

# Ontario Dress Purple Day: Lesson 2



## Lesson 2: Safety in the Community

### Lesson Introduction

Healthy touch is integral to human relationships and we all thrive from experiencing loving, supportive touch. Because of the crucial role touch plays in human relationships, children need practice becoming in tune with their feelings about touch. Some forms of touch may make us feel good. Other forms of touch may make us feel bad or uncomfortable. Only we, as individuals, get to decide how a touch makes us feel and whether or not we would like to be touched in that way. For example, some people like hugs while others do not.

Children have the right to feel safe, to have their voices heard, and to have their boundaries respected. Helping children become in tune with their “uh-oh” feeling in situations that make them feel uncomfortable is important for promoting their safety. That “uh-oh” feeling is a body signal indicating that they need to get help from a trusted adult. Some may refer to this as one’s gut feeling or instinct. Ensuring that children are aware of helping adults in their support network is important so that when they do have the “uh-oh” feeling in a situation that makes them feel unsafe, they can go to one of these adults for help.

The “uh-oh” feeling is important in all situations where children feel uncomfortable. It is also extremely useful in the area of touch. Children need help in learning to recognize their “uh-oh” feeling and apply it to situations involving inappropriate touch. Children also need help in understanding that sometimes people you love and trust can give you the “uh-oh” feeling. It is also important to keep in mind that perpetrators use a grooming process to commit abuse, involving touch that becomes increasingly inappropriate<sup>6,7</sup>.

Children can tell an adult about any kind of touch and not just those that are traditionally considered abusive. For example, although the research literature generally focuses on inappropriate touch underlying sexual abuse, children need to know that ANY kind of touch can be talked about and not only those that are sexual in nature. Children who may be exposed to family violence or who have experienced physical maltreatment can also apply these skills in obtaining help.

An important prevention message to children is that there are no secrets about touch. Asking the child to keep a secret can also take the form of having the child promise not to tell, or saying to the child that this is a private matter. Research has revealed that although the grooming process can look different depending on the perpetrator, secrecy is always involved<sup>1-6</sup>. This finding



underscores the importance of the message to children that they need to get help from a trusted adult if they have been asked to keep any kind of touch a secret.

### Key Themes

1. Pay attention to the “uh-oh” feeling
2. There are no secrets about touch
3. All touch can be talked about

### Learning Outcomes

1. To help children recognize their “uh-oh” feeling and get help from a trusted adult
2. To reinforce that there are no secrets about any kind of touch

### Grade-specific Learning Objectives

#### JK-SK:

- Introduce the “uh-oh” feeling and the importance of paying attention to the “uh-oh” feeling when you have it
- Emphasize the importance of getting help from a trusted adult when you have the “uh-oh” feeling
- Emphasize that there are no secrets about touch and that all touch can be talked about

#### Grades 1-2:

- Help children recognize the “uh-oh” feeling
- Reinforce getting help from a trusted adult when you have the “uh-oh” feeling
- Emphasize that there are no secrets about touch and that all touch can be talked about

#### Grades 3-5:

- Help children recognize the “uh-oh” feeling
- Reinforce getting help from a trusted adult when you have the “uh-oh” feeling
- Emphasize that there are no secrets about touch and that all touch can be talked about

## Discussion Questions

### JK-SK:

1. Who decides how a touch should make you feel?
  - *Emphasize that only you, the individual, gets to decide how a touch makes you feel and not anyone else.*
  - *Tell the children that because our bodies belong to us, we have the right to decide how we want to be touched. We also have to respect how others want to be touched. For example, if we like hugs, does that mean our friend likes hugs too? (Give children an opportunity to answer.)*
  - *Discuss the importance of asking for permission before touching anyone and if that person says no, we need to respect their answer.*
2. What is the “uh-oh” feeling?
  - *Give an example such as: Sometimes when I make toast, I accidentally toast it for too long and I smell something burning. I get an “uh-oh” feeling.*
  - *Define the “uh-oh” feeling: An “uh-oh” feeling is one that we get when we feel that something is wrong or when we feel uncomfortable about something.*
3. Can you think of some examples of when you get the “uh-oh” feeling?
  - *Give children an opportunity to share some examples of when they have had the “uh-oh” feeling.*
4. If someone touched you in a way that gave you an “uh-oh” feeling, what should you do?
  - *Emphasize the importance of getting help from an adult.*
5. If someone touched you and asked you to keep it a secret, what should you do?
  - *If children are not sure what a ‘secret’ is, tell them that a secret is something that someone tells you and asks you not to tell anyone else.*
  - *Tell the children that there are no secrets about touch and all touch can be talked about.*
  - *Emphasize getting help from an adult if anyone tells them to keep a touch a secret.*

