

AJ'S Story About Not OK Touches

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Illustrations by Emily Van Tassell, BS

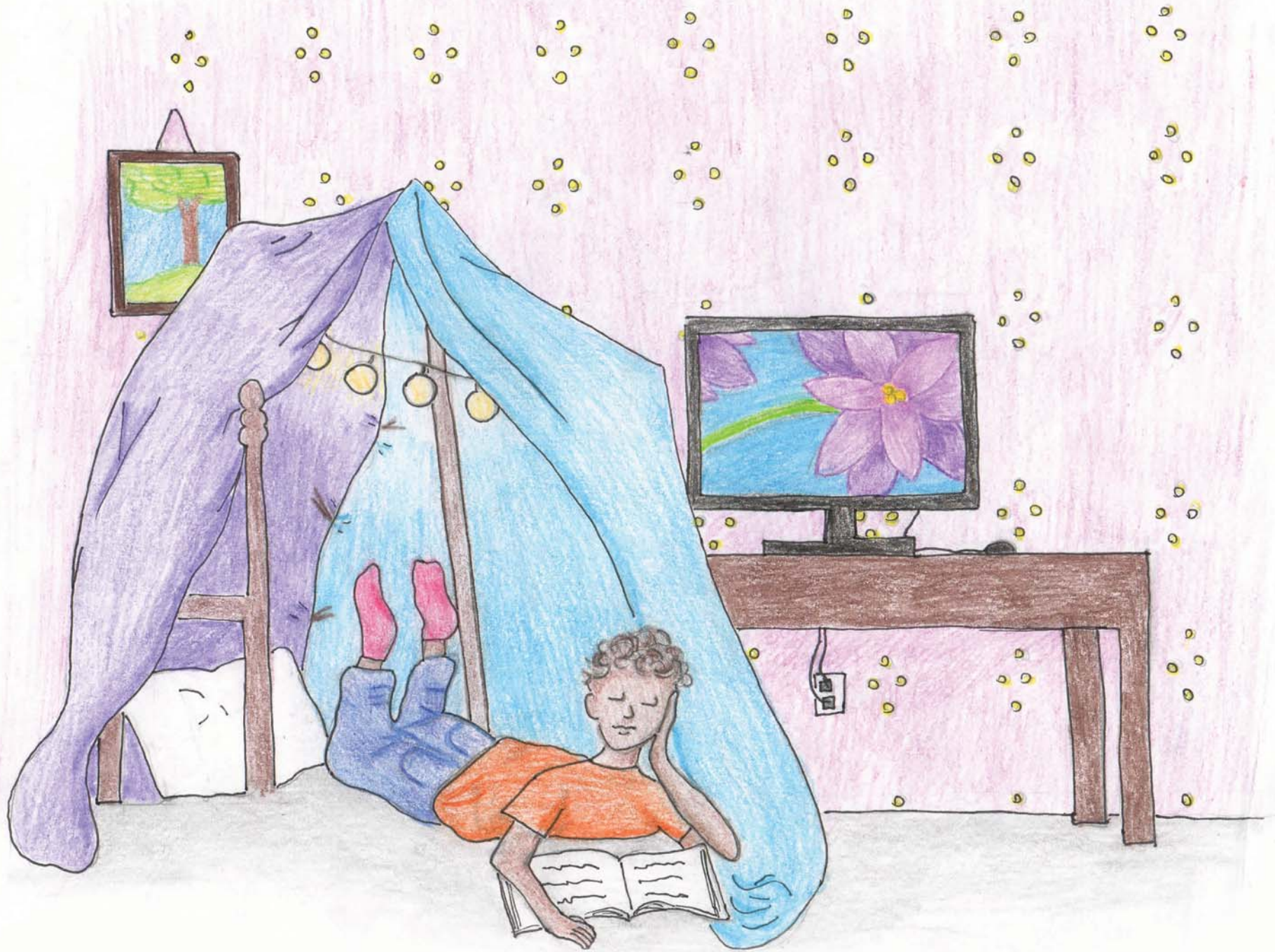
Additional illustration support by Aubrey Kistler, BFA

Foreword

This book is about talking with children about Not OK touches. It can be read with a child by a parent, caregiver, grandparent, foster parent, school counselor, or mental health therapist. This is a sensitive subject and *AJ's Story* has the right tone. The discussion is open and direct and clearly conveys important information about problematic sexual behaviors. Through the story AJ learns about Not OK touches. He also learns that OK touches are great to give and receive.

