

Yes You Can Say No Discussion Guide

Target Audience

Grades 2–6

Length

19 minutes

Kathy Beland, M.Ed., Writer/Executive Producer
Kevin Costello, Producer/Director

Produced in association with Video Art

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Introduction

Yes You Can Say No is an educational video showing children modeling protective, assertive behavior in a number of believable safety situations, including preventing sexual assault. Modeling and role-playing are effective means of developing desired behavior in both adults and children. The skills modeled in the video have been recommended by therapists and offenders for reducing a child's vulnerability to sexual assault.

Yes You Can Say No is a catalyst for the continued practice and discussion of assertive behavior. The video is meant to be part of a full personal safety curriculum, such as *Talking About Touching: A Personal Safety Curriculum*.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate (model) verbal and nonverbal assertiveness skills
- Identify ways of coping with a difficult situation
- Recognize potentially exploitive situations
- Identify resource people in a support system
- Identify the differences between nurturing and exploitive touch

Synopsis

David, a ten-year-old, awakens one morning with an unexplained problem on his mind. Over breakfast, he makes several unsuccessful attempts to tell his parents about his troubles, but he either backs down or does not make himself heard.

While walking to school, David encounters Cindy and Ray, two friends on his baseball team. Through their modeling and guidance, David learns assertiveness skills to use in dealing with everyday challenges. He is shown how to stand tall, look at another person straight in the eyes, and give his message—whether it be telling his coach he wants to pitch in a game or refusing a ride to school from someone he barely knows.

Encouraged by these lessons on assertiveness, David finally reveals the problem that troubles him. Through a flashback scene we learn that his uncle Jim has touched his private body parts and sworn him to secrecy. Drawing on his own resources and the inspiration of Cindy and Ray, David concludes that he must tell someone about the abuse and keep telling until he is believed. He must also tell his uncle “no.” His chance will come soon, because his uncle has arranged to play baseball with him after school.

David's assertiveness skills are first put to the test when children harass him on the playground. In successfully resisting their pressure, he realizes that he may have the power to deal with his "touching" problem as well.

With a new sense of self-confidence and resolve, David is able to say "no" to his uncle Jim and tell his parents about the abuse. Afterward, David tells Cindy and Ray what has happened and thanks them for their help. Cindy reminds David that "You did it yourself!"

Background Information

- Research indicates that about 22 percent of adult women and 7 percent of adult men report having been sexually abused before they were 18 years old.
- Children can be molested at any age, from early infancy to 18 years.
- The mean age range of children reporting having been sexually abused is 9–11 years.
- Reports indicate that one-third to one-half of victims are under age seven.
- Studies have shown that only about 40 percent of victims tell someone at the time and only 6–12 percent of cases are reported to authorities.
- There are many reasons why children do not tell; some young children do not recognize abuse, and in other cases children fear the consequences of telling.
- Research suggests that about 2 percent of reports from children about sexual abuse are fictitious. Although they rarely lie about sexual abuse, young children in particular may make statements that are misinterpreted by adults.
- Approximately 72 percent of sexual abuse incidents involving female children and 58 percent involving male children are perpetrated by someone known to or related to the child.
- Approximately 8 percent of all female cases involve a father or father substitute.

- Men are offenders in 95 percent of cases involving girls and 80 percent of cases involving boys as victims.
- Most sexual offenses against children are accomplished by the offender taking advantage of his/her position or relationship with the child.
- Many child molesters began offending as adolescents.
- Child sexual abuse occurs in all socio-economic and racial groups.

References

- Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I. A., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics and risk factors. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 14*, 19–28.
- Gomes-Schwartz, B., Horowitz, J., & Cardarelli, A. (1990). *Child sexual abuse*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Jones, D. P. H., & McGraw, J. M. (1987). Reliable and fictitious accounts of sexual abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2*, 27–45.
- Wurtele, S. K., & Miller-Perrin, C. L. (1992). *Preventing child sexual abuse*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Disclosure

The video may prompt disclosures from your students. Don't worry; disclosure is a positive step toward getting help for abused children. As an educator, you are not responsible for investigation, intervention, or therapy, but you are required by law to report any disclosure to a child protective agency or law enforcement officials.

