

INAPPROPRIATE SEXUALISED BEHAVIOUR (ISB) AMONG CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS OLD

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HOW TO USE THIS PACK

This pack offers an introductory resource to address ISB. It is intended for use by carers, parents or teachers. The resources are designed for use with children under 12, or young adolescents. It is hoped that those emotionally closest to the child will use these resources with them. However, if that input is not adequate, then the child can be referred to the Meadows team for a clinician to carry out further work.

The material is not prescriptive and is designed to be used discursively, in collaboration with the child and adapted to each child and their individual situation. Consider the child's developmental level, language skills and level of understanding in adapting the materials to meet their individual needs. You may need to find out vocabulary the child uses for different parts of the body and actions, but this may be best done combined with an educational approach. It is also important to consider whether the child has permission to speak with you about ISB. It is vital that the child feels at ease.

- Have they been told to speak to no one about it?
- Have they been told to deny it?
- Do they fear punishment if they speak to you?

Additional Support

If a child requires a higher level of intervention regarding ISB or trauma, please contact The Meadows Team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health for further consultation and guidance on referral.

IDENTIFYING ISB

The following section defines what sexual behaviour is expected for different age groups and what behaviour is atypical. Working with a child showing ISB is an area where adults must tread the narrow line of giving the child the opportunity to speak of any experiences of sexual abuse they may have had or that may be ongoing, whilst giving the message that the ISB is not acceptable. Finding out about the child's experience and giving them information about what is appropriate can be merged in this work.

SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: HEALTHY VS. INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

We all know that children pass through different stages of development as they grow, and that their awareness and curiosity about sexual matters change as they pass from infancy into childhood and then through puberty to adolescence.

Each child is an individual and will develop in his or her own way. However, there is generally an accepted range of behaviours linked to children's age and developmental stage. Sometimes these will involve some exploration with other children of a similar age. It can be difficult to tell the difference between age appropriate sexual exploration and warning signs of inappropriate or even harmful behaviour.

Occasionally, we may need to explain to children why we would prefer them not to continue with a particular behaviour. Sexualised behaviour by children should be dealt with simply, directly, and without emotional charge. When confronted with the behaviour, you should remain calm and state clearly that the particular behaviour which you describe is not acceptable. You might suggest alternative ways of expression. For example, you could use statements such as:

- 'We don't touch each other on the penis in this house. It's against the rules.'
- 'Lying on top of someone is against the body rules.'
- 'We all keep our trousers on properly in class.'

This is a chance to talk with them about keeping themselves and others safe and to let them know that you are someone who will listen. Particular care may be needed in educating children to understand sexual development and privacy as well as ensure that they can communicate effectively about any worries they have.

It is important to recognise that, while people from different backgrounds have different expectations about what is acceptable behaviour in children, sexual abuse happens across all races and cultures.

The chart below shows some examples of normal and healthy sexual behaviour that we might expect to see in children as they pass through different stages of development from pre-school to adolescence.

Each child develops at his or her own pace and not every child will show all these behaviours. The chart also describes behaviour that may give cause for concern.

Sexual behavior: healthy vs. inappropriate

Pre-school children (0-5 years)	
Commonly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use childish 'sexual' language to talk about body parts, e.g. 'willy', 'flower' • Ask how babies are made and where they come from • Touch or rub their own genitals • Show and look at private body parts 	Rarely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss sexual acts or use sexually explicit language • Touch other children's private parts • Show adult-like sexual behaviour or knowledge
School-age children (6-12 years)	
Commonly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions about menstruation, pregnancy and sexual behaviour • Experiment with other children, often during games, kissing, touching, showing and role-playing, e.g. mums and dads/ doctors and nurses • Masturbate in private <p>Older children in this age range are also more likely than pre-school children to use sexual words and discuss sexual acts, particularly with their friends</p>	Rarely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masturbate in public • Show adult-like sexual behaviour or knowledge
Adolescents (13-16 years)	
Commonly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions about relationships and sexual behaviour • Use sexual language and talk about sexual acts between themselves • Masturbate in private • Experiment sexually with adolescents of similar age <p>NB. about one-third of adolescents have sexual intercourse before the age of 16</p>	Rarely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masturbate in public • Have sexual contact with much younger children or adults

TALKING ABOUT ISB WITH A CHILD

If you encounter sexualised play, you may acknowledge the child's sexual curiosity and need to get more information about their body, eg. 'It looks like you want to know if your body is the same or different to your friend's body'. Suggest the child looks at a picture book with you that shows the differences between people's privates.

You could explain, 'Your body is your own private property, and it is not OK to let another person play games with it' or 'The penis is private. That's why it is called your privates. That means you don't show it to anyone.'

You can firmly but calmly tell children to stop their sex play and say, 'In our house, the rules are that children should not play the touching privates games.' This lets the child know the limits of their play. Always be direct in your communication about ISB, describing the child's actual behaviour, eg. 'When you try to watch me on the toilet, you are breaking the rules. We don't do that in our house.'