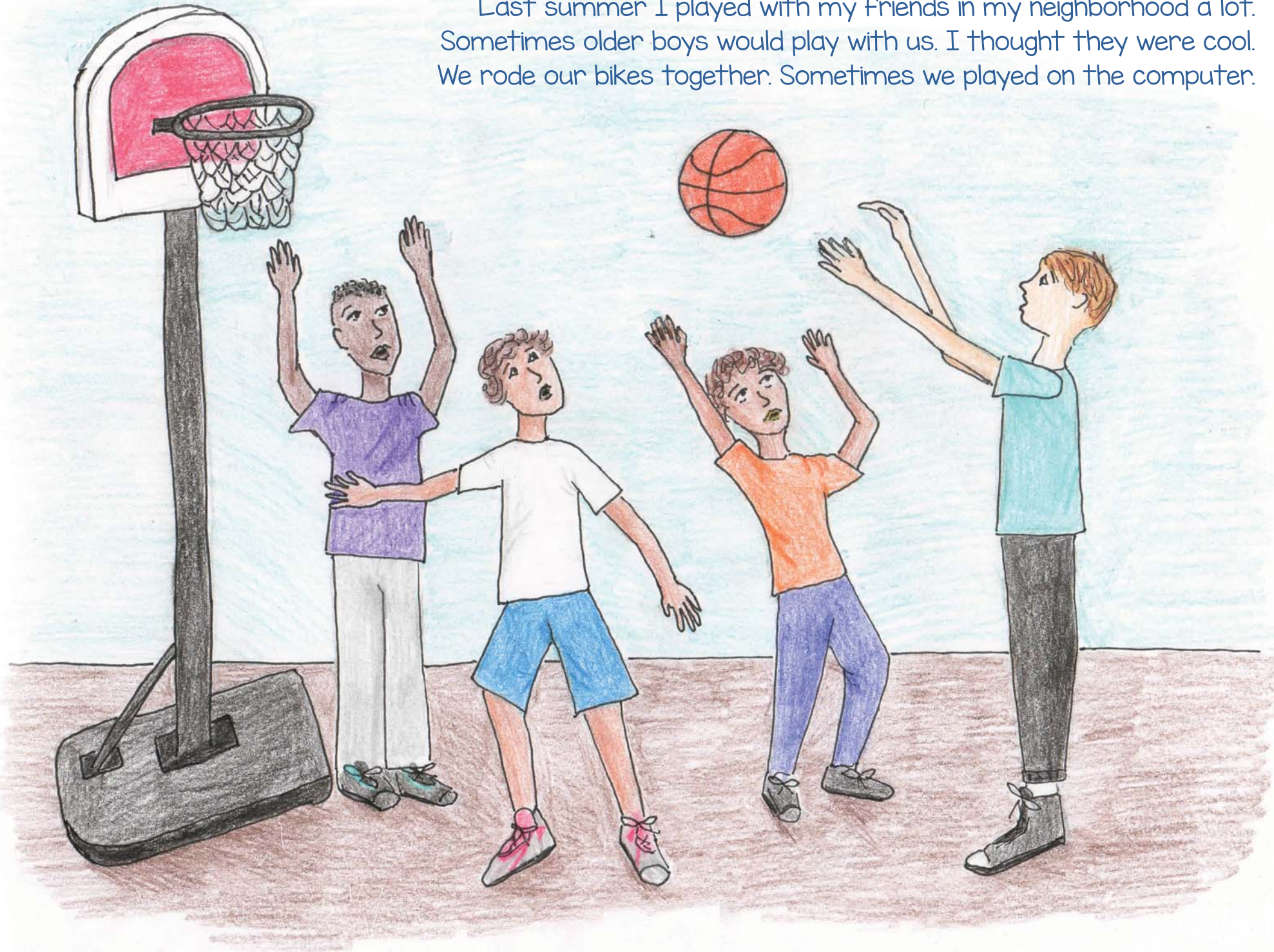
AJ's Story is an excellent tool for therapists to use when working with a child who has been involved in touching behavior that was Not OK. I highly recommend its use as an informative, educational book as well as an interactive, therapeutic tool. Children will remember AJ and the lessons he learned.

Barbara L. Bonner, PhD
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Professor of Pediatrics (retired)



My name is AJ. I am 9 years old. I like to ride bikes and play video games. This book is about a time when I gave my cousin Not OK touches.

Last summer I played with my friends in my neighborhood a lot. Sometimes older boys would play with us. I thought they were cool. We rode our bikes together. Sometimes we played on the computer.





One day one of the older kids showed me videos on the computer. The videos had naked grown-ups. The grown-ups were touching each other on their private parts. I never saw stuff like that before. I was feeling confused and curious.



After we were done watching the videos, I went home. I was still confused about the naked people on the computer. I thought about the people I saw while I ate dinner with my family.

I thought about the naked people over the next few days. I felt curious. I wanted to try some of the things I saw.



One day when I was playing blocks with my little cousin, I decided to try some of the things I saw in that video on the computer. I told my cousin to get undressed. Then I touched his private part. It felt kind of good and kind of not good. My cousin did not say anything. After a little bit of time, I stopped touching him. Then we went back to playing with the blocks.

- * How do you think AJ's cousin is feeling?
- * How do you think AJ felt when he gave his cousin a Not OK touch?



