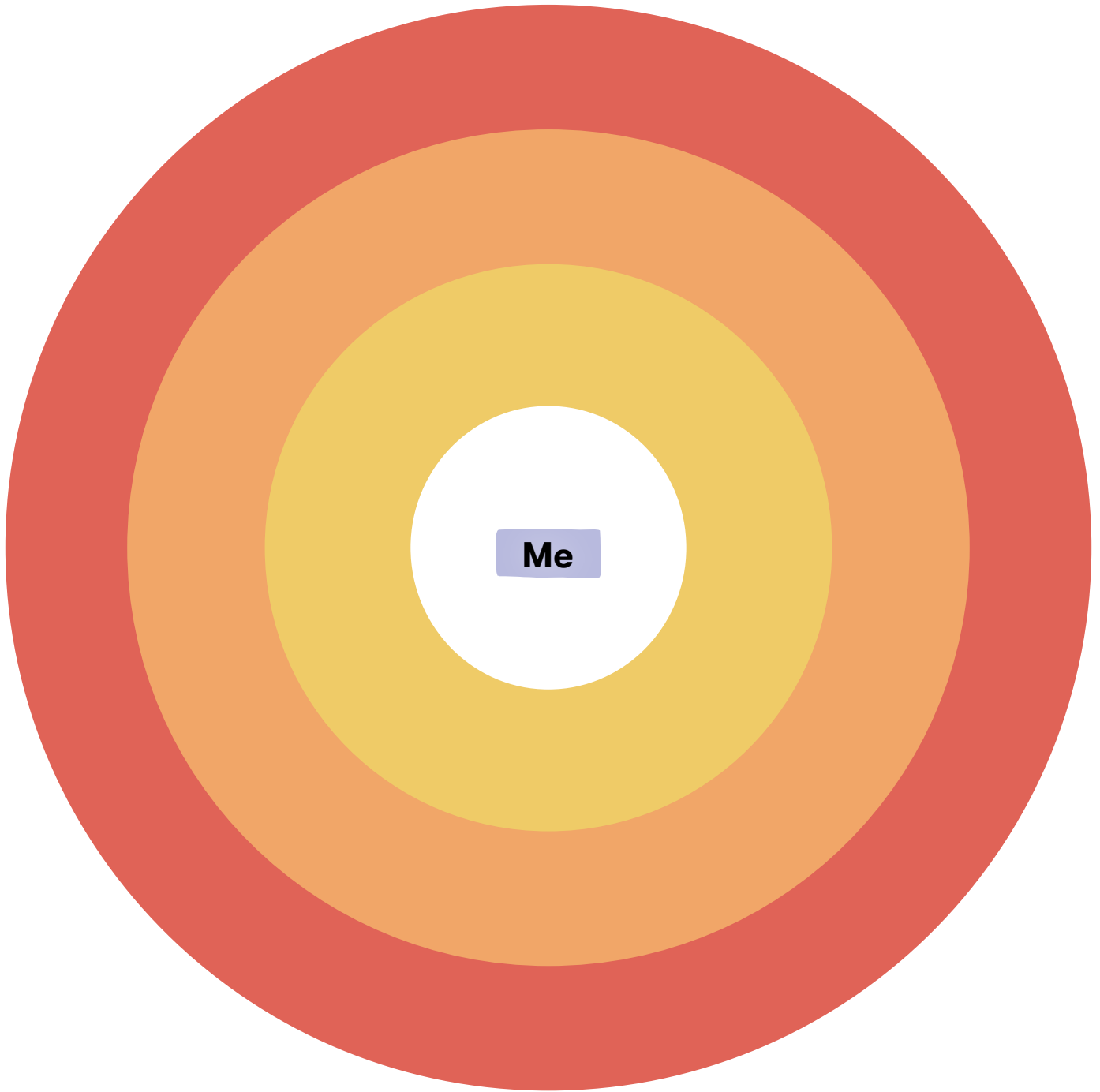
- ➔ **Colour in yellow the people Justine knows well and who can, with her permission, get a little closer to her bubble, in orange the people she knows a little and who are less close to her, and in red the people she doesn't know.**





## Activity

- Use photos of yourself and the people around you and paste them here to create your own Boundary Circle.





# Personal space and privacy

Some kids like to get hugs or be tickled, and others don't. There are days when we don't feel like being hugged or touched by others, and it's okay to say so in order to be left alone. There are also people we don't feel like hugging or kissing, and it's okay to refuse to approach them, even if they often ask us to.

- ➔ Are there times when you like to be cuddled?
- If so, when do you like to be cuddled?



Your personal space is the space around you that you need to feel good. Your personal space can be big or small; it depends on each person and changes from one moment to the next.

- ➔ Show me on the picture when people come into Milo's personal space.
- Does Milo have the right to refuse a hug from a friend even if the friend likes him a lot?
- Does he have the right to say no when an adult wants to kiss him? How do you know if someone really wants to be hugged?