Avoid scolding, punishing or shaming a child for engaging in sex play as that might increase a child's anxiety and make their behaviour seem more exciting, or prevent them from sharing or asking questions in future.

A child's need for comfort, attention and approval are very important and they need help to understand there are ways to get their needs met, in a non-sexual way. You could say:

- It's OK for you to come and tell me you would like a hug.
- It's not OK for you to touch my private parts or ask me to touch yours. Private parts are just that: private.
- It's OK to touch your vulva/vagina in the privacy of your bedroom or in the bathroom. It's not OK in the kitchen, because that's a public room.

Interrupt sexual jokes, stories or language, and explain how this can upset others. Let the child know what certain sexual swear words mean. You could agree on a sign between you, such as a touching your ear, to use as a reminder to the child when they are beginning to break the rules.

Ensure internet access is closely monitored to protect the child from watching inappropriate programmes or pornography. Monitor their TV watching and switch off their TV if there is even any minor sexual behaviour on film. Remember, explain why you are doing that:

- 'If children make mistakes with body rules, it's often because they are muddled. If we both sit here and watch the girls dancing or watch a couple kissing on TV, it just adds to the confusion. So I turned it off.'
- 'If young people show inappropriate sexual behaviour, they need to avoid sexual jokes and watching even slightly sexual scenes on TV. Otherwise, it can feel exciting and make young people want to do something to break the body rules. Actually, those young people need a break from getting excitement in this way'.

There is a link between violence and sexual themes, so removing both these themes from the child's life is helpful.

If the child repeats the ISB, let them know it's still not OK and that you still want to work together to not let it happen again.

Consider: Identifying with the child what the triggers were to his/her ISB. Next time, those triggers occur, what could he/she do instead?

Telling the child that you are wondering where he learned this body behaviour.

WORKING WITH THE CHILD

TRAFFIC LIGHT QUIZ

Aim: The Traffic Lights exercise is used to provoke discussion about behaviour. This gives an indication of the child's understanding of what sexual behaviour is appropriate, and what is unacceptable.

Materials: Traffic Light image; list of scenarios.

Preparation: Twenty statements are provided below as examples. Prior to the session with the child, about 10 of the most relevant statements should be selected, cut out separately and folded or placed face down. Ensure that the chosen statements use language appropriate to the age and individual child. Other statements relevant to the child could be added. There should be an approximately equal number of statements that fall into red (inappropriate), yellow (ambiguous) and green (appropriate) categories.

How to play: The child should be asked to match each statement with a colour as follows: red = not okay/stop; yellow = could be okay; green = okay/go. This exercise can be carried out as a game, taking turns to pick out a folded paper statement and placing it beside the traffic light.

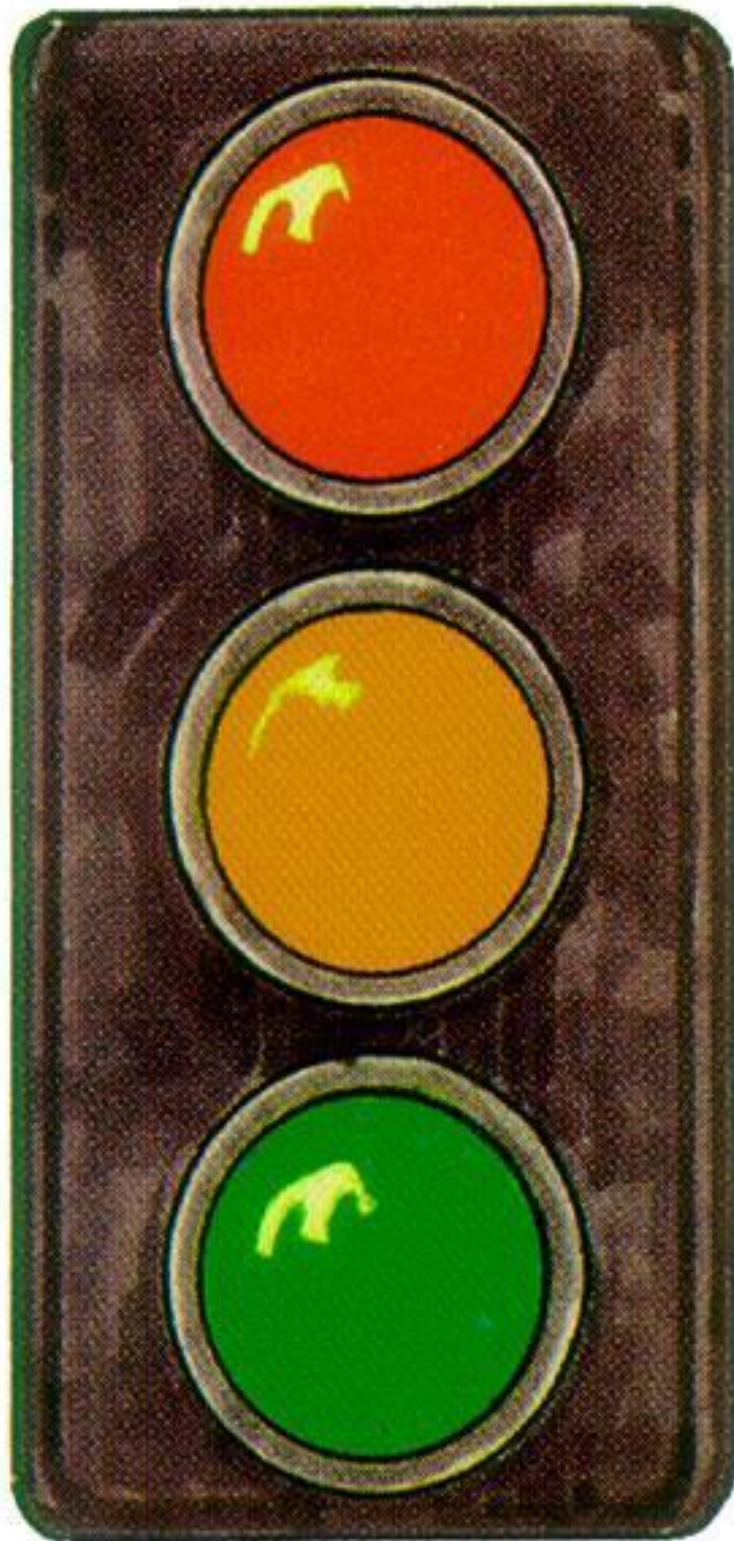
Some items are not overtly 'right' (green) or 'wrong' (red). Some are intentionally ambiguous; this is to facilitate discussion with the child about behaviour in relation to age-appropriateness, context, levels of exposure, and invasiveness. For example, '*Touching your brother's penis in the bath*', may be 'green' for a ten year old helping to wash their sibling, but would be 'red' if he grabs, holds on to, and rubs his brother's penis.

