



The Importance of Language in Early Childhood

WHY WE TEACH AND USE THE CORRECT WORDS

- It may prevent childhood sexual abuse. Research has shown that some sexual offenders avoid children who know the correct name for their genitals because it tells them the child has been educated about their body and is more likely to tell someone about the abuse, which may end abuse more quickly.
- Provides the child with the language to communicate and ask questions about their body.
- Helps children to develop a healthy, positive body image and self-confidence when their genitals are not something to be ashamed of.
- Helps children to be better understood and taken seriously when describing an injury or disclosure.

TEACHING THE NAMES OF ALL BODY PARTS

Research has shown there are many benefits, and NO risks, to teaching children the correct words for ALL their body parts, including their genitals (e.g. vulva, vagina, penis, testicle, uterus, breast etc.).

It is also okay if children know other words for these body parts, however, ensure they know the correct words and are taught them as early as possible.

Describe them the same way you would describe any other body parts (e.g. "this is your elbow").



Having open communication about consent in early childhood allows for easier conversations in later childhood. By having these conversations you are laying the groundwork for future relationships.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender awareness begins around two or three years old. It is during this time when children may notice the differences between genders and assign stereotypes. This is a great time to have conversations with a child about choice. This can include their choice of toys to play with, clothing to wear, and which activities to be involved in.

RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY

It is important to introduce children to the idea that families and relationships can be built in many ways. Consider reading books and consuming media that show a diverse range of families and relationships, as there is no one right way to have a family.

INSTINCTS

Teach children to trust their “gut” feelings (instincts) as they are often the body’s way of letting you know something is wrong or someone has negative intentions. For many people, gut feelings can feel like butterflies in their stomach, increased heart rate or an urge to run.

Consider how you talk about your own body and how that may be interpreted by a young child. Consider what phrases and tone you use when discussing your body. Children will pick up on your tone and interpret that.

For more information check out <https://www.shorecentre.ca/parents/>