Another time, I told my cousin to touch my private part. First my cousin said, "No." I said, "Come on." Then my cousin touched my private part. I guess my cousin did what I said because I was bigger and older. I thought maybe my cousin doesn't like this kind of touching. I wondered if I was going to get in trouble.



The next day when I got home from school my mom looked upset. She said, "Your aunt called and told me that your cousin came home and said, 'Mommy I have something to tell you', then she told me that your cousin said you touched his private part. Why did you do that?"

I didn't say anything. I felt scared because I thought I might be in trouble. Then my dad came home. I thought I might get punished.

After that my mom and dad told me I had to go to my room. I felt very sad because I did not want to be punished. I was also confused.

* Why do you think AJ was confused?

*What do you think AJ is feeling when he sees the caseworker coming to the door?



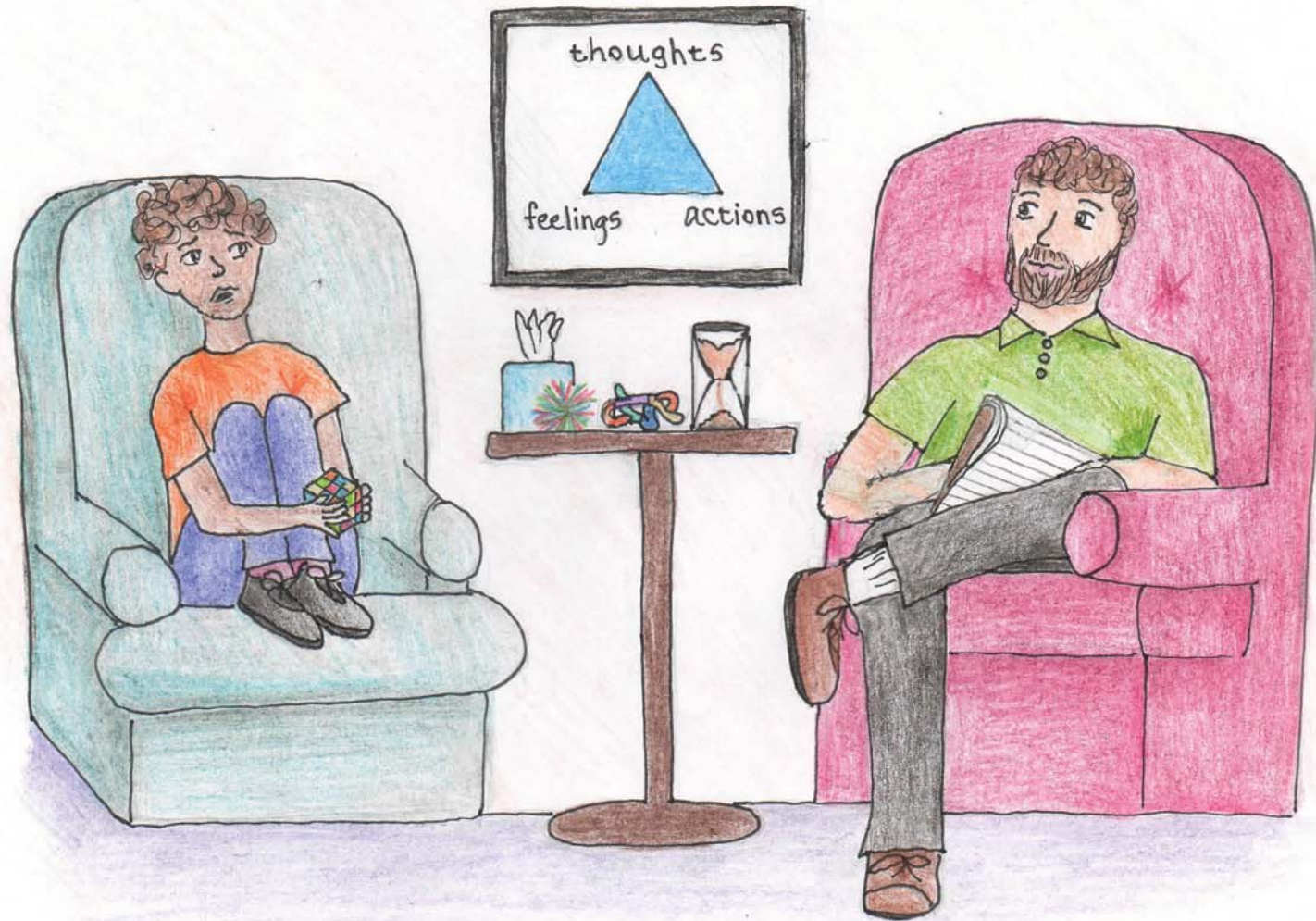
Later that night, a lady came to my house. She said she was a caseworker. She asked me about what happened. I told her that I touched my cousin's private part. I felt scared because I thought I was in trouble.



