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Imaginif...

Play kept our kids safe.

# PARENT SENSE

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## Special points of interest:

- BITSS of protective play can help protect our children.
- Remember all the BITSS you need to know to keep your kids safe.
- Families who don't talk are at risk of child sexual assault.
- Imaginif Pty Ltd has other protective play resources to keep kids safe.

## BITSS to keep our children safe from people harm

All parents want to protect their children. Their safety is our job. Just as we teach them road, sun, water, farm and poison safety, so too must we teach our children rules about personal safety.

The BITSS model of protective behaviours has been designed by a Mum of four to help parents remember the important BITSS of personal safety.

By daily use of the **BITSS** letters of Protective Behaviours you will teach your children:

**Body ownership:** Sense: This is my body and no one can touch it if I don't want them to. I will tell.

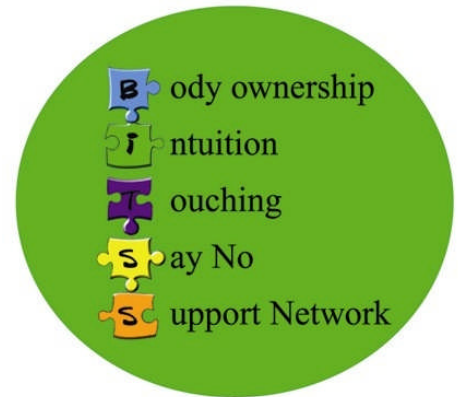
**Intuition:** Feelings of being unsafe or unsure are your intuition or early warning signs. These feelings often occur as a body feeling, or a thought. **Sense:** Children will recognise early warning signs, listen to them, and act upon them. Tell someone.

**Touching:** Some touches are good, like a beautiful smelling flower leaving bits of golden pollen on your nose. Some touches are bad, like a bee crawling out of the flower and stinging you on the nose, getting asthma or sneezing from the flower.

Likewise, some personal touches are good, like Mum or Dad cuddling you. **Sense:** Some personal touches are bad, like someone cuddling you and trying to touch your private parts. Tell someone if this happens.

**Say "NO":** Although toddlers may start out saying "no" when learning to speak, many outgrow it because we tell them that it's not nice to say "no" to a grown up. **Sense:** It's okay to say "no" if you feel unsafe, unsure, or if anyone tries to touch your private parts or be sexy with you. Tell someone. It is not rude to say no to someone who tries to touch your privates but it is wrong for them to be sexy with children.

**Support Network:** Children without people they can turn to are at risk of being sexually abused. Teach your child to pick five trusted adults or services (e.g. Police) that they can tell bad secrets to. If the first person doesn't listen, tell your child that they can go to the next support person and the next. Children need to know it's okay to keep



The BITSS model of protective behaviours was designed by Megan Bayliss from Imaginif.

telling until somebody listens and helps them. **Sense:** It's okay to tell if something is not right. It's okay to keep telling until somebody helps you.

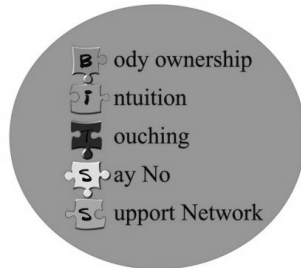
## BITSS to know

Parent sense comes from one parent to another. The BITSS of sense are a collection of simple games you can play: BITSS letters to help you get across to your children important messages about rights, listening to their bodies, about what is acceptable, being okay about saying "no" and about who they can talk to when anything bothers them. These BITSS games are based

on my learning from working with children who have been sexually abused and with the families of those amazing children. To these people, thank you for giving me the space to learn with you and to create everyday activities that stop other children from suffering in silence. This parent sense tutorial is for all of you.

## Why do we need to do a few BITSS daily?

BITSS are important letters to include in everyday play with your children: **B**ody ownership, **I**ntuition, **T**ouching, **S**ay No, **S**upport Network.



By using these bits of play letters, every day, you will reduce the chance that your child will remain silent if someone tries to sexually abuse them.

BITSS are important letters to include in everyday play.

