
My Body Says No!

Classroom Guide

Your body is smart — and your no is yours forever

CASEL Competency: Self-Awareness

Grade Level: Pre-K–2

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Category: Safety Magic

Learning Objectives

- Recognize body signals (tummy butterflies, shoulders pulling away) as meaningful data
 - Learn to say no with confidence and know that NO is always allowed
 - Understand that boundaries apply to ALL relationships — not just strangers
 - Discover that a "no" can never be traded for a reward (the bribery pattern)
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Overview & Preparation

Key Vocabulary

Body Signals • Boundaries • No • Autonomy • Safe • Trusted Adult • Respect • Hug • Permission • Consent

Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- Paper and crayons
- Body outline templates
- Stickers (for marking body signals)
- Optional: role-play props

Before Reading

Connection Question

Has your body ever told you something before your brain figured it out? Like a tummy ache when you were nervous, or pulling away when something didn't feel right?

Background Building

Your body sends you signals every day — tummy butterflies, shoulders pulling away, a quiet voice that says "I don't want to." This story teaches children to TRUST those signals, say no with confidence, and know that their no is never for sale. The story also shows a parent catching themselves before bribing ("If you give Aunt Sarah a hug, you can have ice cream") and instead choosing to honor the child's no. Boundaries apply to everyone — family, friends, strangers — and a no can never be traded for a reward.

During Reading — Pause Points

- **When the hero's body sends signals during the unwanted hug request** — The hero's tummy is squeezing, their shoulders are going UP. Their body is talking! What is it saying?
- **When the parent steps in and supports the hero's no** — The parent said: "You don't have to hug anyone. A wave is just as nice." Why is it important that the grown-up supported the no?
- **When the parent catches themselves before bribing and honors the no instead** — The parent almost said "give a hug and you can have ice cream" — but stopped. Why was stopping so important? What would the bribe have taught?

Discussion Questions

1. The hero's body sent signals BEFORE they could explain why they felt uncomfortable. Why is it important to trust your body even when you can't explain why?

↳ Where in YOUR body do you feel a "no"?

2. The parent almost bribed the child to give a hug. Why is trading a "no" for a reward dangerous? What does it teach children about their own boundaries?

↳ What would you think if someone said, "Your no has a price"?

3. The hero offered a WAVE instead of a hug. Why is offering an alternative important? Does saying no mean saying nothing?

↳ What are other alternatives to a hug that still show you care?

4. Boundaries in this story apply to family members, not just strangers. Why is that important?

↳ Is it okay to say no to someone you love? Does it mean you don't love them?

Facilitation Tips

SENSITIVE TOPIC: Body autonomy is a safety essential but must be handled with care. Some children may have experienced boundary violations. Keep the tone empowering, never frightening. The story's power is in the EVERYDAY scenarios (unwanted hugs at family gatherings) that build the muscle for more serious situations. Never force physical demonstrations. If a child discloses abuse, follow your school's mandatory reporting protocol immediately.

Emotional Payoff

The child learns that their body's signals are ALWAYS worth listening to, that their no is THEIRS and can never be bought, and that the grown-ups in their life should honor their boundaries. The parent repair moment (catching the bribe) models what healthy adult behavior looks like. The child leaves with a physical, portable tool: when my body says no, I listen.

After Reading Activities

Body Signals Map

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Body outline templates, stickers, crayons

On a body outline, children mark WHERE they feel different signals: butterflies in the tummy (nervousness), tight shoulders (pulling away), hot face (embarrassment), shaky hands (fear), calm heart (safety). Discuss: these signals are your body's early warning system. They're ALWAYS worth listening to. Label each one and practice naming them: "Right now I feel _____ in my _____."

The No Practice

Duration: 10 min | Materials: None

Practice saying no in different scenarios (friendly but firm). Scenario 1: "Can I borrow your toy?" / "No, I'm using it." Scenario 2: "Give me a hug!" / "No thank you, but I'll give you a wave!" Scenario 3: "If you do this, I'll give you a treat." / "My no isn't for sale." Practice different NO tones: firm, friendly, quiet, loud. ALL are valid.

The Alternatives Chart

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Large paper, markers

As a class, brainstorm alternatives to hugs: waves, high-fives, fist bumps, thumbs up, air hugs, blowing a kiss, a smile. Create a colorful "Ways to Show I Care" poster for the classroom. The lesson: saying no to one thing doesn't mean saying no to everything. You can care AND have boundaries.

Writing Prompts

- Draw your body signals map. Where do you feel "yes" (safe, happy) and where do you feel "no" (uncomfortable, nervous)? What do those signals tell you?
- Write about a time you said no and it was hard. What happened? Were you glad you said it?
- Design a poster for younger kids: "Your No Rules!" Include three rules about body autonomy that every kid should know.

Home Connection

Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we read "My Body Says No!" about trusting body signals, saying no with confidence, and understanding that a no can never be traded for a reward. Your child created a Body Signals Map and practiced saying no in different scenarios. We also discussed that boundaries apply to ALL relationships, including family.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Practice honoring your child's "no" at home — even when it's inconvenient (e.g., not forcing goodbye hugs)
- Ask your child to show you their Body Signals Map and explain where they feel different emotions
- Have a conversation: "You never have to hug, kiss, or touch anyone you don't want to. And nobody gets to bribe you out of your no."

With warmth,

Your Child's Teacher

Related Books

- My Body Belongs to Me by Jill Starishevsky
- No Means No! by Jayneen Sanders
- C Is for Consent by Eleanor Morrison
- Let's Talk About Body Boundaries by Jayneen Sanders