Did you know we always need to knock on the door or ask if we can come in before going into the bathroom, the bedroom or any other place a person is changing their clothes? These places are private, and it's important to wait for the person to say it's OK to come in before going in. A private space is a space where you can be alone, with nobody else with you. When you wait before going into a private place, we call that "respecting privacy". **You can always ask to be left alone when you're getting changed or when you're going to the bathroom. Your genitals are private.**



# Activity

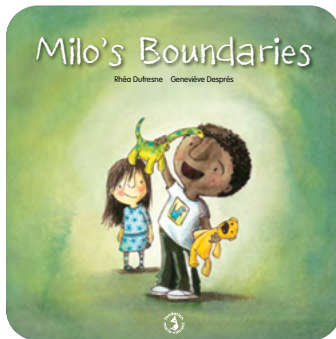
→ Find the five differences between these two images.



**Answers:**  
1. Stuffed bunny 2. Pillow color 3. Pattern on the lilac blanket 4. Mattress that allows for/intrudes personal space 5. How Marvin feels when his bubble is respected/not respected



To continue exploring the notions of the bubble and intimacy with a child, we suggest you visit [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org) to find the book *Milo's Boundaries* in electronic and audio versions. The book is also available in bookstores across Quebec and most municipal libraries.



## Milo's Boundaries

An album for  
children aged 3 to 5.

To view the PDF version →



To view the  
animated version →



To view additional  
discussion prompts  
after reading  
the album →



or visit [marie-vincent.org](http://marie-vincent.org)



# Self-affirmation

→ What does it mean to self-affirm?

Self-affirming means being able to tell other people what you like and don't like. It also means deciding what you want and don't want.



→ Tell me about some times when, like Justine, you can self-affirm.

**For example:**

When someone pushes you



When someone hurts you



When someone laughs at you



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

**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 eye
- Fill your lungs, speak loudly and slowly so the person understands your message

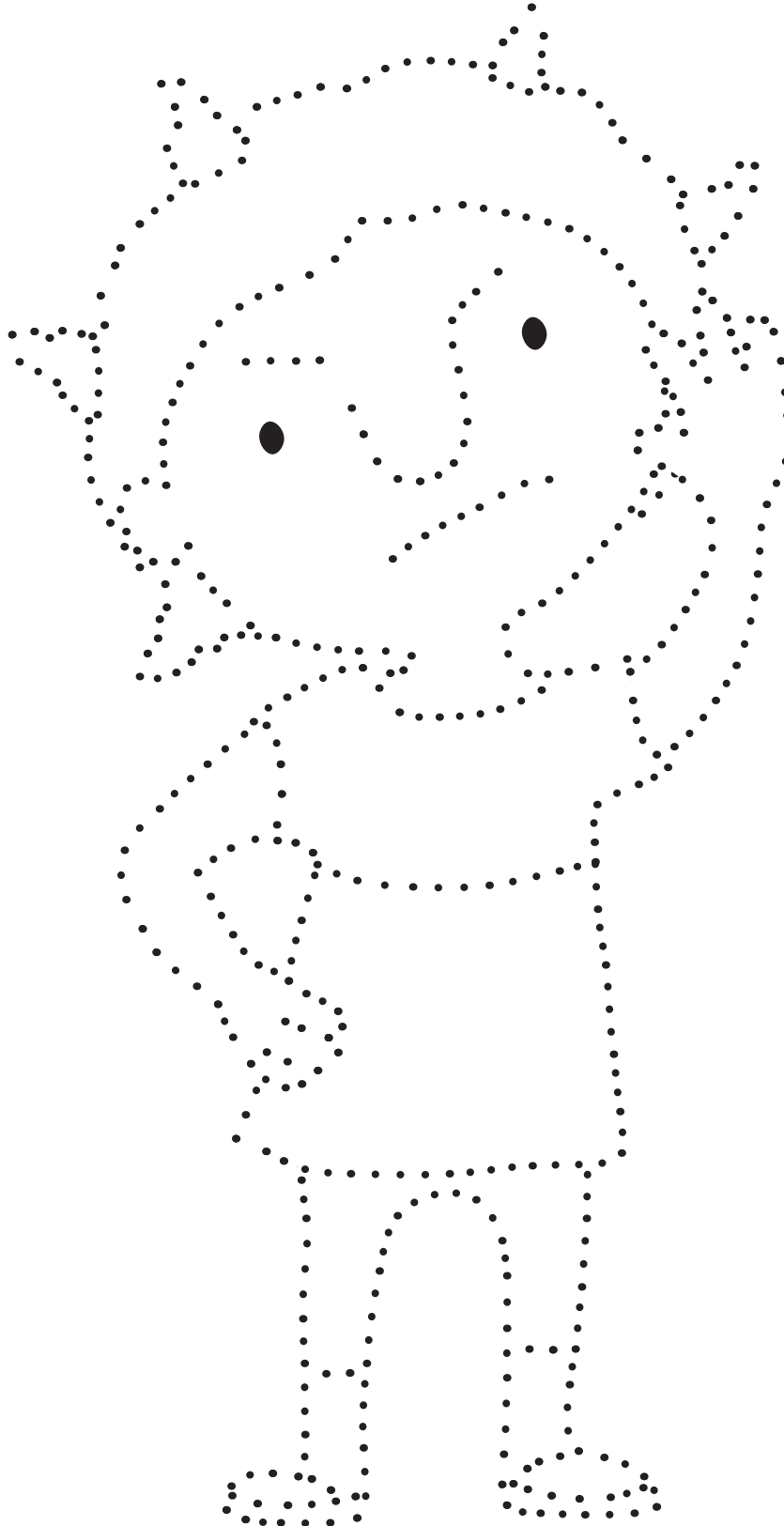
→ We're going to practise self-affirming together. Let's get up and practise the following sentences:

**Back off! You're bothering me!;**  
**Stop! I don't like that!;**  
**No! I don't want to play that game!**





- Help Justine assert herself by connecting the dots. This will enable her to stand up and say what she doesn't like.





## Song

### Song about emotional normalization

On the tune of *If You're Happy And You Know It*

If you're scared and you know it, cover your eyes

If you're scared and you know it, cover your eyes

If you're scared and you know it, then your face will surely show it

If you're scared and you know it, cover your eyes

If you're angry and you know it, stomp your feet

If you're angry and you know it, stomp your feet

If you're angry and you know it, then your face will surely show it

If you're angry and you know it, stomp your feet

If you're sad and you know it, say "Boo hoo!" (Boo hoo!)

If you're sad and you know it, say "Boo hoo!" (Boo hoo!)

If you're sad and you know it, then your face will surely show it

If you're sad and you know it, say "Boo hoo!" (Boo hoo!)

If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hurray!" (Hurray!)

If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hurray!" (Hurray!)

If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it

If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hurray!" (Hurray!)

All emotions are important and OK

Do you know you've got the right to feel that way?

Happy, scared, angry and sad

None of these feelings are bad

All emotions are important and OK





# Listening to your head, your heart and your body

**Your head, your heart and your body send you messages all day long.** It is very important for you to listen to what your head, your heart and your body are telling you, and that you trust them.



**Some acts bring sun into our hearts and our bodies.** They make us feel calm, happy, joyful, comforted, and so on. **These acts also often bring sun into our thoughts,** like when we say in our heads, “I feel good,” “I want to stay here,” “My heart is happy,” and so on.



➔ **Tell me about acts that make you feel good in your heart, in your head and in your body**

Use examples from situations at home, in the extended family or in everyday life.

**There are acts that bring clouds into our hearts and our bodies,** like when we feel angry, sad or scared. **These acts often bring clouds into our thoughts,** too, like when we say in our heads, “I don’t like that,” “I want to leave,” “My heart is angry,” and so on.



➔ **Tell me about acts that make you feel BAD in your heart, in your head or in your body.**

Use examples from situations at home, in the extended family or in everyday life.

