CHILD SAFETY CHECK:

3 Pillars of Consent

How to help your child feel comfortable setting & respecting boundaries

That feeling of control over one's own body—also known as body autonomy—may play a role in preventing and reporting abuse. **Teaching consent early** can help children recognize when their body autonomy is being threatened or violated, and respect others' body autonomy. Use this guide to help build the 3 pillars of consent for your child's safety.

ASK TO TOUCH/TAKE

Model asking for consent when helping a child or playing together--and teach them do the same for others:

- *Can I pick you up?*
- *May I brush your hair?*
- *Would you like a hug?*
- *Do you want help with your sleeves?*
- *Are you still having fun tickling, or do you want to stop?*
- *Can I hold that toy?*
- *May I have a turn?*

Ask before you touch or take & help children learn to ask before they touch or take.

PLAY 'YES' & 'NO'

Encourage kids to say "yes" and "no" in different ways:

- *Be loud, silly, angry, gentle.*

Help kids notice how a "yes" or "no" feels

- *Does their chest feel tight when they need to say "no?"*
- *Does an enthusiastic "yes" make them smile?*

If a child says "yes" but doesn't seem enthusiastic, ask questions about how they are feeling.

Use play & repeated practice to help children build confidence.

WHEN THE ANSWER IS 'NO'

If a child says "no..."

DON'T SAY:

- *But I will be sad if you don't give me a hug/kiss.*
- *I bet your sister would give me a hug/kiss.*
- *Don't be shy.*
- *Just be nice.*

DO SAY:

- *We don't need to hug right now!*
- *You don't have to hug/kiss if you're not comfortable.*
- *Thank you for telling me what you need.*

If the answer is "no" or a child does not seem interested, respond with respect & affirmation—not guilt or shame.

Children's Advocacy Centers of Pennsylvania