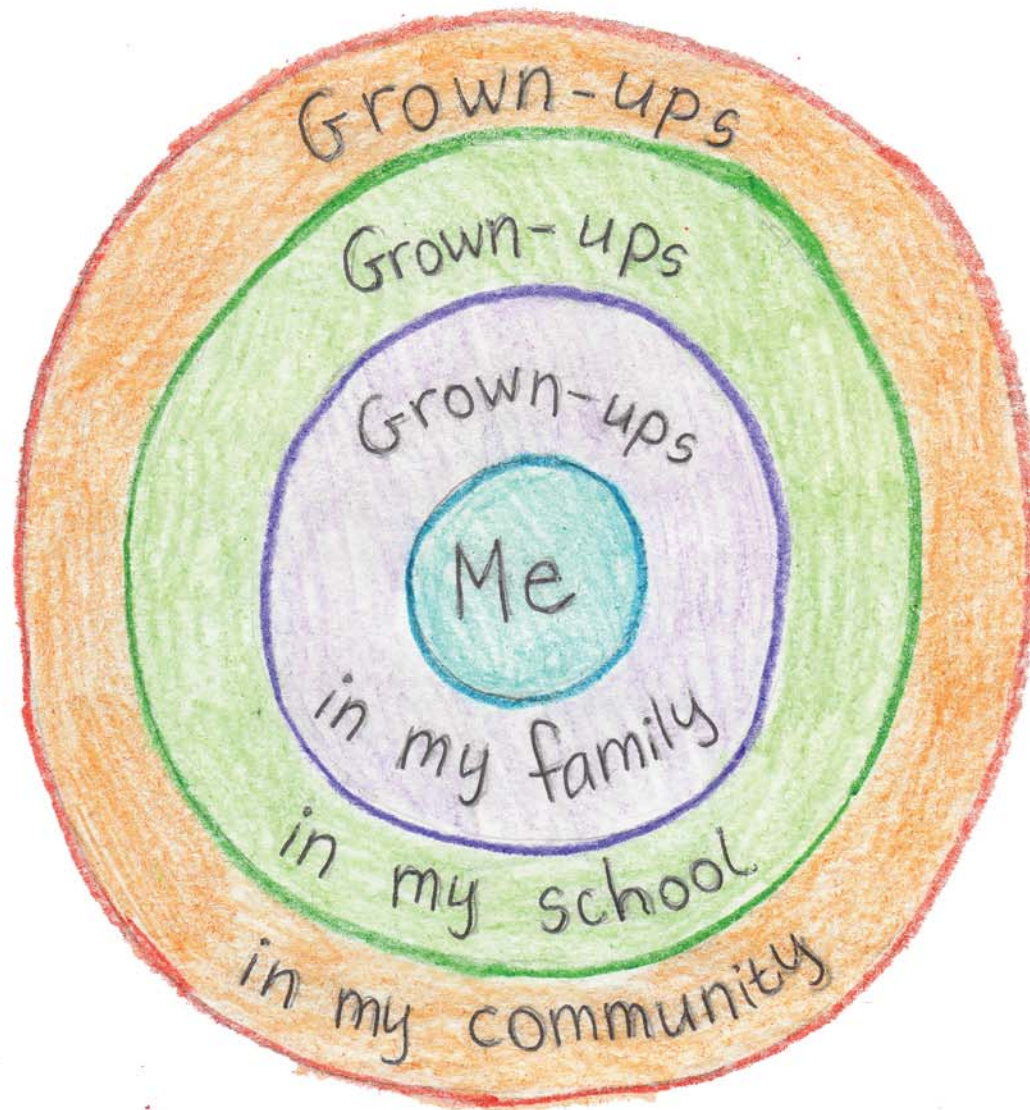
Then I had to go to a doctor's office for a check-up. The doctor asked me about what happened with my cousin. I felt mad that everyone kept asking me the same questions.

The doctor asked me where I learned about touching private parts. I told her about the videos of naked people that I saw. The doctor was nice and said, "Thank you for telling me about that." The doctor asked me if anyone ever touched my private parts. I told the doctor, "Only my cousin after I told him to do it."

The doctor checked my body and told me my body was "OK". She said next I should go to a "talking" doctor. I asked, "Shouldn't the doctor be a listening doctor, too?" The doctor smiled.



Later that week, I went to meet with a “listening” doctor who is called a therapist. The therapist was nice but I didn’t want to talk about what happened with my cousin. We talked about OK, Not OK, and Confusing touches. I learned the Private Part Rules and that private parts are those parts of your body that are covered by your bathing suit.



My Grown-Up Helpers

The Private Part Rules for Kids are:

- It is Not OK to touch other people's private parts.
- It is Not OK for other people to touch your private parts.
- It is Not OK to show your private parts to other people.
- It is Not OK for other people to show you their private parts.
- It is Not OK to make other people uncomfortable with sexual talk or sexual behavior.

If someone gives you Not OK touches or shows you videos or pictures of people with no clothes, it is important to tell your parent or another grown-up. It can take courage to tell.