Additional resources:

www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool

www.brook.org.uk/shop/product/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool-factsheet

Traffic Light Image



Possible scenarios

1. Touching your sister's hair
2. Sleeping in the same sleeping bag as your friend
3. Touching your little brother's penis in the bath
4. Giving Dad a cuddle
5. Kissing other children you don't know
6. Rubbing the teacher's leg
7. Playing wrestling games at the swimming pool
8. Running around the house naked after a shower
9. Putting your mouth on another child or adult's sex parts
10. Putting your finger into someone else's bottom
11. Trying to undress other children
12. Looking at the opposite sex
13. Using swear words for private parts
14. Looking at pictures of naked people on the computer
15. Dressing like the opposite sex
16. Touching your private parts with your hand
17. Playing football with your friend
18. Sitting on Grandad's knee
19. Standing very close to people
20. Hugging someone you have just met at the bus stop.

BODY PARTS & PRIVACY

Aim: Work with the child so they can identify names for parts of their body, know their functions and understand which parts are private.

Materials: Paper & pens; pictures of human bodies

How to play: Ask the child to draw a boy or a girl, man or woman with no clothes on (or use the images provided below). Ask the child to write or tell you, so you can write the names of all parts of the body that they can think of. This can be done by taking turns with you. You can also discuss what each part is used for and what its job is. E.g. eyes are for seeing and hair is for protecting your head.

Clear guidance must be given on the body parts that are private, how to keep them private and what privacy means. The child should be guided to name these parts using their own language. Anatomically correct names for body parts may be mentioned (e.g. did you know the 'willy' is also called a 'penis'?). However, the main goal is to ensure:

- the child has a language to speak about sexual parts and behavior.
- and the child feels encouraged to speak about and understand clearly what parts of the body are not to be exposed or touched by others.