Using play you will find teachable moments to use any one, or all, of the BITSS letters. Play is children's work. It is through BITSS of play that they will learn about self-protection, how to tell someone if something does happen to them and how to say "no." You probably already help protect your

children against sexual assault. But, they need gentle, daily, reminders of what to do. BITSS play provides you with some fun ways to daily remind. Use these bits of information in everyday activities (bathing, making sandwiches, reading, playing together, etc) so that your children continually hear the BITSS required in keeping them safe from child sexual assault.

## But why? My child is safe!

Child sexual abuse is massively under reported because children don't tell and parents can't hear. Children are too scared or don't know how to talk and parents often don't know what to do. The reported amount of child sexual abuse that you may read in the newspapers and some government reports are called incidence statistics. These numbers tell the amount of disclosures to either Police or State Welfare bodies. They are very low compared to what many

people know is actually happening out there. When you hear of counsellors quoting a different figure (like one in three girls and one in five boys) this is a prevalence statistic. This means that child sexual abuse is more prevalent than what is reported to Police. Prevalence testing is done on adults, asking them to look back on unwanted sexual experiences as children. When we are children, we often don't have the words or understanding to be able to tell that

Eighty five percent of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by somebody well known to the child: somebody that has access to your child on an ongoing basis.

situations are wrong. It is often not until adulthood, when we have the information, that we look back and realise that what happened was abuse.

## How come our children are being sexually abused?

Eighty five percent of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by somebody well known to the child: somebody that has access to your child on an ongoing basis. Perpetrators use a grooming process on children to prepare and trick them into accepting sexual abuse. They use

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...it was easy to pick a perpetrator. It's not. They are sneaky and trick us all.

everyday behaviours to test whether your child is likely to disclose secrets. If the perpetrator is satisfied that your child is unlikely to tell, they move onto other forms of abuse, like bad touching. This grooming process can take many months, and includes grooming adults around the child. Including you.

Parents are groomed to disbelieve any thing their child may say about bad touches. Perpetrators often present themselves as wonderful, caring people. They involve themselves in your family's life and are seen to be doing great things in the community. They are purposely trying to trick us all into believing they are safe, concerned, good citizens. Break their trickery by telling.

## Whose fault is it? Am I a bad parent?

If your child is sexually assaulted, it is NEVER their fault. Many parents have no idea that a friend/family member is hurting their children and that is not their fault either. Eighty five percent of men DO NOT sexually abuse children. The fifteen percent of male perpetrators who do are sneaky and hide their bad behaviour. Child sexual assault is always the responsibility of the perpetrator: a person who knows exactly what they are doing and will try to convince you that your child is lying. Don't listen to this. It is part of the grooming process. Continue to be a good parent and listen to your child.

**Listen  
to your  
child.**



**BITSS of listening may just  
save your child.**

## What can I do if my child tells me someone has done bad things to them?

It is not your responsibility to investigate and prove. Leave this to the Police or to the welfare agency in your state tasked with the responsibility of investigation. Child sexual assault is against the law. Don't keep it to yourself. First believe your child and then TELL someone. This helps to end the prevalence figure of one in three.

Child sexual abuse WILL CONTINUE if we don't all take responsibility and tell someone when it has occurred. Tell the school principal, your local doctor, the police, a friend. The local Welfare agency. TELL SOMEONE.

## Let's share and help each other.

I would love to hear different ideas of how you are already including BITSS sense in your family. You can write to me at the address on the back of this tutorial. Perhaps I could include your ideas in another tutorial. Child protection is everybody's responsibility. Sharing activities you already use may just help another family, and protect another child. I know I would be grateful if it protected one of my children.

**Imaginif... there was a world  
without child sexual abuse.**

**By using these bits of play letters, every day,  
you will reduce the chance that your child will remain  
silent if someone tries to sexually abuse them.**

## Embe's story

Embe was seven when a family friend started paying him a lot of attention. The friend would seek Embe out, buy him lollies, take him on outings and treated him as a prince. Because Embe's parents were busy with their jobs and their other children, they were grateful that Embe had some individual atten-

tion from such a nice, responsible man. Embe's behaviour became worse and worse. He did graffiti on walls, other's property and wrote rude notes at school. Embe was in trouble at school, home and in his heart. He was trying to tell someone what was happening



**Parent Sense games  
can help protect  
children like Embe.**

but he didn't have the words to explain and nobody had the time to listen to his behaviour. Embe's parents moved when he was 12. This was when the abuse stopped.

