

### **Sexual Behavior Rules - Variation 1**

1. It is **not ok** to show your private parts to other people.
2. It is **not ok** to look at other people's private parts.
3. It is **not ok** to touch other people's private parts.
4. It is **ok** to touch your private parts as long as its in private and does not take too much time.
5. It is **not ok** to use sexual language or make other people uncomfortable with your sexual behavior.

### **Sexual Behavior Rules – Variation 2**

1. It is **not ok** to show your private parts to other people and it is **not ok** to look at other people's private parts.
2. It is **not ok** to touch other people's private parts.
3. It is **not ok** for other people to touch your private parts.
4. It is **ok** to touch your own private parts in private as long as you do not hurt your skin and, as long as it does not take too much time.
5. It is **not ok** to use sexual language or make other people uncomfortable with your sexual behavior.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH SEXUAL BEHAVIOR  
PROBLEMS**  
(Ages 6-12)

1. Close supervision is important when the child is playing with other children. Check on them frequently to make sure you know where they are and what they are doing. Do not allow them to play in a room with the door closed.
2. It is preferable that the child not bathe or sleep in the same bed with other children. Also, if possible, the child should sleep in a room alone.
3. The child should not be given any opportunities for assuming a role of authority over younger or more vulnerable children.
4. Sexually explicit materials should not be available in the home.
5. The adults should enforce privacy in their bedroom and in the bathrooms. There should be established rules about entering the adults' (i.e., knock before entering) bedroom. If engaging in sexual activity, the adults should take steps to ensure that children cannot come in or observe.
6. The adults should use appropriate modesty in the child's presence. There should be no nudity, partial nudity, or explicit displays of sexual behavior by either parent or other adults in front of the child. It is, however, appropriate for adults to show normal affection to each other and the children.
7. The child should not be permitted to sleep or bathe with the parent.
8. The adults should communicate clear rules and expectations about privacy and appropriate sexual behavior to the child. It is important that all members of the family know and observe these rules.

Bonner, B.L., Walker, C.E., & Berliner, L. (1994). Children with sexual behavior problems. Research project funded by National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, HHS.

## TURTLE TECHNIQUE

1. **Wait. Stop.**
2. **Go in your shell like a turtle.**
3. **Think.**
4. **Do something.**

### Turtle Technique Story

There once was a turtle named Jamie who lived in a pond with her family and a bunch of other turtles. She liked to swim and play with her friends. She also liked to play with her friends. She especially liked to play with her two best friends, Susie and Carol. In this pond, everyone had a special bookbag where they kept their own belongings, things that only belonged to them. One day, Jamie saw that Carol was away from her special place and that Carol had a beautiful pencil sticking out of her bookbag. She wanted to see it up close and she really wanted to have a pencil just like that one. She started to go over to the bag and she was going to take the pencil. Just before she got there, she felt she better **Stop** and **Wait** a second. She then went **inside her shell**, where she knew it would be safe to relax. She then spent a few moments **thinking**:

- Is what I'm thinking of doing OK?
  - She decided that it was not OK because it would be breaking a rule that she should not steal other people's things.
- What will happen if I do this?
  - She thought about how it might make Carol feel bad if she didn't have her pencil anymore and that she might get herself in trouble if she did this.
- What could she do instead?
  - She thought that maybe she could go and play jump-rope with Susie, or maybe go swimming in her favorite part of the pool.
- **So . . . Jamie decided that what she was going to do instead was to go and find Susie to play jump-rope, and she went off to play.**

This story works best when using a puppet that has a head that can be pulled into its shell. They can practice the following steps:

### 1. **Wait-Stop**

- Have the child imagine a stop sign.
- This is the signal to stop what they are doing and ask themselves what they're feeling.
  - “Let us imagine a turtle (use puppet) is in a situation similar to one when she wants to take something that is not hers.”
- How does she think the turtle might be feeling?

### 2. **Go in your shell like a turtle.**

- Ask the child what turtles do when something bothers them.
- Explain:
  - “They go inside their shells where it is safe. Doing that makes it easier to relax and think.”
- Have the child pretend he/she is a turtle and practice going into his/her shell.
  - Demonstrate this with the puppet.
- Explain that while he/she is in the shell, he/she may relax some more by going limp like a bowl of spaghetti or a rag doll.
  - Have the children practice this, taking deep breaths to help them relax.

### 3. **Think**

- Tell the child:
  - “Ask yourself, is what I’m thinking about doing OK?”
  - “What will happen if I do this?”
  - “What could I do instead?”
- Explain that now that the turtle is relaxed, this is a good time to think about these things.
- Use the questions in relation to the situation that was described earlier for the **puppet turtle**.
- Ask the child to name some things the turtle could do instead, maybe some things to make the turtle feel better if they mentioned unpleasant feelings in the first step.
- Make sure that a few suggestions that might have negative consequences are given so there is an opportunity to talk about how some things might seem like a good idea at first but make us feel bad later or get us into trouble.
- Have the child pick something that the turtle can do instead of breaking a behavior rule.