If a child discloses abuse during the discussion, acknowledge the child's disclosure and continue the lesson. Afterward, find a place where you can talk with the child alone.

Follow these guidelines when handling disclosure:

- Listen. Do not express panic or shock.
- Reassure the child that it is right to tell and that the abuse is not his or her fault.
- Do not try to elicit details; you do not need to determine the truth of the situation, only whether there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse.
- Determine the child's immediate safety needs. Tell the child what you will do.
- Report the matter to the proper authorities.

Before Showing the Video

Preparation

Preview the video or read the synopsis before presentation. Make copies of the behavioral steps listed at the end of this guide for your students. It is important to allow ample discussion time after watching the video. It is best to present the video before a recess so that you have a natural opportunity to talk with the students privately if they come forward.

Briefly explain to your class that *Yes You Can Say No* is a film about building assertiveness skills to protect themselves and to deal with everyday challenges.

Discuss the following terms and ask for examples:

- **Personal safety:** Self-protection in potentially dangerous situations.
- **Assertive:** When you are assertive, you express your thoughts in a strong, clear, and respectful way.
- **Passive:** When you are passive, you do not stand up for yourself.
- **Aggressive:** When you express your thoughts in an angry, mean, or rude way, you are being aggressive. Aggressive behavior is not respectful.

After Showing the Video

Discussion Questions

1. What are private body parts? (Areas of the body covered by your bathing suit, or use proper terms: "penis," "vagina," "breasts.")
2. Why didn't David tell his parents at breakfast about his problem with his uncle? (Fear, embarrassment, hard to talk about.)
3. Was the problem David's fault? (It is never the child's fault.)
4. Why did uncle Jim want David to keep their game a secret? (Because uncle Jim knew it was wrong to do this to David.)
5. What clues told you that David should tell someone about the game? (Safety rules about touch; that he was asked to keep it a secret; his feelings.)
6. What would you do if a grownup or older person, even someone you knew or were related to, touched your private body parts? (Say "no"; get away if possible; tell.)
7. How do you say "no" to someone who wants you to break a touching rule? (Stand tall, look her/him straight in the eyes, and say "no" without giving excuses. Repeat as many times as you need to.)
8. What does it mean to be "assertive"? When was David assertive? How could you tell?
9. If David had been alone when he met up with the children who bullied him, would he have made the same choice? Why or why not? (It may have been best to give them the bat if he sensed there was a chance he could get physically hurt. To give in could have been smart, not cowardly.)
10. If David's parents had not believed him about his touching problem, who else could he have told? (Teacher, school counselor, a relative.)
11. Who could you tell if someone wanted you to keep a secret like this?

Role-Plays

1. Have the students practice saying “no” in different ways. “Thank you, but no.” “No, I don’t want to.”
2. Give students imaginary situations to role-play. Have students practice being assertive and responding in different ways. Debrief students after each role-play. Ask: “Did (role-playing student) express his or her thoughts in a strong, clear, and respectful way?” Some possible situations are:
 - A friend asks if she can copy your homework.
 - You are with two friends who want you to shoplift with them.
 - You do more housework than your brother, and you want to talk to your parents about it.
 - A stranger in a movie theater sits down next to you and puts his arm around your shoulders.
 - Someone offers you a ride because your bike just got a flat.
 - A man in the park says he has lost his dog and asks you to help him look for it.

The Touching Rule*

REMEMBER, if someone asks you to break a touching rule:

STAND TALL.

LOOK THE PERSON STRAIGHT IN THE EYES.

SAY “NO” like you really mean it, without giving excuses.

SAY “NO” AGAIN if you need to.

TELL SOMEONE about it right away, and keep telling until someone believes you.

No one has the right to touch your private parts, except for health reasons. Everyone has the right to say “no” and report any touch that makes her/him feel uncomfortable.

**From Yes You Can Say No, a video on personal safety produced by Committee for Children, Seattle, WA.*