Embe was 22 when he told his parents what had happened. Although shocked, they listened, believed and helped get the assistance Embe needed.

## BITSS: Body ownership

From the moment we are born our bodies belong to us. They are our human signature. Babies may need to rely on adults to care for them but each baby's body is still unique: unique skin, tone, imprints, hair, voice, size and shape.

A newborn baby has little realisation of where their body begins and ends, so as loving parents we engage in touch, good touch, to teach our babies what is theirs and what is ours. We stroke them, massage them and put clothes on them to give a message of body ownership.

Children who are at risk of sexual abuse, or who have already been sexually assaulted often don't have a good idea of their body size or where their body boundaries begin and end. Too frequently they fail to recognise their real size in relation to a potential perpetrator. Sometimes they think they are as big as the perpetrator and sometimes they see themselves as much smaller and helpless than everybody else in their family. This size confusion is a result of lowered self-esteem and something that perpetrators may focus on in their grooming process. For this reason it is important to teach our children body ownership and to assist in ensuring they have a healthy self-esteem.

**Gingerbread person:** Using a gingerbread person cutter you can show your child the outline of the gingerbread body. Explain that every person has their own body outline and that each of us is different. Our body outline is our boundary and protector. Nobody can touch us if we don't want them to.

**Atlas/Globe:** Using maps or a globe show that every state/suburb/country has a boundary. The boundary shows the body of the country. Most of these countries have armies that help to protect the boundary. Our clothes are like an army. They help to protect our body and give a sign to other people that certain parts of our body are private – the parts we wear underwear or swimming costumes over.

**Paper doll chains:** Make a paper doll chain with your child. As part of the game show how the dolls are holding hands or touching feet but not touching any other body parts. This is because some dolls and people don't like being touched and we must respect that. Sometimes we don't like being touched and we can use our words to tell, but dolls don't have words so they have to tell us by allowing touching hands only.

**Body outlines:** As an activity to display different body size, have your child lie on a big piece of paper with their legs together. Draw around their body. Then have the child draw around yours and compare sizes. Stick the body outlines to the wall as a way to visually display the difference in size between an adult and a child. Tell the child that it is an adult's job to look after children because adults are bigger and can do more things. **WARNING** – never draw around a child's genital area. Children who have been sexually abused may interpret this as a sexual



"...are holding hands ... but not touching any other body parts."

behaviour and become confused about it. Also, perpetrators may use this exercise as a way to desensitise children against having their private parts touched or looked at.

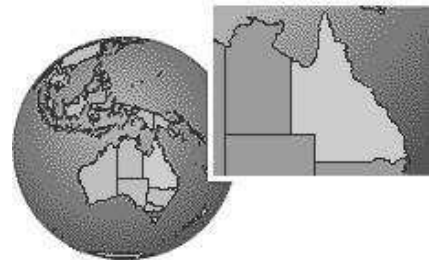
**Photo collages:** Using pictures cut from magazines, make a people collage. Talk about the difference in size between adults and children and stress that adults look after children, not hurt them or do adult type things with them (like making them do all the housework or kissing like Mum and Dad).

**Swimming costumes:** Use dressing or swimming time to introduce private parts. The parts that our swimmers or undies cover are private parts of our body that we don't share with other people. They are ours and nobody can touch them. Exceptions are parents washing and health workers checking. When children say, "What will I draw?" respond "How about a picture of you in your swimmers? Remember to cover your private parts, and don't forget a hat".

**A word a week: Correct names of body parts:** Many parents are uncomfortable with using the correct name for body parts. To provide your child with the best protection, they need to know the correct or "language" name for their private areas and require instruction from you that nobody can touch them in those places unless Mum or Dad are washing them or unless they are sick and the doctor or nurse needs to look there. It can be hard to introduce the correct names if you have been using nicknames since the child was born. Overcome this by introducing a game of "A word a week". By teaching a new word a week, say "partition", or "adventurous" you are normalising the introduction of words of

the week like vagina, penis, anus, and breasts.

**Fences and doors:** Explain to children that the reason we have fences or doors is to give a message of defensible space: space that belongs to us and says "Private. No entry". That's why we shut the toilet door when we go to the toilet! Sand play is a great way to reinforce defensible space. When your child builds a sand castle tell them that strong walls and moats were a castle's protection and that a sun hat and sun cream are the child's protection now, just like wearing swimming costumes to protect private parts.