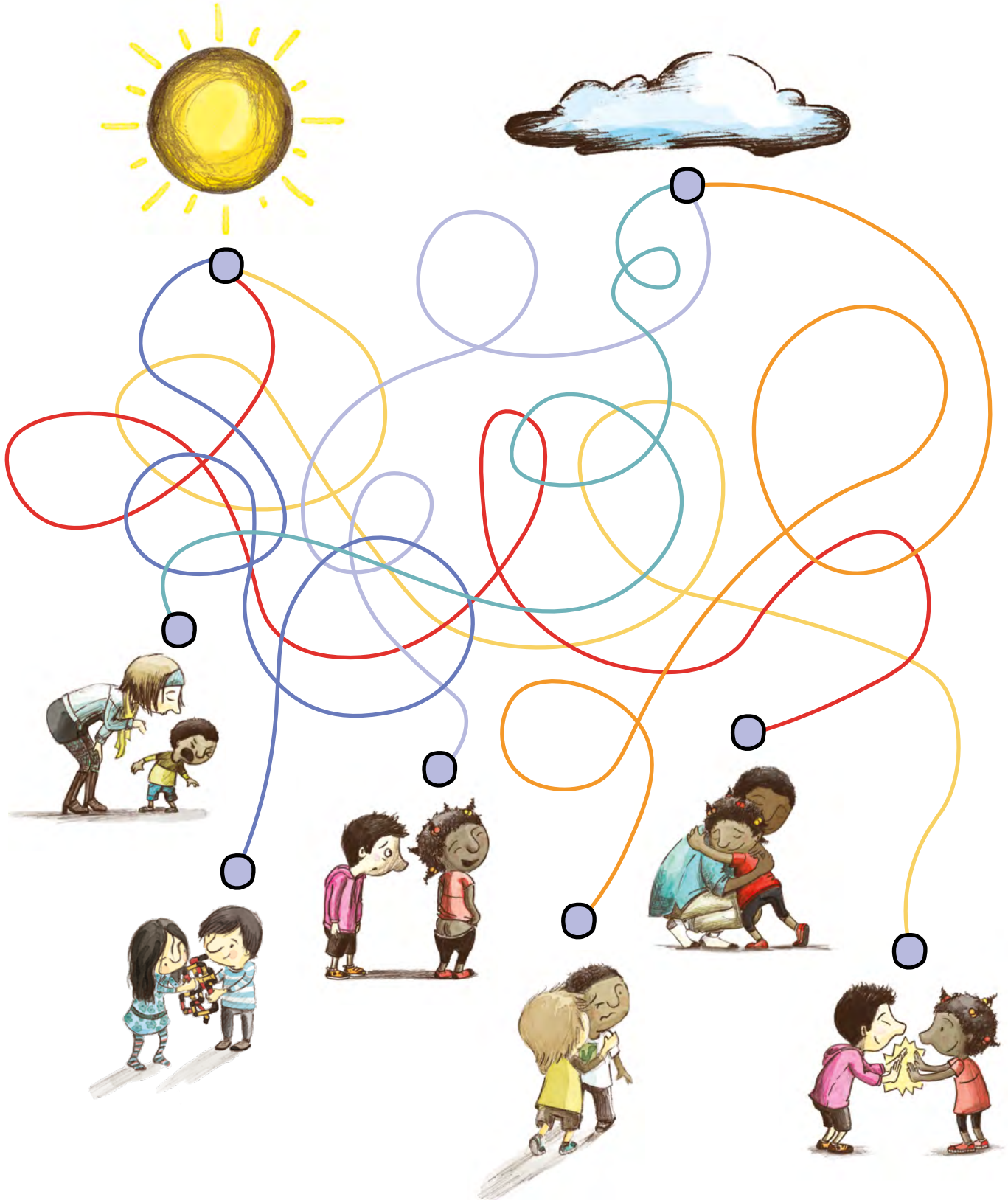
Trust yourself. If an act brings clouds into your heart, your head or your body, it’s because something’s not right, and you need to self-affirm and say:

**“Stop it, I don’t want this!”**



## Activity

➔ From the images below, follow the coloured lines with your finger to see if it puts sunshine in the children's bodies and hearts or if it puts clouds in their bodies and hearts instead.





## Risky situations

→ Did you know that there are some acts grown-ups are not allowed to do to children? What are they?

It is very important for you to remember that:



**Nobody** is allowed to **touch** your private parts



**Nobody** is allowed to **look** at your private parts

**Nobody** is allowed to **put their mouth** on your private parts



**Nobody** is allowed to **take pictures** of your private parts



**Nobody** is allowed to **ask you** to touch, look at, put your mouth 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

The **only** times when 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 or give you medicine



## Discussion

### Adults

### you trust



A trusted adult is someone **you feel good with**. It's someone you **like seeing**, who **makes you smile and who can help you when you have problems**. It's also someone who **respects your personal space**.

The **personal space** is the space around you that you need to feel good. Your personal space can be big or small, it depends on the person.

#### 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 OK," "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 with a person you love.

#### → Tell me about the trusted adults in your life.

I want you to know that I am always here for you, to listen when you want to talk, **to help when you have a problem, and to answer your questions**. I am one of your trusted adults. You can also talk to **other people**.

