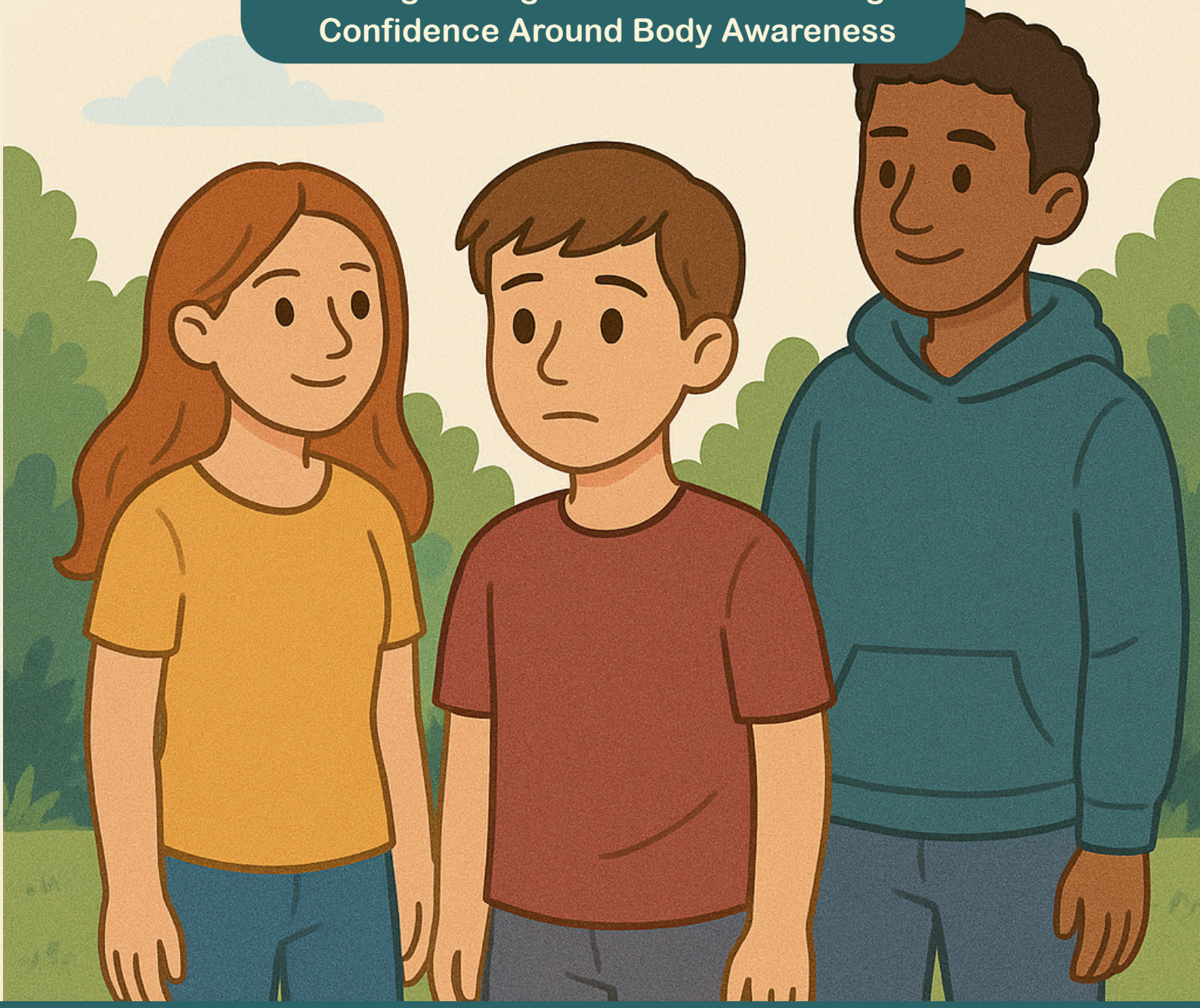
NESTLING MINDS

Tough Talks

Talking About the Body Without Awkwardness

Using the Right Words and Building Confidence Around Body Awareness



"Your child's body is changing and they deserve the right words, the rightmessage,and the right to feel proud of who they are."

START HERE

This is Mini Guide 2 in an 8-part series to help parents talk to their pre-teens about sexual safety in clear, confident, and age-appropriate ways.

Pre-teens (8–12) are naturally curious. They're noticing changes in themselves and their peers. They're hearing new words some correct, some inappropriate. This is the perfect time to teach:

- The correct names for private parts
- That it's okay to be curious and respectful
- That private means personal, not shameful
- How to care for their growing body

Let's help them feel informed, safe, and confident.

By

Ashu Sharma
Counselling Psychologist and Founder
Nestling Minds

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT PRIVATE PARTS

Your child needs to:

- Know the correct names for private parts without embarrassment
- Understand what makes a body part private
- Learn that curiosity is normal, but boundaries matter
- Respect their own body and others' bodies

"When kids know the right words and feel safe asking questions, they're more likely to speak up if something feels wrong."