...it is important to teach our children body ownership and to assist in ensuring they have a healthy self-esteem.

## BITSS: Intuition

Intuition is the adult term for early warning signs. It is sometimes said that females have better intuition than males because girls are much more sensitive. Perhaps that's only because we train our sons NOT to rely on their intuition. Not to show their feelings about things. We like them to be rational, sensible and scientific, cut off from their feelings. And when children are sensitive we put them down by telling them not to be girls/sissies/cry babies!?! The other thing we often do when children show emotion is to tell them to grow up and act their age. Enough! Stop NOW! By training the feelings out of our children we are teaching them to not recognise and act on sexual abuse. Today is the day we start teaching our children to recognise and listen to their early warning signs and to act on them as children. Don't wait until they are young adults and force them to make belated safety decisions about walking alone at night or unsafe partying.

Children need to learn the very basic rules about intuition, body warnings, while they are still young. If they don't get it as children they will not trust their intuition as they get older. Our early warning signs, our body feelings, are nature's way of giving us a message that something is good or bad. The worst that can happen is that we might be wrong. Better to be wrong than sexually abused! My goodness! No wonder so many children are being sexually abused. We are training the feeling out of them.

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse often pick children who are disconnected from their early warning signs, children who are unlikely to say anything even if they do have a feeling that something is wrong. Protect your child by offering activities and discussions that include listening to their body. There are some lovely storybooks about this. Buy one. Today. Read it to your child often.

**Dog's hair/cat's tail:** Animals are great for showing off their early warning signs. Animals have not had it trained out of them: it is an automatic process just like when we are cold we get goose bumps. When dogs are bothered by the presence of another dog the hairs on their backs are automatically raised and they often bare their teeth. This is the dog's physical early warning sign telling its opponent to back off! Cats automatically flick their tails and flatten their ears. When we scare, annoy or hurt an animal their body tells us to leave them alone. Because we fear being hurt by them we tend to become sensible and back off. And so it is for perpetrators of child sexual abuse. If a child displays their early warning signs the perpetrator will back off. The child is telling them it is not



Animals are great for showing off their early warning signs. Encourage your child to become Dingo like.

safe, that there will be a consequence to the abusive behaviour. The child becomes the hunter and the perpetrator runs.

Ask your child what their early warning sign is for any different situation: do they feel like they have a tiger in their tummy trying to get out, or can they feel the hairs on the back of their neck standing up? Encourage your child to describe how they are feeling, and don't laugh at their descriptions. Remember that children don't have an adult vocabulary.

The classic example of this is a child saying they have a headache in their stomach. They know they have a pain but can't describe it in detail. It is up to us to help them to find the right words to describe how they are feeling. How are they ever going to do this if we don't help them pinpoint feelings in a range of different (happy, sad, scary, etc) situations?

**Scary stories or movies:** Scary stories are a great way to introduce physical early warning signs. When reading a story together you can ask your child how their body is feeling. If they respond that they don't know, reflect to them what their body is doing: curled up in a ball, fists clenched, sweating, chewing fingernails, etc.

**Common physical descriptions from children:** In my work with children I have heard many early warning signs. These include:

- A pack of wolves in my tummy.
- A ball of string with lots of knots in it.
- Fire or skull and crossbones in my stomach.
- A question sign/bell in my head.
- Beautiful smelling flowers in my heart.
- Ants biting me all over.
- Legs like Mummy's tummy, all wobbly.
- An echidna in my chest.

Use some of these or invent your own when you discuss feelings with your child. By modeling a verbal description of how your body is feeling linked to the emotional

word you would use, you are assisting your child to gain a greater feeling vocabulary. Use a variety of physical descriptions to match a whole range of emotions, not just scared or angry feelings. Remember the good feelings too. How would you describe the body feelings for happiness, relief and excitement? Describing feelings is not just about the painful feelings. All feelings are natural and are there to tell us something.

**Drawing/writing exercise using prompt pictures:** Show your child a picture (magazine, photo, card). Ask them to draw/write the way their body would react to the situation in the picture. When children respond by saying they would punch/kiss the person, or run away, ask them to draw/write what would be happening inside their body where nobody else can see. This process is a bit like peeling an onion. There are layers to get through to help connect with body reactions, emotional layers that are deeper than the behaviours children show us.

