

## PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

# *for the adventure of family life*



## 77\_My body belongs to me

Ideally, a child experiences at an early age that its limits are respected and not exceeded. It learns that it can stand up for itself and that a child's no is important. But what are the prerequisites for this to happen? What does a child need to be able to maintain its physical and emotional boundaries so it can feel safe in the world?

### **Caregivers' behaviour and the right to physical integrity**

Taking oneself and body seriously is based on the learning experience: I am important, I am allowed to say no and this is taken seriously by people around me. It is very difficult for children to learn to defend their own boundaries when they are frequently violated by people closest to them.

“In Denmark, the latest survey on violence found that over fifty percent of parents still hit their children. In Germany we probably have about the same or even higher percentages.” (Juul, 2016, page 157)<sup>1</sup>

### **Learn how to deal with strong feelings in a healthy way at an early stage**

All feelings are justified and allowed to be. But not all behaviour is okay. For example, if a child experiences strong feelings and would like to hit other children, caregivers can show it constructive ways of dealing with these feelings. For example, when it's angry, it can hit a pillow, stomp on the floor, or take deep breaths in and out until it calms down. The core message must be: "You and your feelings are perfectly fine, but physically harming others is not allowed."

## **The power of language**

When adults manage to convey to children and young people at an early stage that their words have power, their voice can make a difference and what they say is heard, then fisticuffs become superfluous. In expressing oneself, a meaningful exchange and cooperation can arise and at the same time boundaries can be formulated and maintained.

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### Recommended literature:

1 Jesper Juul, (2016), Leitwölfe sein. Liebevoller Führung in der Familie (Being Leader of the Pack. Loving Leadership in the Family), Beltz Publishing Group, 9th edition, Weinheim