

ESPACE Gaspésie-les-îles
Illustrated by Valérie Desrochers

MY BODY, MY RIGHTS!



Dominique et compagnie

Foreword

This book is a tool to help you have important conversations with young children about delicate, complex issues. In it, we talk about our bodies, our rights, the kinds of touches that we like and don't like, as well as strategies for setting limits and enforcing them. We also discuss the importance of talking about bad secrets, and the courage it takes to do so.

ESPACE Gaspésie-les-îles has created this book as a sexual education resource to help prevent sexual assault. Many parents, educators and health professionals have expressed to us their need for such a concrete awareness tool.

For over 30 years, ESPACE organizations have been visiting schools and childcare establishments to tell children about their rights, discuss what different forms of violence might look like and teach them strategies to protect themselves from violence or reduce its impacts. Empowering children and the adults around them is the foundation of all of our actions, and this book is a logical continuity of our preventive mission.



Reading tips

Here are some tips to help you use this tool:

- First, you will notice that the text is **dotted with red and green bubbles**. These will help you delve deeper into the subject, initiate dialogue and create links between the story and the young readers' lives. They offer children a chance to express themselves with regard to different situations throughout the story. We recommend reading the book first without these bubbles, so that children understand what the story is about, and then integrating the bubbles at a second reading.
- You can also use the illustrations to highlight the **emotions experienced by the characters**. This will allow children to develop their empathy and help you clarify concepts such as consent. For example, you can ask: "How did he feel when..." or "Does she like that touch? How can you tell?"
- There are key phrases within the story that are **rhythmic and repetitive**. Do not hesitate to encourage children to say them with you, like a nursery rhyme, and even add gestures! The repetition of key phrases and the involvement of children during reading will help them retain information, gain confidence and assert themselves.
- Both boys and girls can experience sexual violence. Even though genders have been assigned to the characters, they have been deliberately portrayed in a non-stereotypical way. You can easily change **female characters** to **male characters** (and vice versa) by inventing new names for them. This will allow for a **greater diversity of role models** with which everyone can identify.

Good and bad touches

In this book, we use the terms **good touch** and **bad touch**. Here is a way you can explain it to children in a language that is easy for them to understand.

A **good touch** is a touch that you like, and that makes you feel good. You decide to give or receive this touch because you want to. You have made the choice.

A **bad touch** is one that makes you feel sad, confused, angry or unsafe. It's a touch that another person forces you to give or to receive. You don't feel free to decide, you feel like you have no choice.

Emphasis is not placed on the parts of the body, but rather on feelings and consent. In this way, the concepts remain clear and concise, and no possible situation of sexual violence is excluded.

We thank you for making an effort to prevent sexual violence. As an adult, you can empower children by giving them concrete and reassuring information. Your involvement is precious: you are helping children to develop a healthy relationship with their bodies, encouraging them to respect their own limits and those of others, and identifying yourself as a reassuring presence in their lives. At the end of the book, you will find a section on what to do if a child confides in you, as well as some helpful resources.

Thanks again and happy reading!

The Editing Committee

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Today, in Mister Joseph's class, there is a special activity.

Two grown-ups, William and Aisha, have come to talk to the children about their rights and their body.

William and Aisha explain that
**children have the right to always
feel safe in their body, because their
body belongs to them.**



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Practice by asking
"Who owns (name
of student, teacher,
parent)'s body?
He/She does!"

Let your readers
know that even if
two people are in a
relationship, each
person still makes
decisions about their
own body.

**It means that your body is yours.
Did you know that?**



During the special activity, William and Aisha talk about **good touches**. These are touches that make us feel good in our heart and in our body.

Evelyne thinks of the big hugs she gives to her uncle.



Matéo thinks of the bedtime kisses his dad gives him.





Kim thinks of Grandma's massages, which calm her after school.

Charlie thinks of being tickled by her sister.



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What are some examples of touches that you like?

The children also learn that sometimes people can try to take away our right to feel good and safe in our bodies.

Someone might ask us for bad touches or might do **bad touches** to us. These are touches that make us feel





It can also happen that people tell us things about our body or look at us in a way that might scare us or make us feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

When that happens, our heart might beat fast, our throat might feel tight and our muscles get tense. Sometimes, we might feel hot, dizzy or sick. We might get a stomach ache. These are signals that our body sends us when it senses danger.