- * Who are grown-up helpers that you and your parents trust for you to talk to?

I learned in therapy that there are also lots of touches that are OK!

- Some OK touches are hugs, high fives, holding hands, and pats on the back.
- It is also OK to touch your own private parts when you are alone.
- Some touches that are Not OK for kids are OK for adults who love each other.

We also talked about that it is sometimes OK for someone like a doctor or your parent to touch your private parts to keep you clean or healthy.

But if you are not sure if a touch is OK, or is confusing, it is a very good idea to talk to another grown-up helper.



- * What are OK touches that you like to give to . . .
 - * Your parents or caregivers?
 - * Your brothers, sisters, and cousins?
 - * Your friends at school?

In therapy, I also learned ways to make sure I give only OK touches. I learned to ask before giving a hug. Then the other person can decide if they want one or not.

Now I give OK touches. I like to give my friends high-fives after a game. I also like to get OK touches. And I really like when my parents give me goodnight kisses before bedtime.

My mom and dad are proud of me because I learned all about OK, Not OK, and Confusing touches.



*What could be examples of Confusing touches?"

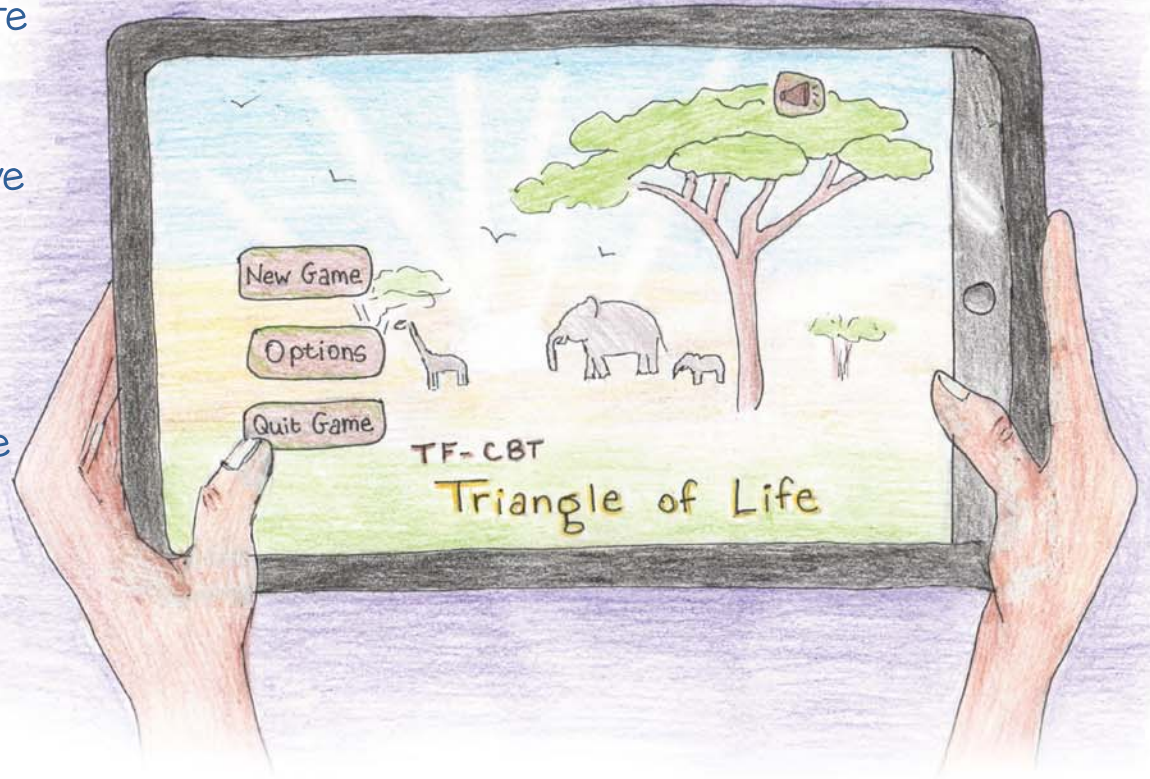
I learned that other kids come for therapy because they also gave a Not OK touch. Some of those kids saw grown-ups touching private parts on the computer, too.

Sometimes we don't know why kids might give other kids Not OK touches.

I also learned that all kids can be confused and curious about OK, Not OK, and Confusing touches. But it does not mean that they are bad.

Now I know that what I did was a Not OK touch.