WHAT TO SAY AND HOW TO SAY IT

Start the Conversation Calmly

Choose a relaxed moment a walk, car ride, or bedtime.

If you're talking to your daughter:

"You're growing up, and your body is going to go through some changes. That's completely normal, and I want you to know what's happening and feel good about it. Do you know what the word 'vulva' means?"

This is also when curiosity around bodies, relationships, and "grown-up stuff" takes root often whispered about with friends or searched online.

If you're talking to your Son:

"Let's talk about your body for a second — especially the parts we sometimes avoid naming. Do you know the difference between a penis and testicles? They're just body parts, like arms and ears, and it's important to call them by their correct names."

Let your child respond. If they don't know, keep going calmly and clearly.time.

Use Visuals if Needed

"If you're unsure how to explain, use a child-friendly diagram from a trusted book or website.

"This is a diagram of a girl's body. The outside part of her private area is called the vulva, and inside is the vagina. These parts are private that means only she can decide who sees or touches them, and usually, that's no one except for medical help or hygiene."

"And here's a diagram of a boy's body. Boys have a penis and testicles. These are private parts, too. No one should be touching or looking at them unless there's a real reason — and even then, it should always be with your permission."

Keep the Tone Light Even When They Giggle

Kids this age might laugh or act silly. That's okay they're not mocking you; they're just figuring out how to handle the awkwardness.

You Can Say:

"I get that this sounds funny — but that's only because we don't usually talk about it. Let's practice saying the names together: penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, breasts. See? Totally normal words."

Talking About Hygiene and Body Care

This is also the age when personal hygiene needs change. Sweat glands become active, and girls may begin menstruating. Your child may feel unsure or embarrassed and that's where your reassurance comes in.

For daughters:

"As your body changes, you might notice discharge or start your period. It's totally normal. Let me show you how to use a pad and where we'll keep extras for school."

For Sons:

"As you grow, you'll need to wash around your penis and testicles carefully every day. If you ever have any questions about how it looks or feels, I'm here to help you figure it out."

Everyday Phrases to Reinforce

- “Your private parts are called that because they belong to you.”
- “It’s okay to be curious about your body that’s part of growing up.”
- “You can always ask me anything. I’ll never be upset or embarrassed.”
- “Knowing the right names helps you take care of your body and talk to a grown-up if something feels wrong.”

What Makes a Part Private?

Children often hear the phrase “private parts” without fully understanding why those parts are treated differently. It’s important to frame this in a positive, respectful way.

“These parts are private not because they’re shameful but because they deserve extra care and respect. They belong only to you. That’s why you get to decide who sees or touches them and usually, the answer is no one.”

CLEARING UP COMMON PLAYGROUND CONFUSIONS

At this age, your child may be hearing and sharing misinformation. Use this moment to gently clarify a few things they might be curious or confused about:

“No, girls don’t pee from the vagina. There’s a separate opening called the urethra.” “Having breasts doesn’t mean someone is a grown-up bodies change at different times.” “Just because someone laughs when they’re tickled doesn’t always mean they’re okay with it.”

Remind them: If something sounds confusing or weird, it’s always okay to ask a trusted adult.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

Let your child know that it’s normal to have questions or concerns about their body and that they should never feel ashamed to speak up.

- “If something on your body feels sore, itchy, or different let me know.”
- “Even if you’re just a little unsure, I’d rather you ask than worry silently.”
- “If anything ever makes you feel uncomfortable or unsure, tell me or a trusted adult.”
- Feeling uncertain about what’s okay and what’s not

These reassurances help build both body awareness and emotional safety.

MINI ACTIVITY: REAL WORD NOT A WORD

Here's a quick, fun way to reinforce correct vocabulary:

"Let's play 'Real Word – Not a Word'!"

"Is 'vulva' a real word? Yes!"

"What about 'peepee'? That's a nickname not a real word. Let's learn the correct ones together."

This kind of playful learning helps normalize the language and diffuses awkwardness for both of you.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- Use small, honest conversations often, instead of one "big talk".
- Don't wait for them to ask bring up topics when they feel natural.
- Revisit regularly the more you talk about it, the more normal it becomes.

This kind of playful learning helps normalize the language and diffuses awkwardness for both of you.

ALSO IN THIS SERIES

This is just one part of the **Tough Talks** series from Nestling Minds. Look out for the other mini-guides:

Coming up next:

- Mini Guide 1: Understanding Your Pre-Teen
- Mini Guide 3: Teaching Consent Early
- Mini Guide 4: Recognizing Unsafe or Confusing Touch
- Mini Guide 5: Protecting Your Child from Sexual Abuse
- Mini Guide 6: Keeping Your Child Safe Online
- Mini Guide 7: What to Say When They Ask “That Question”
- Mini Guide 8: Your Safety Net as a Parent

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Nestling Minds is an initiative dedicated to promoting emotional wellbeing, life skills, and safe conversations for children, parents, and educators. Through workshops, resources, and school partnerships, we help families navigate the real challenges of growing up together.

Stay Joyful, Stay Curious,

Ashu Sharma
Counselling Psychologist and Founder
Nestling Minds

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