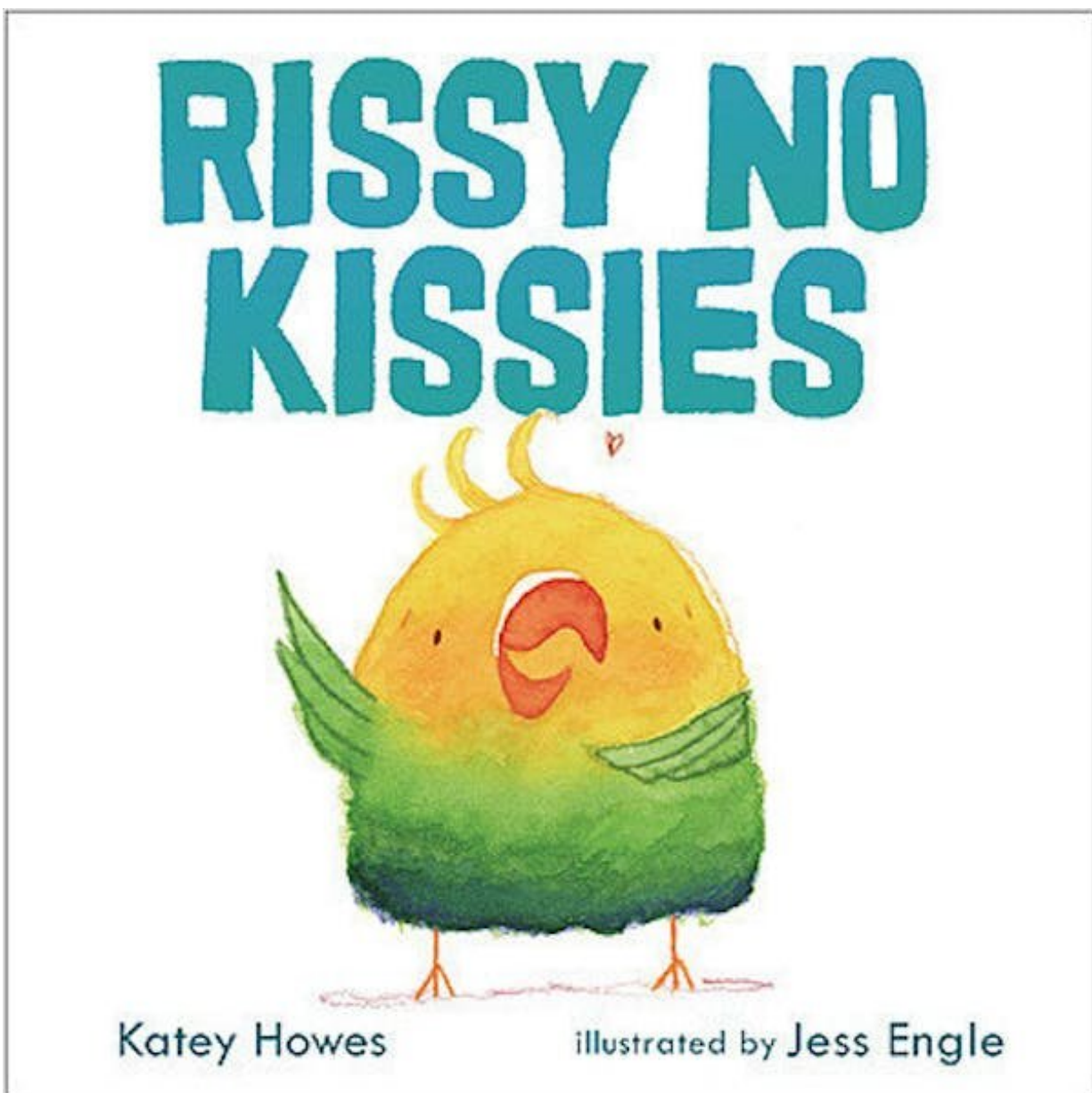


How do you teach a primary school child about consent? You can start with these books

September 23 2022, by Emma Whatman and Paul Venzo



Rissy No Kissies by Katey Howes. Credit: Lerner Publishing Group

Parents will be increasingly aware they need to talk about [consent](#) with their children.

There is no such thing as "too young" to start the conversation. In fact, the earlier the better, when it comes to understanding how to have respect for your body and other people's.

We are researchers on children's literature that deals with issues around sex and gender. Books can provide a safe, engaging way to discuss the tricky but vital topic of consent.

Books for younger children

For primary-aged children, books don't usually discuss [sexual consent](#), but cover topics such as [boundaries](#), safe touching and healthy relationships.