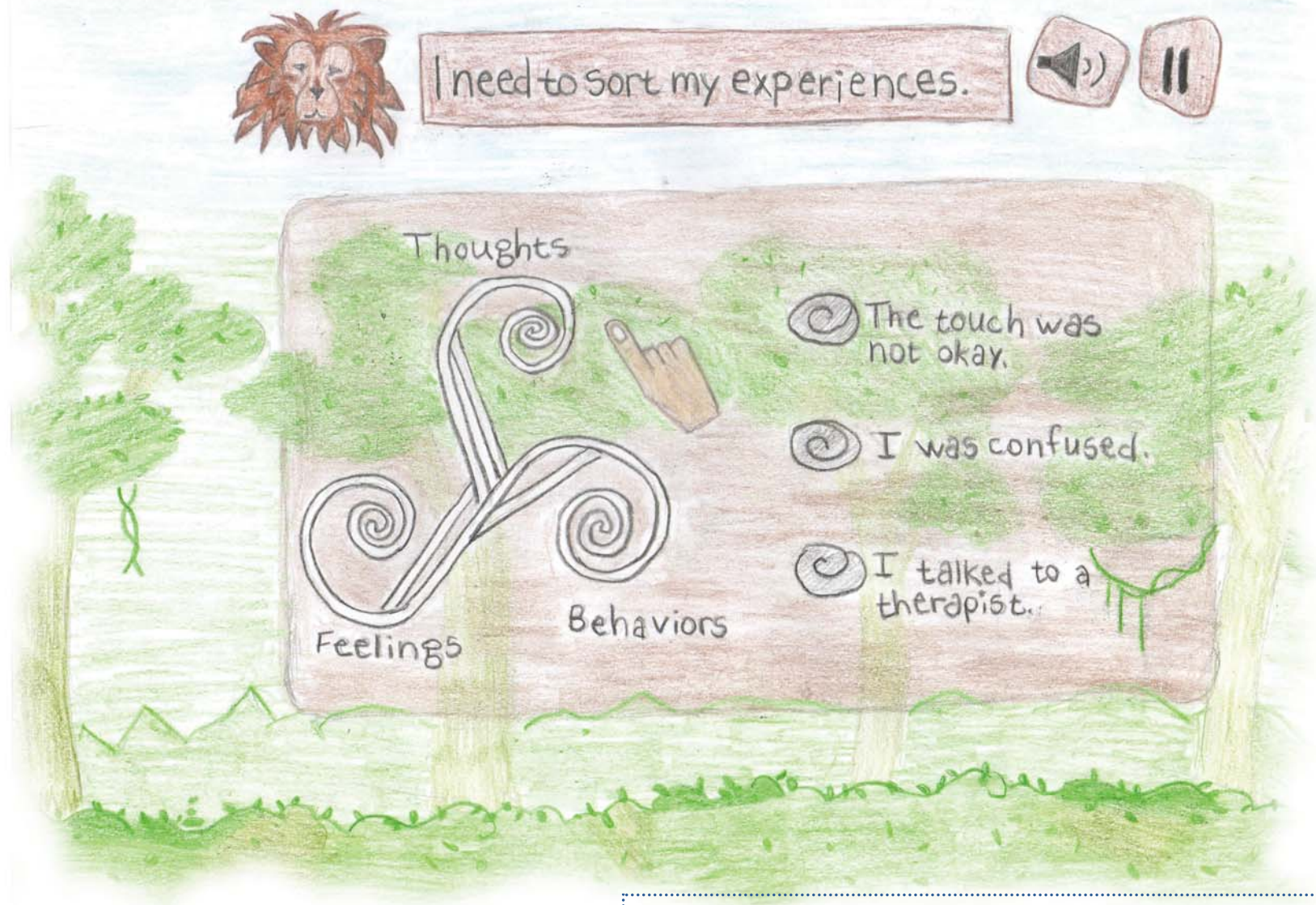
It is Not OK for a kid to touch another kid's or grown-up's private parts.



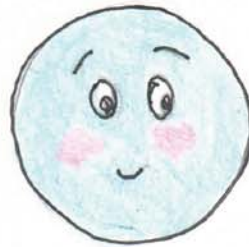
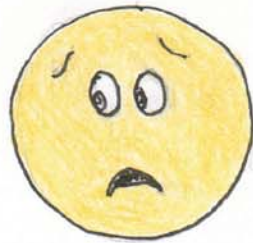
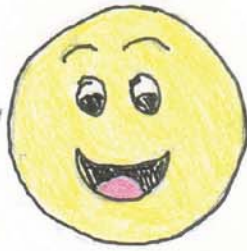
* Were you ever confused about if a touch was an OK or Not OK touch?

Sometimes it's hard to know if something is OK, NOT OK, or Confusing. Punches, pinches, pushes, and shoves are all Not OK touches too.

I learned that if I am confused about something, I should ask my parents or another grown-up who I trust.



* Were you ever confused about something that you had to ask a grown-up about? Who did you talk to?



I learned that it's helpful to talk about feelings. I'm sorry that I hurt my cousin's feelings. I got to tell my cousin I'm sorry and I feel better. Now we can play together when one of my parents or my aunt or uncle are with us and say it is OK.

- * What might be some things that helped AJ to feel better?
- * How do you think talking about confusing things could help you?

* How many feelings can you name?