**Art collage of different faces:** Cut faces out of magazines and glue to a sheet of paper. Ask the child to say how they think each person is feeling. Learning emotional language will help your child throughout life. When they can express emotions, children have a better chance of telling you if something happens to them. Because children don't have an extended emotional vocabulary they act out their emotions as a way of telling us something is wrong. As parents, we often miss these messages, and ask the child to stop being naughty/silly/annoying. If your child cannot find words to express their emotions, they have

# BITSS: Intuition (continued)

body stances. Mix the pieces up and have the child match them together. While the child is matching, give hints about what a person's legs might look like if they've got an angry face and have their arms crossed, or what a face might look like when the arms and legs are hanging limp.

**Mime:** When the opportunity arises and the kids are bored with nothing to do, play a miming game. Silently act out a particular body reaction to any emotion and ask the children to guess what you are feeling. Offer a prize for correct answers. Gingerbread people make great food prizes because you can then naturally mention body ownership. Remember though that food is a child's right and food rewards must never be used to replace good care and nutrition. A food reward needs to be something special. A real treat, not something that the child has a basic right to on a daily basis.



"..act out a particular body reaction to any emotion..."

sand and crystal clear water) is whispered into the first child's ear. That child then whispers the message into the next child's ear and this continues, passing to each child until the message is back to the beginning person. The first child then states, out loud, the message they have just received. It is generally quite different to the way it started. Say SURPRISE, SURPRISE! If a child asks to play the secret game again (as they do), correct them by saying, "It's called surprises because you must never keep secrets." Playing this game prepares a child's mind for changing the word "secrets" to "surprises" and assists children to remember to tell a b o u t b a d secrets.

**"The worst that can happen is that we might be wrong. Better to be wrong than sexually abused! "**

**What ideas have you picked up from other people to help you protectively play with intuition (feelings, early warning signs)?**

**List them here so you don't forget them.**

**Surprises:** We have a rule in our house that the word "secret" is not to be used EVER. Secrets are bad things, things that you can't tell anyone, whereas a surprise is something that can be kept confidential until a particular time, like the chocolate we bought for Mum's birthday. Often perpetrators will encourage children to keep secrets. Bad secrets hurt children and they

need to know they don't have to keep them. Remember, nothing is so awful that we can't talk to someone about it. This rule needs to be reinforced by discouraging the keeping of "secrets".



**Secrets are bad things, things that you can't tell anyone.**

Introduce changing "secret" to "surprises" by playing the following game and letting children know that it is never okay to keep secrets because when they stay in your head they make you feel all jumbled up. They get more scary and confused and we feel awful. Secrets must be broken. Telling someone out loud is the best way to stop secrets. Play "Surprises": this is similar to the old Chinese Whispers game (also called "secrets"), a game of secret messages that become changed, distorted and nothing like the first secret. You need a group of children. A positive message (e.g. The beach is beautiful today with its golden



There are approximately 2000 feeling words in our language. We usually stick to only ever using 6 words to describe how we feel. It's time to change that because being able to describe your insides, helps to give a voice to what's happening outside.

## BITSS: Touch

Any touch can turn from good to bad. So too does sexual activity and the grooming process that leads up to sexual abuse. Therefore it is important your child understands good touches/bad touches. Just as adults have the authority to say no at any time, so too do children. If someone is cuddling them and then tries to touch their private parts, children need to know this is a bad touch and they can say no and go and tell someone, even though the cuddle was good at first and they really wanted it.

Most children are familiar with the idea of bad touches out of the blue. If someone comes up to your child in the playground and hits them, this would definitely be a bad touch. If someone grabs them while they are in the shopping centre, this is a bad touch. If their sister runs off with their favourite toy, this is a bad touch. This is fairly easy for children to understand.

Many parents still teach about stranger danger and children being dragged into a car by a person who pretends to know the parents. While this does still happen and children still need to be aware of this danger, they are at FAR GREATER risk of being sexually abused by someone in their own home. Approximately eighty five percent of reported child sexual abuse is perpetrated by somebody well known to the child. It is VERY IMPORTANT that parents teach their children about how good touches can sometimes turn into bad touches. This knowledge could prevent sexual abuse by making perpetrators think twice about sexually abusing your child because your child is savvy and might tell.