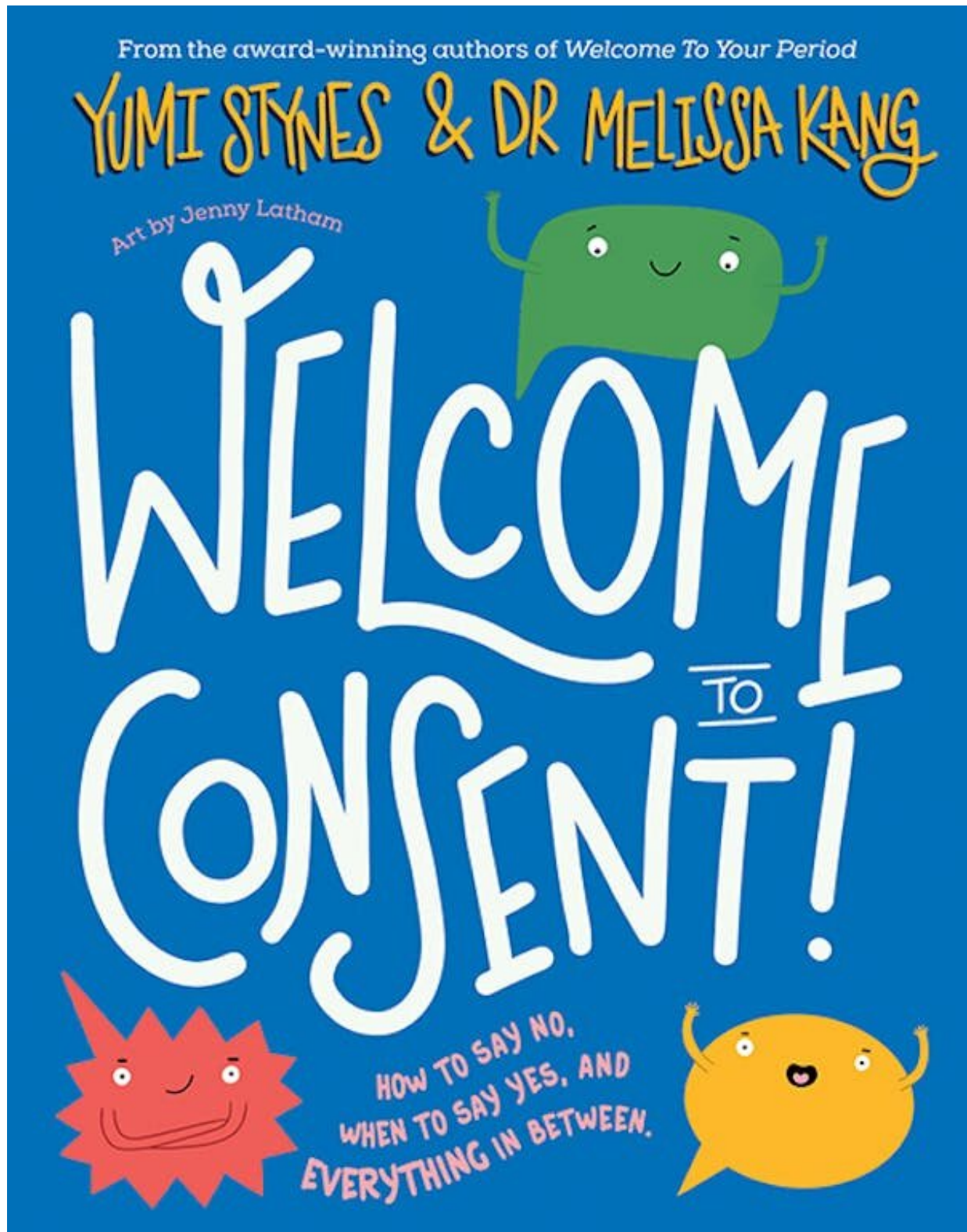
[Let's Talk About Body Boundaries, Consent and Respect](#) by primary teacher and mother Jayneen Sanders is one place you can start.

This book teaches verbal and non-verbal ways children can show they are OK for another person to go inside their "body boundary"—an invisible line around the child's body. It also reminds adult readers that if a child indicates they don't want to be touched, it's important to respect this. As the book says in its opening line: "Your body belongs to you and you are the boss of it."

[Rissy No Kissies](#) by children's author Katey Howes is about a lovebird named Rissy. She says "no" to kisses because they make her uncomfortable, but this makes other people think she is being rude. Rissy learns there is nothing wrong with her. As her mother tells her: "your body and your heart are yours, and you choose how to share."

Both these books show the importance of kids talking to trustworthy adults. They provide notes for children, parents and educators about body autonomy, consent and different ways to show affection. Even just reading and talking about consent with kids shows them their parents are part of their "safety network" (adults they can trust).

[Consent \(for Kids!\): Boundaries and Being in Charge of You](#) by former higher school teacher Rachel Brian uses more lighthearted language, but stays on the same theme. It with begins with the message: "Consent, it's like being the ruler of your own country. Population: You. "I hearby decree that I won't be doing any snuggling today."



Welcome To Consent by Yumi Styles and Melissa Kang. Credit: Hardie Grant

Books for older children

For older primary school [children](#), there are also books that talk about consent more broadly, as well as sexual consent.

These books introduce the concepts of agency (the power to decide), saying "yes" and "no," and what consent is before introducing sex, puberty and developing crushes.

They talk about how understanding consent is part of growing up.

Two books to consider here are [Welcome to Consent](#) by broadcaster and mother Yumi Stynes and former Dolly doctor Melissa Kang and [Can We Talk About Consent](#) by sex and relationships educator Justin Hancock and illustrator Fuchsia Macaree.

The latter's chapter on sex begins by telling the reader "it's okay if you aren't ready to learn about sex yet. Either skip ahead, or put the book down for a bit."

Both books use hand-drawn illustrations to represent different bodies and experiences.

Importantly, they define consent in clear ways, and use correct language to describe body parts and sexual acts. Unlike the Morrison government's infamous, confusing "milkshake" video in 2021, there are no embarrassed metaphors or unhelpful euphemisms to talk about sex.

What to watch out for

Not all books cover consent well. Some frame consent as something that

boys must get from girls, reinforcing gendered stereotypes. Others assume all readers are heterosexual, white and able-bodied. Look for books featuring different perspectives.

Welcome to Consent uses "own voices" quotes from lots of different people, meaning consent is approached from different angles. For example, 15-year-old Tans writes: "I have ADHD and autism and anxiety. These things can affect my ability to interpret body language. I need a few more cues."

Sometimes you can read these [books](#) with your child, sometimes they may want to read them alone. The most important thing is you are starting an open discussion with them.

Talking about consent with young people can be daunting, but it's an important topic we can't ignore. Books about consent can teach kids about safety and respect and—when the time is right—can empower them with understanding sex and [consent](#) as well.

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