I learned that talking about things that are confusing, like Not OK touches, is good and helpful. You can talk with a parent, teacher, or therapist like I did. I think it can really help kids feel better!



Who are other grown-ups you can talk to if you are confused about OK and Not OK touches?

Let's name other people children can talk to if they are confused or have questions.

- * Parent
- * Teacher
- * Doctor
- * School Counselor
- * Another grown-up in the family
- * Minister, Rabbi, Imam, or other grown-up where you worship
- * Who else?

Adult Reader Guide

This book is designed to be read by a supportive adult (parent/caregiver, therapist) to a child (ages 5-10, or as developmentally appropriate) who has engaged in a Not OK touch with another child. Sometimes children who engage in such behavior have also experienced sexual abuse. This book would be appropriate for those children, too. This book may also be appropriate for a child impacted by a Not OK touch from another child.

Conversational Boxes

- * Throughout the book there are several boxes with asterisked questions. Some children may not be able to answer these questions independently. Feel free to assist the child in providing age-appropriate answers.
- * The purpose of these boxes is to engage the child in a discussion to help the child understand the experience and emotions of the character in the story.
- * This book can also help the child to begin to acknowledge and talk about their own experience(s) with Not OK or Confusing touching.
- * Consider asking additional questions throughout the book and encourage conversation. For some children, it may be more helpful to read the book in its entirety (without the questions), then ask the questions while the children reflect on their reactions to the book.
- * Encourage the child to ask additional questions throughout the book by using active listening skills. Active listening involves listening and repeating back what the child says without making judgments or adding your own comments. This requires full attention and focus on the child, and in and of itself can be very healing. Important steps to fully engage in active listening include:
 - * Making eye contact
 - * Repeating or summarizing what the child has expressed
 - * Praising appropriate expression of feelings or questions asked about the emotions of the character and story