### 4. **Do something:**

- Explain that now the turtle has picked something to do, he/she needs to go ahead and do it.

**WHEN CHILDREN'S SEXUAL BEHAVIORS RAISE CONCERN:  
SIGNALS FOR PARENTS AND COUNSELORS**

1. The child focuses on sexuality to a greater extent than on other aspects of his or her environment, and/or has more sexual knowledge than similar-aged children with similar backgrounds who live in the same area. A child's sexual interests should be in balance with his or her curiosity about, and exploration of, other aspects of his or her life.
2. The child has an ongoing compulsive interest in sexual, or sexually-related activities, and/or is more interested in engaging in sexual behaviors than in playing with friends, going to school, and doing other developmentally appropriate activities.
3. The child engages in sexual behaviors with those who are much older or younger. Most school-aged children engage in sexual behaviors with children within a year or so of their age. In general, the wider the age range between children engaging in sexual behaviors, the greater the concern.
4. The child continues to ask unfamiliar children, or children who are uninterested, to engage in sexual activities. Healthy and natural sexual play usually occurs between friends and playmates.
5. The child, or a group of children, bribes or emotionally and/or physically forces another child of any age into sexual behaviors.
6. The child exhibits confusion or distorted ideas about the rights of others in regard to sexual behaviors. The child may contend: "She wanted it" or "I can touch him if I want to".
7. The child tries to manipulate children or adults into touching his or her genitals or causes physical harm to his or her own or other's genitals.
8. Other children repeatedly complain about the child's sexual behaviors—especially when the child has already been spoken to by an adult.
9. The child continues to behave in sexual ways in front of adults who say "no", or the child does not seem to comprehend admonitions to curtail sexual behaviors in public places.
10. The child appears anxious, tense, angry, or fearful when sexual topics arise in his or her everyday life.
11. The child manifests a number of disturbing toileting behaviors; s/he plays with or smears feces, urinates outside of bathroom, uses excessive amounts of toilet paper, stuffs toilet bowls to overflow, sniffs or steals underwear.
12. The child's drawings depict genitals as the predominant feature.

13. The child manually stimulates or has oral or genital contact with animals.
14. The child has painful and/or continuous erections or vaginal discharge.

Johnson, T.C. (1991b, August/September). Understanding the sexual behaviors of young children. SIECUS Report, 8.

## **GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSING SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR WITH CHILDREN**

1. If you are going to talk with your child about sexuality, make certain that you have correct information. If you do not know the answer to a question, be honest with your child. You could look for the answer together in a book from the library.
2. Pay attention to your child's questions and answer the questions at the level he/she can comprehend. If your child is asking about how animals make babies, just talk about that. If they want to understand the entire reproductive cycle, get them books or diagrams and help them understand that process.
3. Remember how your parents discussed or did not discuss sexuality with you and decide whether you want to change how you talk to your child. If your child has not asked and is not asking questions about sexuality, make sure you are not somehow discouraging communication in this area.
4. If some children are not ready to discuss sexual behavior, let them know you will talk with them when they are ready. Let your child know that you will try again another time, and then remember to bring it up again later.
5. Find a time to bring up the topic of sexuality. For example, if you see a program on television or a movie with your child where a sexual issue is raised, state your agreement or disagreement with the way in which it is portrayed. Have age appropriate books on sexuality available for your children and read these books together.
6. It is recommended that parents use the generally accepted terms for body parts (breasts, penis, vagina, etc.), particularly with children ages 6 to 12.
7. When you discuss sexuality with your child, remember that your own sexual values will be conveyed to your child. If there is a difference between your attitudes about sexual behavior, how you act sexually, and what you want your child's sexual behavior and attitudes to be, this could cause your child to be confused.
8. A way to encourage communication about sexuality with children is to ask what the dirty jokes are that are going around their school. You may find that they are not much different than the jokes told when you were growing up. Another technique you might use is to ask about sexual slang words being used. This will give you an opportunity to clarify the accurate meaning of the words used and the jokes being told if your child is confused by them.

9. When your child uses a dirty word, you may want to ask what the word means. You may need to tell the child the actual meaning of the word. It is up to you if a child is allowed to use dirty words or slang. However, if parents use these words, it is very possible that children will imitate them.
10. It is important for children to know that changes will occur to their bodies during puberty before these changes begin to occur.
11. It is also important for children/adolescents to know about sexual intercourse, reproduction, and contraception before they become sexually active.
12. Children are more likely to engage in responsible sexual behavior if they have positive models, correct knowledge, and clear values. Children learn most of their values and attitudes by watching adults and peers.

Note: If parents or caretakers are having problems in their intimate relationships, these issues should not be discussed with the child nor should the child be used as a confidante. Children cannot help parents with adult sexual problems. This does not mean that if a child is aware of relationship difficulties the parent is having with a mate, that the child's questions should not be answered. However, the questions should be discussed only to the extent that they are helpful to answer the child's questions.

Adapted from Johnson, T.C. (1989). Human sexuality: Curriculum for parents and children in troubled families. Los Angeles, CA: Children's Institute International.