



Teaching your kids to say 'NO'

By Michelle Derrig

As parents, we spend an enormous amount of time and effort trying to get our kids to say 'yes'. Yes to eating veggies, yes to bedtime, yes to putting away toys, yes to cleaning teeth, yes to a multitude of tasks throughout each and every day. On the other hand, teaching our kids to say 'no' isn't something that we normally spend much time encouraging.

Yet when it comes to keeping our kids safe, it is important that we take the time to help develop our children's response to unsafe situations, by teaching them how to say 'NO' not only to strangers but also to family, friends and acquaintances.

Depending on the situation and the age and maturity of your child, there are different ways you can help develop this skill.

Responding to Strangers

The most basic response is to teach your child to shout a big 'NO' or 'STOP'. This response is easy for very young children to learn and involves shouting or screaming the words, making as much noise as possible and trying to get away from the stranger.



Another valuable response is to teach them a sentence like 'No – you are not my mum/dad' or 'HELP – Stranger'. This detail will bring much more attention to a screaming child in a public area and alerts others to the fact that they are not just witnessing a child throwing a tantrum.

Responding to someone known to them

Teaching your child to respond to inappropriate behaviour by someone known to them, can be a little more complicated. To help our children deal with these tricky situations, we want to give them different options to extricate themselves. Whilst we can still encourage them to shout a big 'no' and to physically run from the situation, some other options include:

- Teaching them a sentence like *'Please don't do that I don't like it'* or *'Can you stop that it makes me feel uncomfortable'*. This can be useful in the earlier stages of abuse, where the behaviour may be very subtle, but still unwelcome.
- Giving children permission to make-up an excuse such as *'I'm busting to go to the toilet'* or *'I think I can hear Mum calling'* to enable them to leave a space and seek out others.
- Developing a password or message that older children could text/call on their mobile phone if feeling unsafe or requiring help.

Finally, keep in mind that these responses should always be age appropriate, should be practised

aloud where possible and should be revisited as your child grows and matures.

www.onlyforme.com.au