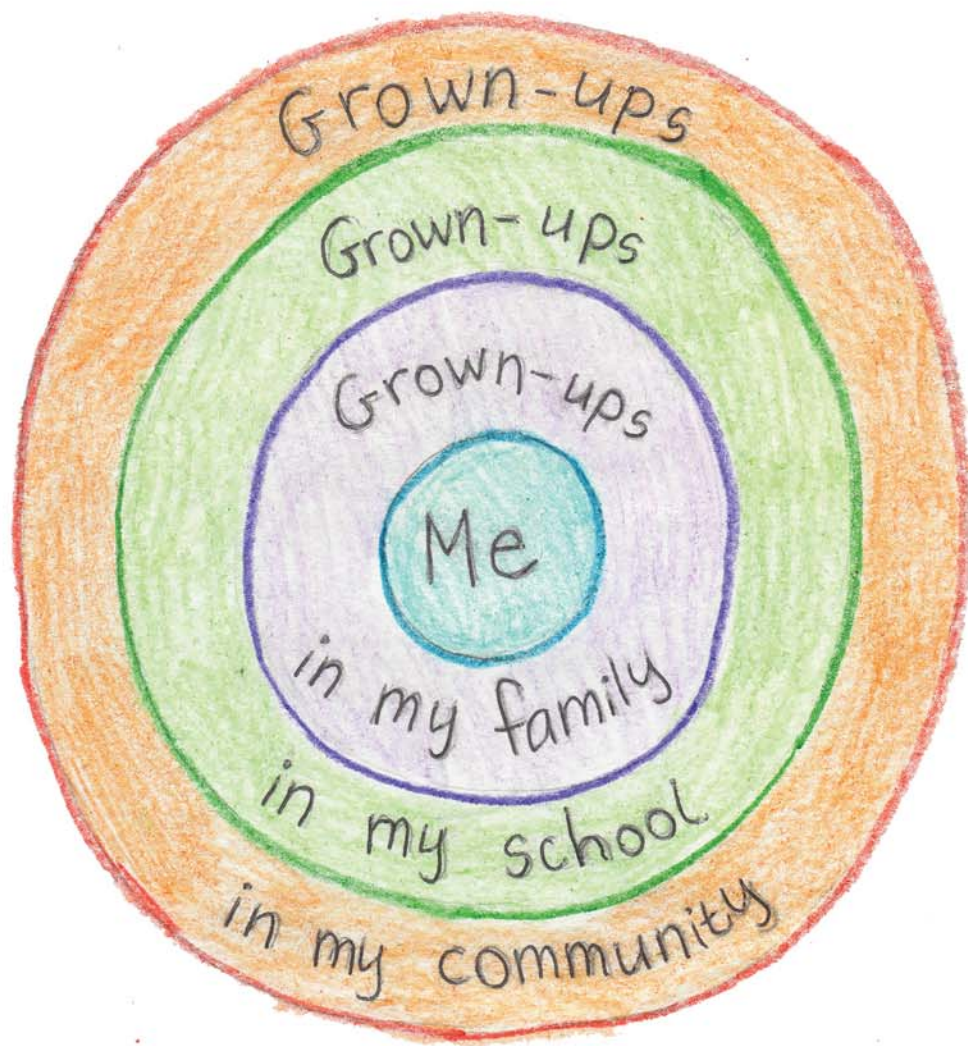
Responding to Questions

- * While reading this book to children, they may ask questions. Asking questions is positive and something to be encouraged.
- * Answer questions honestly and accurately whenever possible and appropriate.
- * If you are unsure of how to answer a question, simply respond by saying something like, “You know, that’s a really good question. I’ll have to get more information about that and get back to you.” This is a great response because it helps children to understand that we all need help from others sometimes to get needed information or support. It is important that you follow through in answering the child’s question once you have determined an appropriate response.
- * This book does not address questions about the behaviors of the older boy who showed AJ the video on the computer, nor the story of AJ’s cousin who was touched in a Not OK way by AJ. It is natural, and in fact helpful, for a child to have questions about those situations as well.

This might be an opportunity for a parent or caregiver to give the above response about needing to get more information and get back to the child about how those kinds of situations might be handled. A counselor, child’s doctor, or child protection worker may be a helpful resource. It is also an excellent opportunity for the helping professional to listen for what the child may want to know or is concerned about and to offer additional educational information about touching rules and safety.

Handling Disclosures

- * If during the course of reading this book a child makes an additional disclosure regarding experiencing or engaging in a Not OK touch, it is important to remain calm and praise the child for telling you.
- * When you are unsure or need guidance about the types of behaviors described in this book you can contact your local medical or mental health professional. If abuse or neglect is suspected, contact your local or state child protection agency or abuse hotline (ChildHelp: <https://childhelphotline.org>).
- * Remember, it is important to empower children and encourage open communication. Praise the child for participation throughout the book. It’s okay to make reading this book fun, and for your child to feel proud about learning to stay safe!



Do your own Circle of Grown-Up Helpers!

- * Draw a picture with 4 rings-like a "bull's-eye" target! Use a whole sheet of paper so you have lots of room. Write your name in the small inside circle.
- * In the next ring closest to you, draw pictures or write the names of the grown-ups in your family who you can talk to about OK, Not OK, or Confusing touches.
- * In the next ring, put in the names or draw pictures of grown-ups at your school you can talk to about OK, Not OK, or Confusing touches.
- * In the outside ring, draw pictures or write the names of grown-ups in your community where you live (people in your faith community, doctor, police officers or case worker) you can talk to about OK, Not OK, or Confusing touches. Put phone numbers for the grown-ups in each ring if you have them!

Below is a copiable poster for "My Private Parts Rules"

Private Parts Rules For Kids

My private parts are those covered by my bathing suit.

- It is Not OK to touch other people's private parts.
- It is Not OK for other people to touch my private parts.
- It is Not OK to show my private parts to other people.
- It is Not OK for other people to show me their private parts.
- It is Not OK to make other people uncomfortable with sexual talk or sexual behavior.

Resources

When a child gives Not OK touches or has other concerning sexual behaviors for a child their age, parents, caregivers, and other adults often have lots of different feelings and do not know where to go for help. Learning more about children's typical sexual development, typical behaviors and what makes sexual behaviors problematic, can help adults know how to best help the child who has given a Not OK touch, and other children who may have been impacted. For more information about child sexual development, children with problematic sexual behavior, as well as other helpful resources, please visit:

National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth

www.NCSBY.com

www.NCSBY.org/resources

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.NCTSN.org

www.NCTSN.org/resources (click on "All NCTSN Resources", this takes you to "Trauma Type" and select "Sexual Abuse")

Stop It Now!®

www.stopitnow.org

www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance (In the section "Children's Behaviors", click on "Learn More")

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Online safety for kids: <https://www.netsmartzkids.org>

TF-CBT Triangle of Life

The illustrations on pages 20 and 21 are from a children's video game which helps with better understanding thoughts, feelings, and actions called TF-CBT Triangle of Life. It is available to download for on iTunes and Google Play.

When to Contact a Therapist

Problematic sexual behavior in children can be very challenging for parents and caregivers. Thus, it can be very helpful to have the support of a therapist.

Such help and support is essential when:

- * The problematic sexual behavior is affecting other children
- * The problematic sexual behavior is repetitive in nature
- * The child does not respond when an adult tells them to stop or directs them away from the behavior
- * The behavior seems to be a response to sexual abuse

It can be difficult to contact a professional for help. Remember, the professional's job is to help everyone be safe and for the child who has engaged in Not OK touches to learn how to make better choices about their behavior. The first step should be an assessment by the professional so they know if therapy would be helpful to the child with Not OK touches, as well as the child who was impacted by these behaviors. Therapy for children who gave Not OK touches and also for children impacted by them, is highly effective and should always involve the children's parents and other caregivers.

For more information about therapy for children who gave Not OK touches, please visit: www.NCSBY.org

For information about therapy for children impacted by Not OK touches, please visit: www.NCSTN.org

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