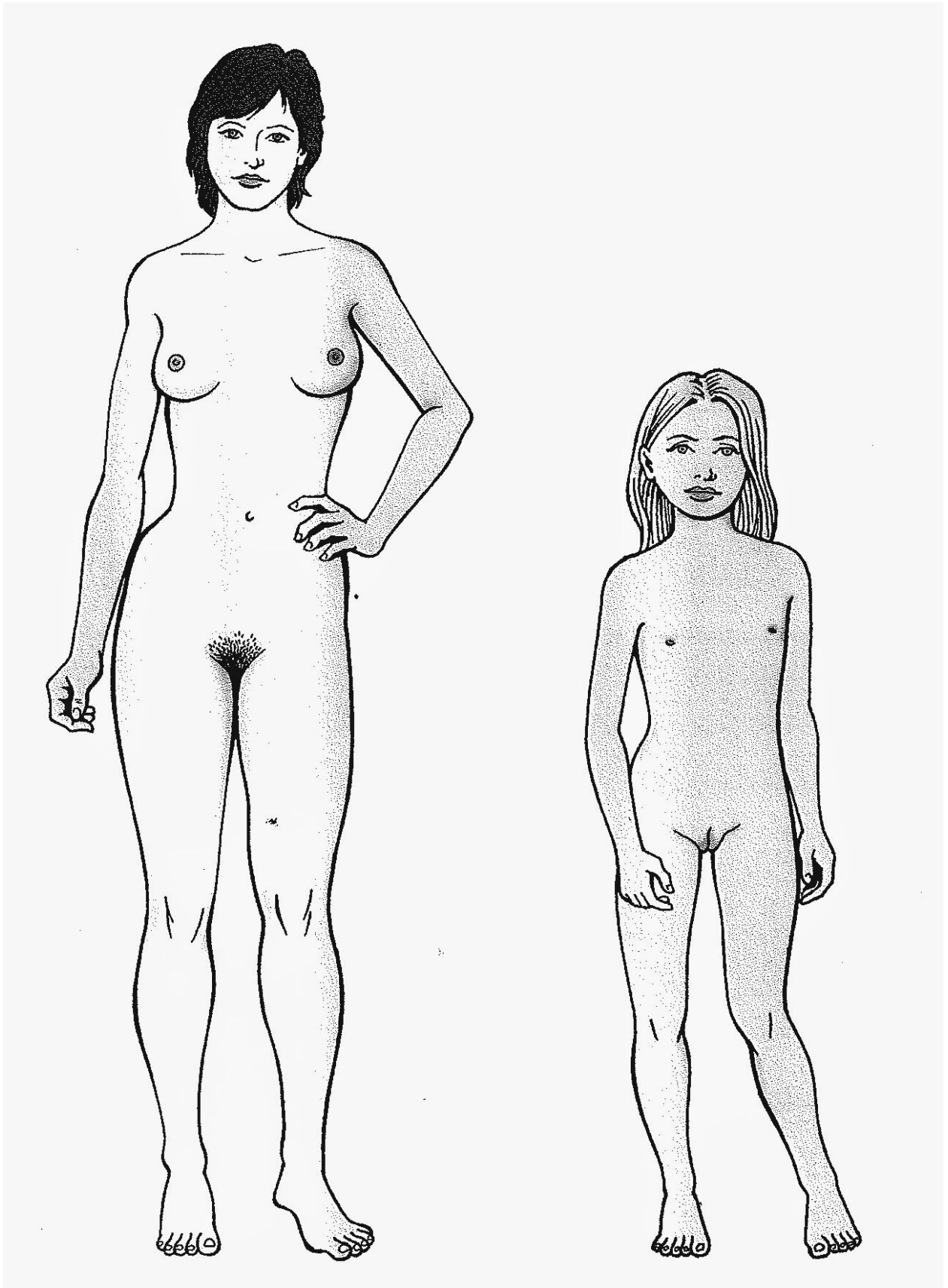
You and the child could discuss what people wear in the public swimming pool, and why they don't swim naked. The child could be asked to draw on swimwear, or simply draw a cross or symbol over the private parts.

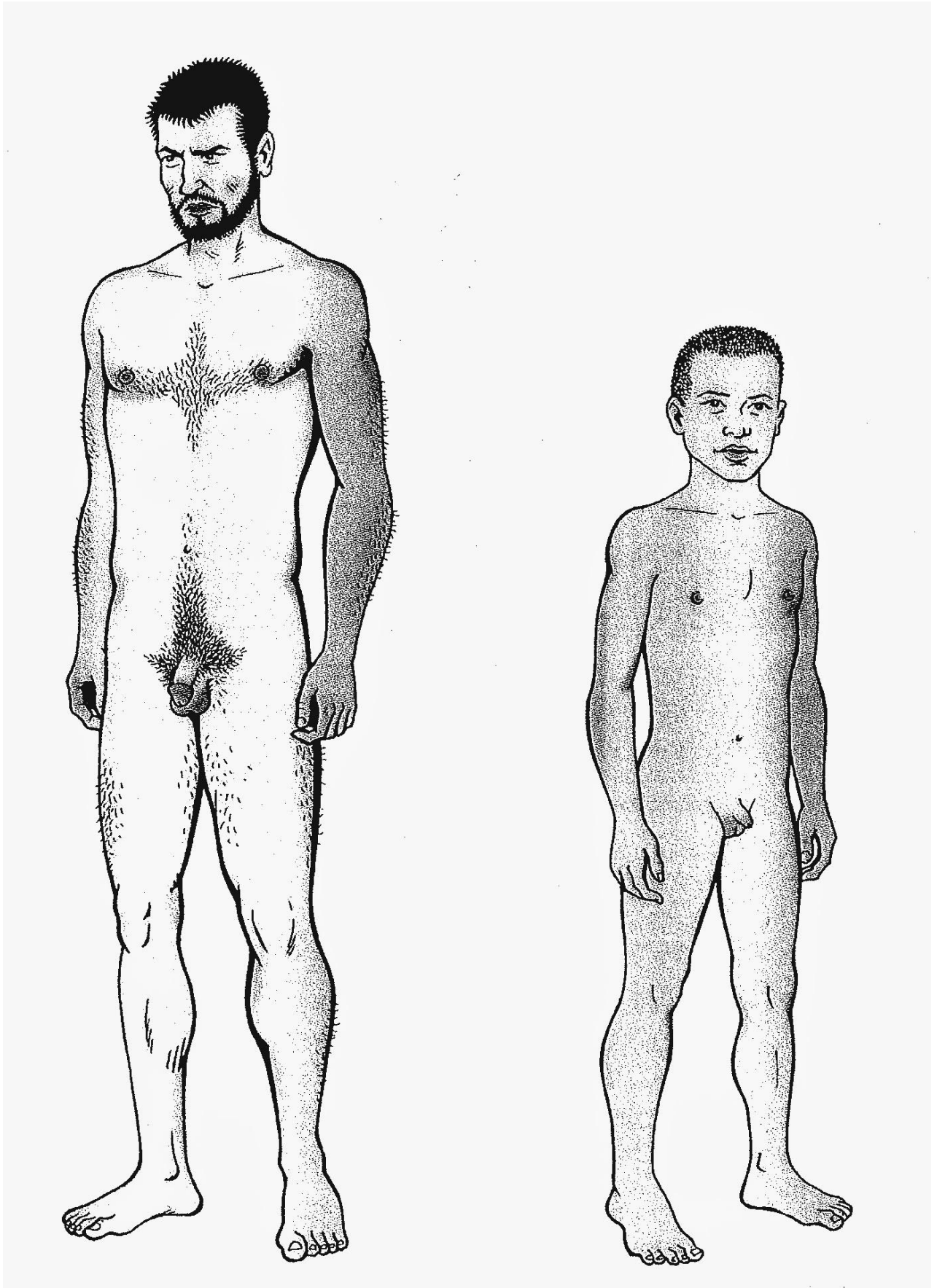
You could ask if the child has heard of the word 'sex' and what they think that might mean.