Nature and our daily lives are full of examples just waiting to be used as teachable good touch/bad touch moments. The games on the next pages will give you some ideas to start with. I know that once you start playing with them you will see other examples all around you. Use them. I prefer to always use examples of good touches leading to bad and unwanted sexual touches but I know through experience that some parents are frightened of spoiling their child's innocence by introducing the topic of child sexual abuse. However, while our children remain at risk of being sexually abused it is our responsibility to ensure that they know that sometimes trusted adults, including family members, can use good touches to trick them into accepting bad touches.

Just to further complicate things, sometimes children enjoy the bad sexual touches. They feel loved and wanted and think this is normal activity. This is partly due to the way our bodies are made and partly because perpetrators groom the children and other adults around them to believe this is acceptable and normal. Do not allow yourself or your children to be fooled. Have very clear boundaries (Body ownership) and use as many occasions as you can to reinforce the good touch bad touch thermometer in discussions about child sexual assault.

**Rule poster:** Make up a poster collage that depicts good touches that turn to bad touches. Even an ice cream on a hot day leading up to a melted ice cream and a sad child is a great example of good touch to bad touch and is something that most children would be able to identify with. Draw a big red line through the middle of the collage, through the behaviours that are beginning to become suspicious, and tell your children that it is at this point that they must tell the person that they are going to tell on them. This is not tittle-tattling or dobbing. This is you protecting your children against the possibility of sexual abuse.

**Traffic Lights:** When teaching children colours many parents use some sort of reward system for when the child gets the colour right. If you show behaviours as traffic lights, where green is good touch, orange is suspicious or iffy "I'm going to tell" touch, and red is "No way! I'm telling now" touch, it is easy for them to remember that behaviours can change from go to stop. Reward your child for correct guess-

ing of behaviours. A sticker, or a story, is better than a food reward as food and good nutrition is a child's right, not a treat.

**Flowers:** As beautiful as some flowers may be, they have the potential to turn from a good touch to a bad touch. Use them as an example. Running up to smell a beautiful flower may result in being pricked by a thorn, stung by a bee, or getting a rash on your face from poison leaves or petals. People too can start off being nice but end up hurting us with their words or touch.

**Animals:** Many parents warn children about patting dogs, "Be careful! That dog might bite". This is a perfect example of good touch/bad touch. Use these teachable moments to explain that sometimes, good things can turn to bad things and that children need to watch for changes and know when to back away. If you are patting a cat and its tail starts flicking it is the cat's early warning sign to us that it is unhappy. Your child is at risk of being bitten or scratched by the cat.

**Chatterbox:** Make a chatterbox out of a square piece of paper. Most children know how to make one so ask the experts for assistance here! On the inside faces, include statements about good touch/bad touch. Children love a bit of rot so don't make it all serious. Put something like, "You cuddled a koala and it pooped on you. / Boo Hoo, Poo Poo". The aim is to get it into the child's head that sometimes, good things turn to bad things and that it's okay to react when this happens.

**Miming:** When the children are bored and ask you what they can do, as a fun alternative to suggesting they clean their rooms, play a miming game, similar to Charades. Mime out a good touch that turns to a bad touch and then mime going to tell someone what has happened. The good touch/bad touch mime does not need to be around abuse. It could be greet kissing a friend who has very bad breath and the kiss turns into a breath holding session. If you choose to mime a cuddle that turns to a sexual touch please follow it up with a discussion about body ownership and the importance of telling someone what has happened.



## BITSS: Support Network

The children who are most at risk of sexual abuse are those who have no support networks - those who do not have a range of trusted adults they can talk to. Whereas once we lived in extended family groups, often surrounded by grandparents and aunts and uncles, nowadays we tend to be isolated from our family, friends, and other emotional supports. We tend to live busy lives with little time for just chatting with our children or friends.

Support networks are important for all of us. Perpetrators zero in on children without supports. Worse still, perpetrators will groom a child's supports and trick them into believing that the child is lying about sexual abuse. They isolate us from our supports in case we raise suspicions or hear other's suspicions. The best way to counteract this is to remain in contact with our friends, to talk, to listen, and to believe. If we do this as adults, we are modeling good relationships to our children, teaching them it's okay to talk to others and to have lives outside the family home.