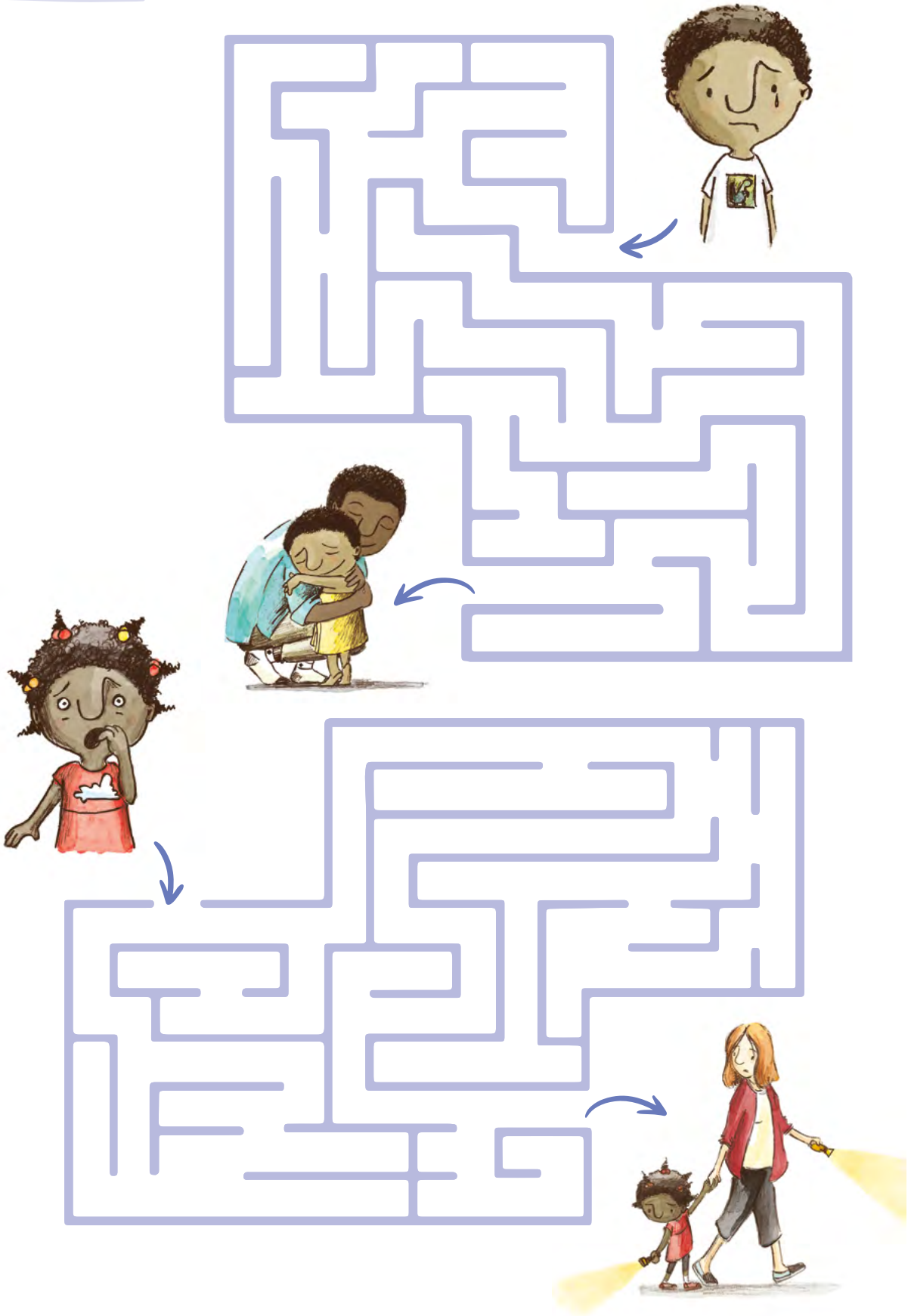
#### → Can you name other trusted adults, apart from your parents or family members?

Examples: police officer, nurse, teacher, etc.





→ Help Justine and Miro find their 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

### 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 a trusted 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.



➔ **Practise each step with your child to help them integrate the self-protection skills.**



→ Help Miro remember, in the right order, the three steps to protect himself.

|          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> |
|----------|----------|----------|





**Real names for**

**sexual parts and the**

**concept of privacy**



## **The Importance of Using Real Words to Talk About Sexual or Intimate Body Parts**

As we've seen, curiosity about the human body is a natural part of children's development. Therefore it's important to answer their questions on the subject and help them learn about their bodies and the different parts that make them up. But when the time comes to talk to them about genitals, all too often, adults avoid the subject or use nicknames rather than the real terms. Adults also tend to associate these words with "toilet words" or even "undesirable" words.

These ways of doing things maintain mystery and taboo about genitals and make children understand that they create discomfort in adults by asking questions about them. Yet this knowledge is essential for the child.

**The real words will give the child a precise vocabulary and more power, among other things, to disclose a situation of sexual violence, making their words clearer and therefore increasing their impact. In fact, it seems that child abusers are less likely to turn to those who know more about the subject since it would then be more likely that they would talk to adults about it. The use of real words is, therefore, a major asset for the child in terms of protection, but also a means of seeking help if needed and disclosing a situation of sexual violence more clearly. It will then be easier for the adults around them to detect such situations, understand them, and provide assistance. Using the right vocabulary from the earliest age is a must!**

Children also need to understand the purpose of different body parts. No one is embarrassed to teach children that their noses are used, among other things, to smell odours or breathe. The same should apply to genitals. The child needs to understand that genitals are used for urination (peeing), defecation (pooping), as well as common behaviours (such as sitting up) and that for adults, they also contribute to reproduction as well as feeding newborns.

Finally, toddlers gradually acquire the ability to wash themselves and wipe themselves on the toilet. This skill can be reinforced by teaching children that certain parts of their bodies are more fragile and precious (the genitals) and that, for this reason, they need to be well cared for by washing them properly.