It is helpful to discuss the meaning of the word 'private'. You could ask the child if he leaves the toilet door open/closed when he goes for a pee, or if he gets dressed in the morning in the street, kitchen or his bedroom. Link this to the word 'private'.

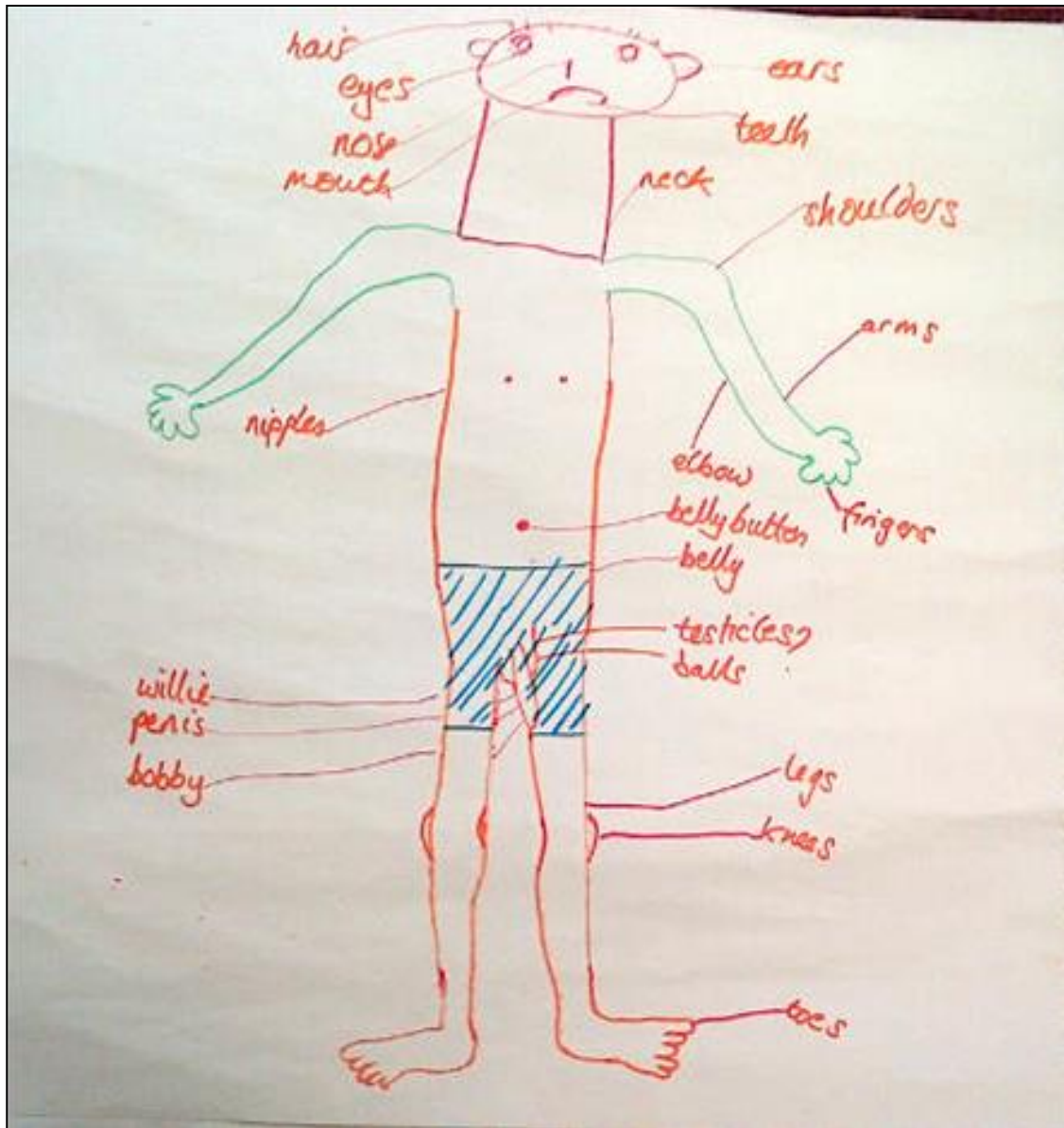
This may be a good moment to speak about the difference between 'private' and 'secret' (See section on 'Secrets').

