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If you're the parent of a pre-teen, the Penn State stories of the last couple of weeks can have you horrified at the possibility that someone you trust could possibly sexually abuse your child. Take this opportunity to teach your kids about how their bodies work, and how pedophiles can use this as a trap.

Consider starting a conversation by asking your child what they might have heard happened at Penn State. Listen to their answer without interruption. Gently correct any misinformation, ask if they have any questions, then, tell them what you want them to know using your family's terms for the sexual anatomy. I suggest making the following points:

There are some adults who touch children in their sexual parts, sometimes touching or even kissing children in the way that should be reserved for grownups who love each other.

As you continue, you might say "It's really important to me that you understand this, so ask questions"

Your penis/vagina works in a very interesting way. When touched in certain ways, these special parts of your body can automatically feel good, sometimes whether your brain wants to or not. These feelings in your penis/vagina can be compared to being tickled -- you may giggle even if you want the person to stop!

You may tell an older child that they will learn about the *autonomic nervous system* in health class. Explain that it's one of the tools the brain uses to control the body, that it's what makes the body react in certain ways without you actually deciding. Give examples like getting goose bumps when cold or blinking from dust in the eye. If your family has discussed erections, bring that into the conversation. Plan a follow-up discussion on the private, positive aspect of sexual arousal for both boys and girls.

There are some people -- thankfully very, very few, who touch children in the penis/vagina area and make their body have these special feelings. They sometimes start with games or touch that have nothing to do with your penis/vagina, then gradually include your private body parts. Kids, like you, are not expected to be able to tell a good grown up from a bad one. That's why Mom and Dad make it our job to know every grown up in your life.

No one gets to touch you anywhere and say it's a secret.

A pedophile understands the autonomic nature of sexual arousal and uses a child's lack of understanding to persuade a child to keep their special secret.

I want you to know how your sex parts work so no one can ever convince you that you "like" something" just because your body reacted in a special way.

Most kids have experienced sexual arousal by middle school, and have a vague understanding at best. Take this opportunity to help your kids understand this very important, life affirming physical response and how others might exploit it.

[Dr. Janet Rosenzweig](http://www.SexWiseParent.com) is the author of [The Sex-Wise Parent: The Parent's Guide to Protecting Your Child and Strengthening Your Family](#), from Skyhorse Publishing. Find more information for parents at www.SexWiseParent.com