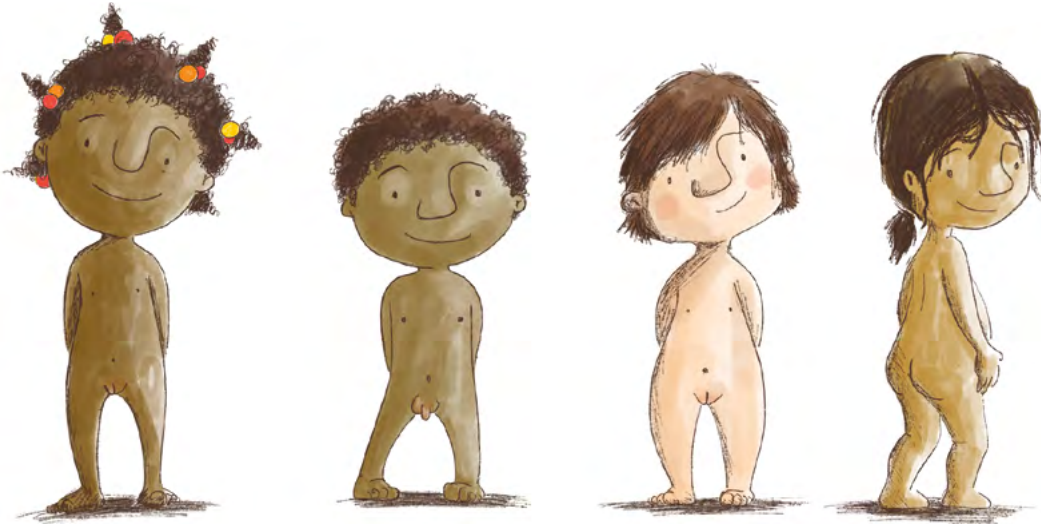
It's therefore important to name genitals as they are at every appropriate moment (e.g. diaper change, bathing, grooming, dressing, etc.) right from the child's birth.

#### **Please consider**

For personal reasons, some people may find it too uncomfortable to use the real words "sexual parts," even if they understand their purpose. In such cases, we suggest using at least the words "genitals" (specifying to children that these are the parts of the body under the underwear or bathing suit).



# Anatomy



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

→ **Ask your child to name various body parts: head (hair, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc.), arms, hands, legs, feet, etc.**

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

**These are the parts of your body that are covered by your underwear or your bathing suit.**

Lots of kids find it funny to talk about private parts, but **they are body parts like any other!** All of the private parts are different. No two are alike, just as no two noses are the same.

The right words to name private parts are: **buttocks, vulva, penis, testicles, breasts and nipples.**

**What are your private parts for?**

→ **Answer level 1**

Your vulva or your penis let you go pee. Your buttocks help you go poo, but also to sit down.

**Answer level 2**

Your private parts produce little cells, and in grown-ups, those cells help them make babies.



Curiosity is normal. Children want to understand how different bodies are made. It's also normal to discover your own body and realize that touching the private parts feels good. Remember that the private parts are precious and private. Your body belongs to you, and the same goes for other people's bodies.



→ Colour in this Marvin doctor.



The words doctors use to name genitals are buttocks, vulva, penis, testicles, breasts and nipples.



## Discussion

# Hygiene

It is important to wash **all the parts of your body**, especially the ones that we keep warm and that are warm.

→ **Can you tell me where your hair is, your underarms, behind your ears, your neck, your belly button, your vulva/your penis, your buttocks, the skin between your fingers, the skin between your toes.**

**Some parts of the body, such as the private 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. It's also important to change your underwear regularly.

Did you know that, even if someone takes a bath with you, **you are always in charge of washing your body**? And the other person is in charge of washing **their** body?