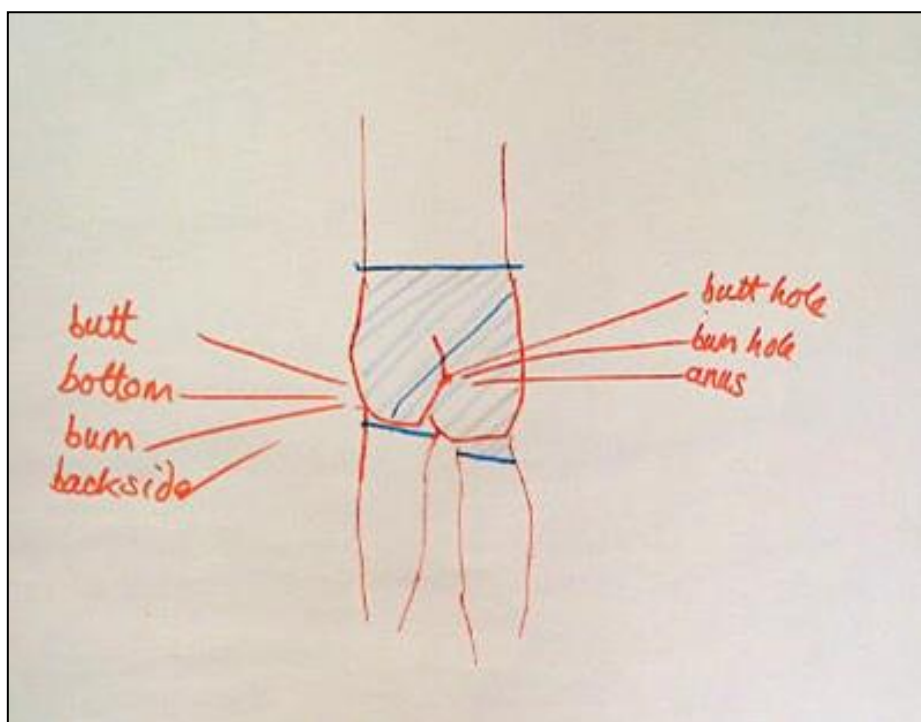
This work will subsequently enable the child to speak about, and adopt the body rules, that apply to both children and adults. Below are pictures you can photocopy for use with a child. Following this, are examples of some work of this nature completed with a teenage boy with Learning Disabilities.





