

Have you ever considered the messages
we give small children about their right
to 'own' their bodies and to refuse
unwanted touching?

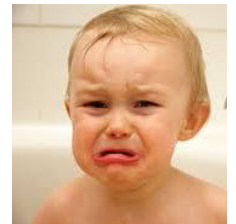
These messages start with tiny babies as we pass them from person to person, how we do everyday tasks such as cleaning and wiping littlies, without so much as an explanation, and how we expect children to accept tickles and kisses from relatives -or even strangers who think they have a right to 'coochie coo' those chubby cheeks or to squeeze a juicy little knee.

Often we are more concerned with what others may think about US and how we have taught our littlies to 'be polite' (and not wipe off those yukky kisses or tell the kisser to 'go away!"), than our children's feelings.



As we unwittingly give children messages about compliance, we may also be setting them up for potentially abusive situations.

DON'T TOUCH ME!



Instead, we can treat babies and small children with respect and allow them to refuse any unwanted touching -from anyone, even grandma if they don't feel like hugs and kisses.

Yes, I know babies and children are 'delicious' and grandma (and anyone else) may have their feelings hurt but perhaps instead of insisting kids 'kiss granny', we can ask, would you like a cuddle? Or, do you have a goodbye hug for Grandad? And we can respect their wishes.

When they are treated with respect, children will learn that they do have rights, that their body is theirs and they can be in charge.

Most importantly we give them a clear message that they are safe to come and tell us if they feel that their privacy has been breached in any way and they know we will listen, because we always have.

As well as respecting our children's bodies, we need to respect and love our own bodies. In all the busyness of caring for small (and not so small) people, we often forget about taking care of ourselves, so I want to send a strong message to take care of YOU.

We need to honour the big job we do and care for ourselves just as well as we take care of others.

Pinky McKay ~ November 2013

Pinky is a former Leader for LLLNZ and will be a major speaker at the 50th Anniversary Reunion in October.