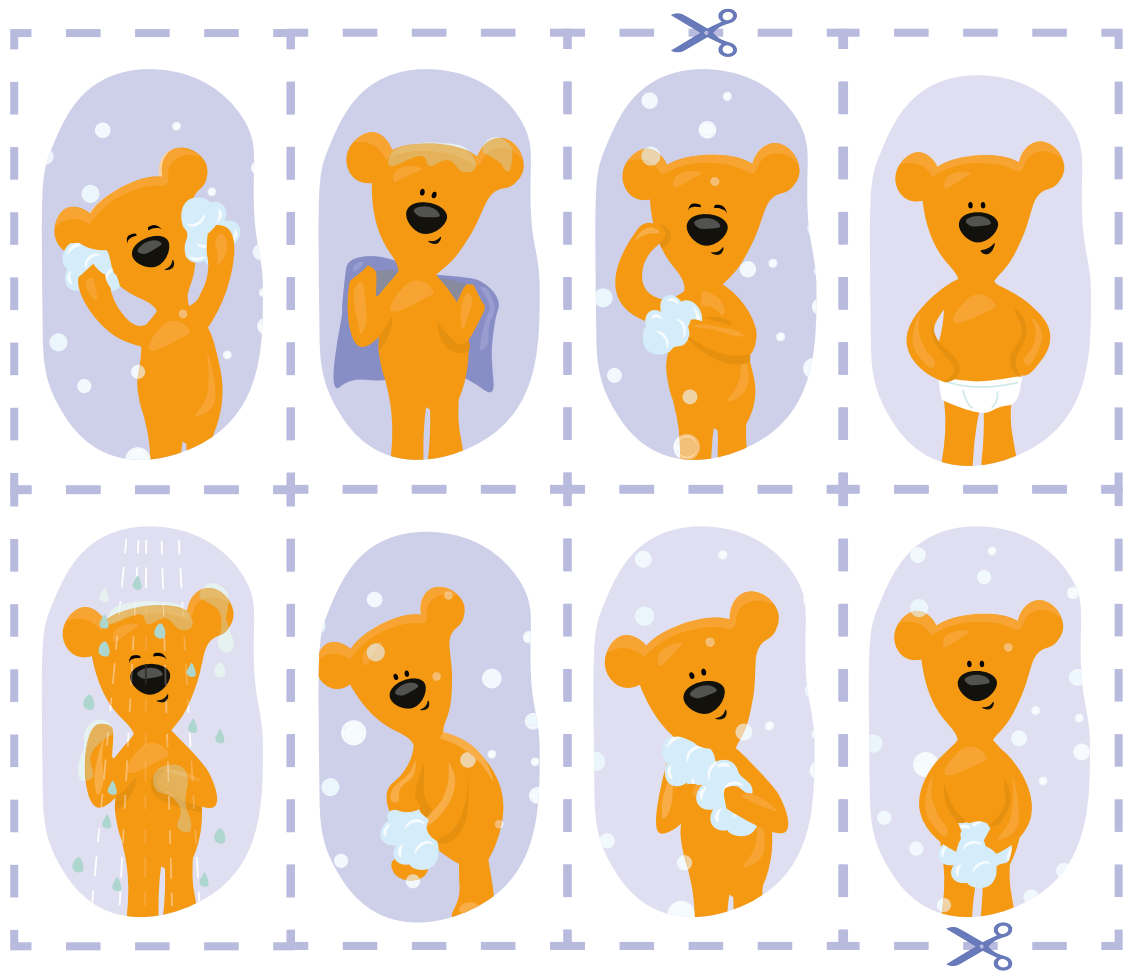


→ **Help Marvin become the champion at washing himself by arranging the different steps in order.**

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Wash the face and behind the ears         | Wash the neck, chest, and belly button | Wash the arms, underarms, hands, and between the fingers | Wash the penis or vulva and the buttocks |
| Wash the legs, feet, and between the toes | Rinse well everywhere                  | Dry the whole body well                                  | Put on clean underwear                   |



→ Cut out the pictures on the dotted lines to put them in the right order on the previous page.







# Congratulations!

---

Child's name

## Champion of washing alone

Date: \_\_\_\_\_







## Body

## development



**Your body is changing and will keep changing all your life.**

Every person you know started out as a baby. When people grow, they become children, then teenagers. Later, they become adults, and then, seniors.

➔ **Show me on the picture how you compare to Justine, who is growing.**

**When we are very young,** our body can look quite similar to the bodies of other children, except sometimes for the private parts.

**When we grow,** all the parts of our bodies grow too, and that's normal.

**When we become adults,** our bodies no longer grow, but they keep changing over time.



## Discussion

### Body

### diversity



Every body is different. People come in all heights, shapes, and skin colours. Some people wear eyeglasses, some have a deep voice and some have curly hair. Others have small feet, long hair, and need help moving around, requiring the use of a wheelchair or a cane, for instance.

**Each person is unique! It's normal, and it's wonderful!**

→ **Show me on the picture what things are similar and what things are different between the characters.**



**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. You use it to move around, eat, sleep, play, love! Your body doesn't need to be the same as other bodies. It is what it is -- and that's what makes it unique and special.

**It's normal to be curious about your body** and the bodies of others, to be intrigued by how it changes as time goes by. Remember, though, that you should never make fun of someone else's body.

→ **Encourage your child to ask questions about the human body.**



**Turn to page 20 of this handbook to remind yourself of the attitudes to adopt when answering children's questions about sexuality.**



**Emotions and**

**Thoughts, including**

**self-esteem**



**What am I teaching when I teach a child to recognize and express emotions?**

**Do you have any children in your family between the ages of 1 and 3?**



**How are you feeling, Marvin?**

**Intended for children aged 1 to 3.**

To view the PDF version →



The teaching of emotions is part of many programs targeting toddlers, and with good reason, since this essential learning will be used in many areas throughout life. The prevention of sexual violence is no exception.

**In fact, when children learn to recognize their emotions, they become more aware of what they are feeling and can better identify the alarm signals their bodies send them in certain unpleasant situations. Through their emotional experiences, they also become better at identifying what they like or dislike and, thus, better at identifying their limits.**

In addition, when children learn to express their emotions clearly in words rather than behaviour, their assertiveness skills and self-esteem are enhanced. This learning process is made possible by the normalization and legitimization of emotions. For example, we teach children that all human beings experience these emotions regardless of age, gender, etc. We demonstrate that all emotions are valid and that everyone has the right to feel, express and affirm them on a daily basis.

All this learning helps develop the basic skills that will later form the notion of consent, including sexual consent, and that will help ensure healthier, egalitarian and violence-free relationships.



# Basic

# emotions



Did you know that **everyone feels emotions** in their hearts?