Examples drawn with children



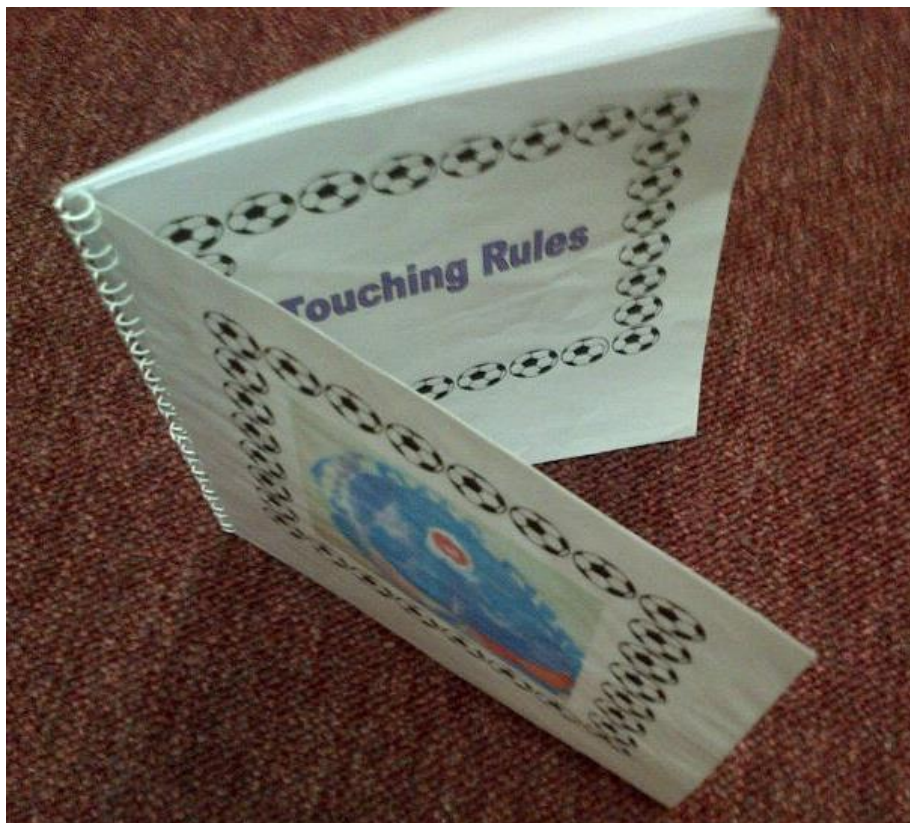


BODY BEHAVIOUR RULES

This part introduces clear and explicit body behaviour rules. For some children, particularly those with learning disabilities, body rules need to be repeated many times in different situations. One helpful way to do this is by using songs. The resource link below is for older teenagers with learning disabilities, but songs may be adapted for the child with whom you are working.

Social stories for ISB can be written and illustrated. These are pictorial templates providing direct guidance to encourage appropriate sexual behaviour in social situations. Several scenarios can be covered, e.g. 'Touching Myself', 'OK Touching of Others'. These are particularly useful with younger children, and visual learners. Body behaviour rules must be agreed by all at the child's home, and a guidance poster can be pinned up somewhere visible.

Illustration Touching Rules Book



There are some statements that can be repeated from time to time, once the child is sufficiently familiar with ideas of private parts of the body, and the meaning of the word 'sex'. You could define this as 'to do with the touching of private parts of the body'. We often have to be very explicit, using the child's words and formal vocabulary. In order to be clear, we may use illustrations. The detail in which you discuss sexual boundaries and privacy with children will depend on their age, developmental stage and also the sorts of things they might have experienced.

We tend to be more specific with older teenagers, and are guided often by the knowledge they already have.

Examples of body rules

- 'It is against the rules for sex to happen between children.'
- 'It is against the rules for sex to happen between adults and children.'
- 'It's OK for adults to have sex if they both agree to it. This should be done in a private place, because it's a private thing to do.'
- 'If any of the rules are broken, then it's important that you tell someone.'

Resources:

www.me-and-us.co.uk/songsforyourbody

www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx

SUGGESTED BODY RULES

Here is an example of a 'Body Rules' list. Just choose four or five rules that are most relevant, and adapt them to your individual child:

Our Body Safety Rules

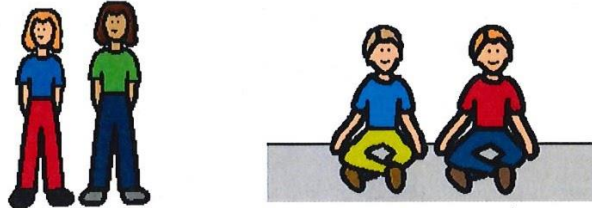
1. We know the names of our private parts.
2. We do not use bad words with other people.
3. No one is allowed to touch our private parts.
4. You should not touch someone else's private parts.
5. No one is allowed to take pictures of your private parts, and you don't take pictures of other people's private parts.
6. We can touch our own private parts, as long as we are alone in our room.
7. When playing with friends or adults, keep your clothes on.
8. Getting dressed, bathing or going to the toilet should be done in private.
9. If someone tries to touch your private parts, say "NO!" and get away.
10. You shouldn't keep secrets, and if someone asks you to do so, tell an adult you trust.
11. If someone breaks a body safety rule, tell an adult you trust.
12. If someone touches your private parts without permission, remember it's not your fault and tell an adult you trust.

SOCIAL STORIES

Personal Space

Everybody needs some personal space. Personal space is the distance between us and other people that makes us feel comfortable.

Some people like to be close to other people.



Some people like to be further away from other people.



Standing or sitting too close can make some people feel
upset or

angry



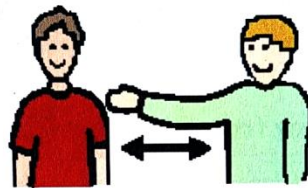
Sometimes people will want to sit close to you one day and further away from you another day. This can be confusing.



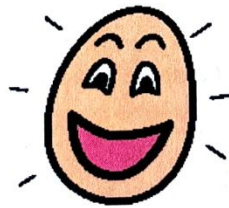
It is a good idea to always leave some space between yourself and another person.



It can be hard to know how much personal space other people need. One way to know that you are giving another person enough space is if you are an arm's length away from them.



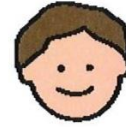
If we leave enough space between ourselves and other people then we will make other people feel happy with us.