### Grades 1-2:

1. Who decides how a touch should make you feel?
  - *Emphasize that only you, the individual, gets to decide how a touch makes you feel and not anyone else.*
  - *Tell the children that because our bodies belong to us, we have the right to decide how we want to be touched. We also have to respect how others want to be touched. For example, if we like hugs, does that mean our friend likes hugs too? (Give children an opportunity to answer.)*
  - *Discuss the importance of asking for permission before touching anyone and if that person says no, we need to respect their answer.*

2. What is the “uh-oh” feeling?
  - Give an example such as: Sometimes when I make toast, I accidentally toast it for too long and I smell something burning. I get an “uh-oh” feeling.
  - Define the “uh-oh” feeling: An “uh-oh” feeling is one that we get when we feel that something is wrong or when we feel uncomfortable about something.
3. Can you think of some examples of when you get the “uh-oh” feeling?
  - Give the children an opportunity to share some examples of when they have had the “uh-oh” feeling.
4. If someone touched you in a way that gave you an “uh-oh” feeling, what should you do?
  - Emphasize the importance of getting help from an adult.
5. What would you do if someone touched you and asked you to keep it a secret?
  - If children are not sure about the word ‘secret’, tell them that a secret is something that someone tells you and asks you not to tell anyone else.
  - Emphasize that all touch can be talked about and no touch should be kept a secret.
  - Remind children to go to an adult for help if someone tells them to keep a touch a secret.

### Grades 3-5:

1. Who decides how a touch should make you feel?
  - Emphasize that only you, the individual, gets to decide how a touch makes you feel and not anyone else.
  - Tell the children that because our bodies belong to us, we have the right to decide how we want to be touched. We also have to respect how others want to be touched. For example, if we like hugs, does that mean our friend likes hugs too? (Give children an opportunity to answer).
  - Discuss the importance of asking for permission before touching anyone and if that person says no, we need to respect their answer.
2. What is the “uh-oh” feeling? Can you think of some examples of situations where you might get an “uh-oh” feeling?
  - Give children an opportunity to share some responses. If they are not sure what an “uh-oh” feeling is, tell them that it is also their gut feeling or instinct that signals to them that something is wrong or makes them feel uncomfortable.
3. If you are in a situation that gives you the “uh-oh” feeling, what should you do? Who can you go to get help from?
  - Emphasize to go get help from an adult.
  - Encourage children to provide more than one adult that they can go to for help.
  - Acknowledge that each individual’s support network will look different.
4. If someone touches you in a way that gives you the “uh-oh” feeling and asks you to keep it a secret, what should you do?
  - Emphasize the importance of getting help from an adult.

- *Remind them of the key messages that there are no secrets about touch and all touch can be talked about.*

### Activity

- Touch Bags for JK - Grade 2 and Touch Skits for Grades 3-5

### Relevant Ontario Curriculum Expectations

*The new "Relevant Ontario Curriculum Expectations" will be available soon.*

## References

1. Colton, M., Roberts, S., & Vanstone, M. (2010). Sexual abuse by men who work with children. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 19*, 345-364.
2. Craven, S., Brown, S., & Gilchrist, E. (2006). Sexual grooming of children: Review of literature and theoretical considerations. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 12*, 287-299.
3. Eliot, M., Browne, K., & Kilcoyne, J. (1995). Child sexual abuse prevention: What offenders tell us. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*, 579-594.
4. Hershkowitz, I., Lanes, O., & Lamb, M.E. (2007). Exploring the disclosure of child sexual abuse with alleged victims and their parents. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31*, 111-123.
5. Kogan, S.M. (2004). Disclosing unwanted sexual experiences: Results from a national sample of adolescent women. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 28*, 147-165.
6. McAlinden, A. (2006). 'Setting em' up': Personal, familial, and institutional grooming in the sexual abuse of children. *Social and Legal Studies, 15*(3), 339-362.
7. Paine, M.L., & Hansen, D.J. (2002). Factors influencing children to self-disclose sexual abuse. *Clinical Psychology Review, 22*, 271-295.