- ➔ **Show me where your heart is.**
- ➔ **Which emotions can you name?**
- ➔ **How do the children in this picture feel, and why do they feel that way?**

Have you noticed there are pleasant 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”.

All kids have emotions, and they express them using words or with their bodies.

**When you are sad**, you might cry, feel a lump in your throat, lean forward and feel heavy, curl up in a ball, and want to be alone. **When you are angry**, you might growl, frown, glare, clench your teeth, stamp your feet, make fists, turn red. **When you are scared**, you might jump, freeze, be glad that there are other people around, feel hot, have a stomach ache, want to hide, get sweaty palms, shiver. **When you are happy**, you might feel good or excited and want to jump around.





→ Connect children who are experiencing the same emotion (joy, anger, fear, sadness)





## Activity

→ In this image, find :

- A superhero
- A sad child
- A panda
- A child who doesn't like to be hugged
- A doll
- A green block
- Children who have joy in their hearts







# Managing emotions

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:**

**1 Breathing** gently, To help, you can imagine that you're smelling a flower, and then that you're blowing out a candle.

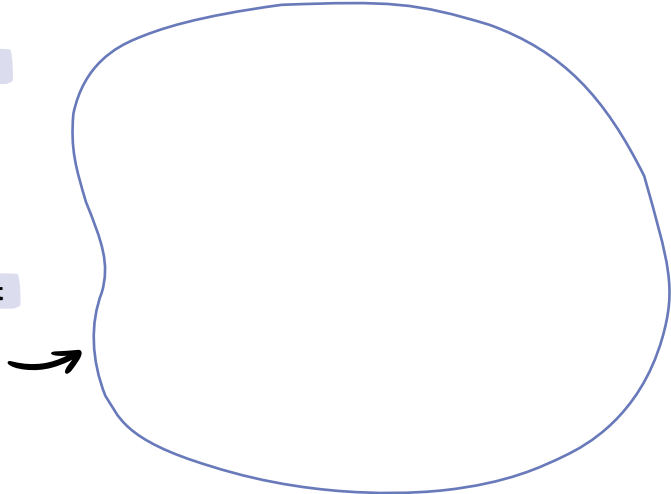


→ Invite your child to breathe in slowly and breathe out slowly, until they feel calmer...

**2 Changing your mood** by making movements or doing activities that feel good.

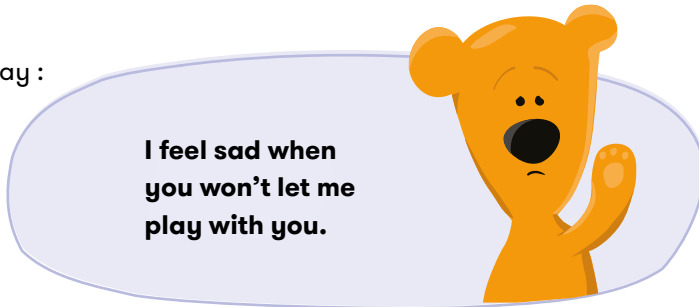
→ Tell me about the hobbies that help you calm down or come out of a bad mood. For example, drawing, playing with clay, playing outside, jumping in place, etc.

→ Draw an activity you could choose next time to feel better when you have a cloud in your heart.



**3 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.

For example, you could say :





## Normalizing emotions

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.

→ **Tell me about the last time you were angry.**

Did you know that **you're allowed to cry when you're sad**? It doesn't mean you're a baby. Everyone feels sad from time to time— girls and boys, adults and kids.

→ **Tell me about the last time you were sad.**

Did you know that **you're allowed to be scared**? It doesn't mean you're not brave. Everyone feels afraid— girls and boys, adults and kids.

→ **Tell me about the last time you were scared.**

Did you know that **every person around you has a heart full of emotions**? Did you know that emotions are changing all the time? They show up, stay for a moment and leave depending on what happens during your day.

→ **How did you feel in your heart this morning? And now?**





## Song

### Emotion

### recognition song

To the tune of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*

My head, my heart and body

They send messages to me

They talk about emotions

I've got to pay attention

**Sadness, joy, anger and fear**

**All of these each day I feel**

When I'm sad I want to cry

I can feel my throat so tight

I feel everything is wrong

I need a hug, big and strong

**Sadness, joy, anger and fear**

**All of these each day I feel**

When I'm angry I turn red

There's a storm inside my head

I feel everyone is mean

I need to be heard and seen

**Sadness, joy, anger and fear**

**All of these each day I feel**

When I'm scared my tummy aches

My whole body starts to shake

I feel my heart beating fast

I need to feel safe at last

**Sadness, joy, anger and fear**

**All of these each day I feel**

When I'm cheerful and jolly

I am full of energy

In my heart there's butterflies

And a sparkle in my eyes

**Sadness, joy, anger and fear**

**All of these each day I feel**





→ This Marvin is feeling really good.  
Colour him!





# Activity

→ Colour in the Marvin's that are flying away!