Given that some families have become isolated due to the need to travel for work or for cheaper housing, we too often have no one we know to talk to or to call on for support. This is one of the reasons why communities have Neighbourhood Centres and Women's Centres. Isolation places us at risk and if the only supports we have are community agencies then they are there waiting for us to use them. Children also need supports. When parents are isolated and unable to model talking about problems or worries to friends, children remain at a loss as to whom they can talk to.

**Hand:** When adults are stressed they often forget things, like telephone numbers or birth dates. When children become stressed they also forget things. Their mind is so busy attempting to work out what is happening there is little memory room left for remembering. Both adults and children need a memory aid to assist remembering things – like a telephone or birthday book. Children can't carry heavy books all the time so show them how to use their hand as a memory aid.

Use the symbol of a hand to encourage having five support people that a child can contact at any time. It could be Mum, Dad, Teacher, Grandma, Aunty. The list of possibilities is endless. The idea is to ensure that your child remembers they can talk to these people about anything at all. In situations where you just don't know enough trusted people, use the names of services like Kids Help Line (1800 55 1800), or Police.

This needs to be continually reinforced so that when your child is feeling stressed about something, particularly if it is sexual abuse, they can look at their hand and remember what to do: to call and tell someone. Tell your child that if the first support person is not available, go to the next, or the next. Encourage children to keep telling until someone does something to help and protect them.

Trace the child's hand. On each of the fingers have the child write the name and telephone number of their five chosen support people. It's best to tell the people they've been chosen so that if your child rings they will listen and do something. Stick the hand to a wall where the child will continually see it, and practise, practise,

practise remembering who to tell if they need to talk about anything.

**Walkie Talkies:** Just as hands and fans are used as a reminder that there are at least five people to talk to about anything that is bothering them, feet and toes can also be used. We call them "Walkie Talkies." Encourage your child to walk and talk to any of their support people about anything that they may want to discuss. Sometimes children are so worried about telling a support person something personal that the actual plan of how to get to the person is forgotten. If you have used some of the earlier ideas about having the phone numbers handy of support people to talk to, the children may innocently overlook the people closest to them that they can turn to for support. Along with phoning someone, walking and talking is another way to get support. If Nan's in the kitchen it's just as easy for the child to walk out to her and tell her what's on their mind. Likewise, if the child is at school, they could walk to their teacher during little/big lunch and tell them.

Decorating feet, and calling them "Walkie Talkies" is a simple, cheap and effective way to get the message across. Draw around the outline of your child's foot. Each toe is a support person. Decorate the toes to make them resemble a particular support. For example, if the big toe is nominated as Dad, decorate it with wool similar to Dad's hair colouring. Ask your child to draw in the facial features using the best colour to match eyes/lips. Be creative. Use scrap materials or just pencils. Underneath the decorated toes write a statement to remind your child to walk and talk to their support people: i.e., "I walk to Mum, I walk to Gran, I walk to Pete and

Uncle Ted, I walk all day to find Louise, now I need you to help me please."

**Fan:** The fan is a variation of the hand. Fold a piece of paper into five concertinaed sections to make a fan shape. Write the name of a support person on each fold, and their telephone number on the back. Decorate the fan however the child wants: drawings, glue pretty things on, etc. This is slightly more fun than the hand exercise as the child has something they can play with. Given that any of these ideas need to be made part of daily life and reinforced continually so that children remember them, it is quite acceptable to keep changing the way you present the information. Instead of a hand or a fan, use a picture of an umbrella with five different sections, or a row of five paper dolls (see body ownership).

**Telephone practice:** It is safest to teach your child how to use the telephone. It is no good providing them with support people information if they don't know how to contact them. Using play telephones, teach your children the rudiments of telephone usage and telephone etiquette (Hello, it's Megan here. Can I speak with Susie please?). Next time you ring a family member, allow your child to dial the numbers. If they do not practise, they may be unable to make that call when they need to.

**Phone card:** For older children it is always a good idea to provide them with a phone card and to show them how to use a phone box. Believe it or not, not all children have mobile phones!