Touching Myself

My name is

I am years old



I am learning about keeping things private



This means things that are just for me



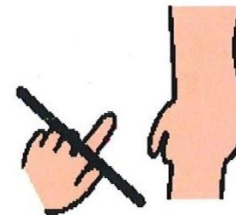
Some parts of my body are private places



I will try not to touch these parts when other people are around



I will try not to touch my (word child is comfortable with for body part) when other people are there



If I try hard I can
(reward that is a motivator for child and that
parents are comfortable with giving)



PREVENTION – SAFETY PLANNING

This section addresses the heightened risk of sexual abuse attached to a child demonstrating ISB. The first sheet of safety planning includes materials for younger children, and outlines the nature of different kinds of touch from other people (those that feel nice – or give ‘yes’ feelings, and those that feel unpleasant – give ‘no’ feelings).

When you are worried about someone breaking the body rules, tell someone you trust!

The resource below can be altered to be relevant to a particular child. Included are some possibly helpful adults, and some less optimal options, eg. Facebook, a worried peer and a dog.

The purpose of this is to provide an opportunity for discussion with the child about their choices. The second sheet offers choices of a number of people that the child may feel comfortable to speak to, if someone else has broken the body rules with them.

Make a hand out for the child which is personalised, with the names and contact details of the protective figures selected by the child.

Resources included in this pack:

Who can I tell? (p.24)
Secrets Worksheet (p.26)

Additional Resources

Children’s Sexual Behaviours: A Parent’s Guide www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/CSS_CSBPGEn.pdf

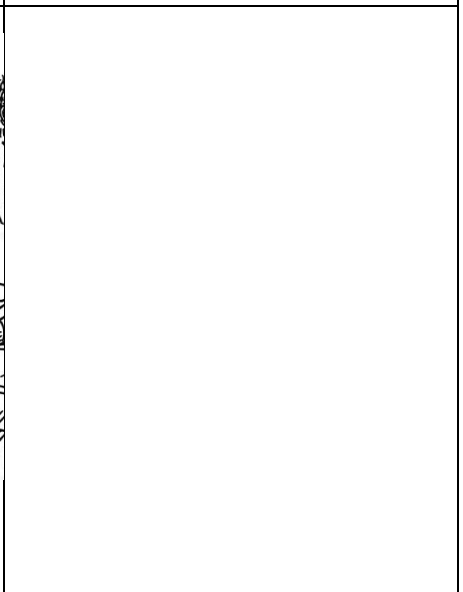
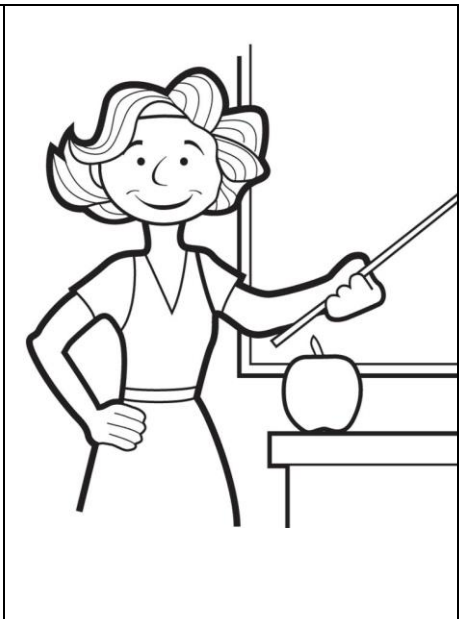
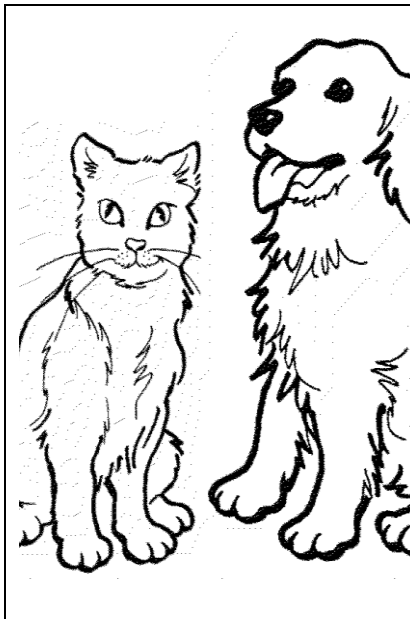
Brook: Sexual Health & Wellbeing for under 25s www.brook.org.uk/our-work

NSPCC Underwear Rule Poster: www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/underwear-rule-children-guide-english.pdf

WHO CAN I TELL IF I'M WORRIED?

Who can I tell if I'm worried that someone has broken the body rules with me?





IMPULSE CONTROL

This guidance on impulse control is informed by the Turtle and STOPP techniques. These are cognitive behavioural strategies which could be used to teach children steps in managing ISB

STOPP

Stop

Don't act immediately. Wait.



Take a Breath

Slowly breathe in and out a couple of times.

Observe

What am I thinking about?
What am I focusing on?
What am I reacting to?
What am I feeling in my body?



Pull Back



Zoom out!
See the bigger picture.
Is this fact or opinion?
Is there another way of looking at this?
What would someone else say about it?
How does this affect others?
What advice would I give a friend in this situation?
How important is this situation right now?

Practise what works

Consider the consequences.
What's the BEST thing to do?
Do what will help most!



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www.getselfhelp.co.uk/stopp.htm

www.get.gg