## Imaginif PTY LTD is the home of the talk doctors

Megan Bayliss, Rebekah Allen and Fran Burke  
PO Box 995  
Edge Hill  
QLD 4870

Phone: 07 4032 5034  
Email: [megan@imaginif.com.au](mailto:megan@imaginif.com.au)  
ABN: 85 114 419 537

Megan writes daily to :  
[www.imaginif.com.au](http://www.imaginif.com.au)  
Come visit and add your ideas.

Imaginif...protective play kept our children safe.

We have other protective play resources too. Come to a monthly Protective Play party to experience them.



...play kept our kids safe!

Imaginif PTY LTD has great pleasure in introducing parents around the world to a simple, effective and at home fun way to help protect their children against sexual abuse: BITSS of protective play ideas and protective behaviour resources.

BITSS resources can now be bought by the general public from Imaginif, or on eBay.com.au, with special bulk deals available to clubs, organizations and government departments who may want to print multiple copies of resources.

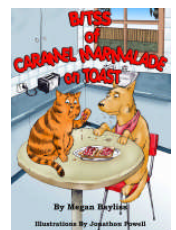
The BITSS model of protective behaviours was developed by Aussie Social Worker, therapist and mother of 4, Megan Bayliss in late 1999. It took her 5 years to refine the BITSS model after talking with thousands of parents, carers, children, counselors, government workers and community groups, both in Australia and in the UK, about what difference they needed to protect their children.

The vast majority of parents said:  
***they wanted something they could use at home on a daily basis, that was easy to find and buy, and that didn't cost a lot.***

All through these discussions with people just like you, Megan tested and retested BITSS with real children and parents in an effort to ensure that the play ideas were easy, could be remembered in all situations, and covered the important elements of protective behaviours.

**BITSS IS EASY, but, more importantly, when practiced daily, it helps to keep our kids safe.**

Have you seen Megan's children's chapter book, *Bits of Caramel Marmalade on Toast*? It's available from Imaginif, Angus and Robertson and Collin's Booksellers in Cairns. Action packed with protective learning it's one of those "read another chapter please" books. RRP \$15.00.



## The final BITSS

There are endless ways to include BITSS letters and games as part of your child's everyday life. The suggestions here are like an entrée to get you thinking and playing. Be curious, create different activities, seek out more information or think about getting a few resource aids from sexual assault centres or other places that deal with child sexual abuse. There are some great computer games around (FPQ and Brave Hearts) that children can play too. Host a protective behaviours party in your home for your group of support people/friends. Spread the word to other parents. Ask your childcare centre to host a workshop. Most importantly, make BITSS every day play practice in your home and **TELL** the police if your child discloses sexual assault.

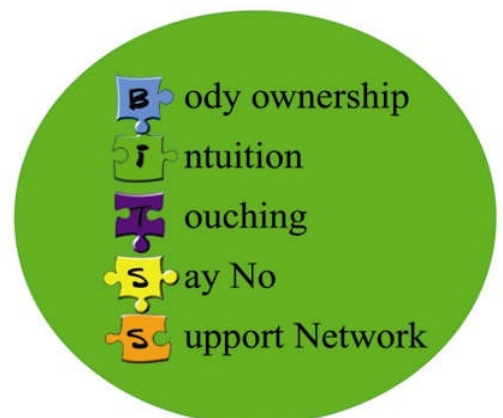
If up to one in three children are sexually abused then that means that two out of three aren't. As a collective group of parents, let's **move our children to the book club of the two who aren't hurt.**

The more unhurt books in the book club means that the one in three figure has to improve. Let's write a new book that tells perpetrators that the time has come. We're watching, we're telling and we're taking the control back. As the incidence statistic goes up (people reporting child sexual abuse at the time it happens), it is my dream that the prevalence statistic (adults disclosing through survey that they were abused as children) will go down. Perpetrators will have the book thrown at them. They will read that our children will tell, that we'll back them up and that they'd better think twice about sexually abusing our children.

Finally, please remember, if your child is sexually abused it is never their fault. It is ALWAYS the responsibility of the perpetrator. Frequently parents have no idea that it is happening. This is not their fault either. Remember that perpetrators groom adults as well. Break this vicious cycle by telling the authorities.

Have fun playing with the BITSS games suggested in this book and don't forget to email me the BITSS you already do. Stay curious about finding new ways to protect your child and investigate and increase what is already going right for you and your children.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.



BITSS is EASY to remember:  
Body ownership, Intuition, Touch, Say no, Support network.