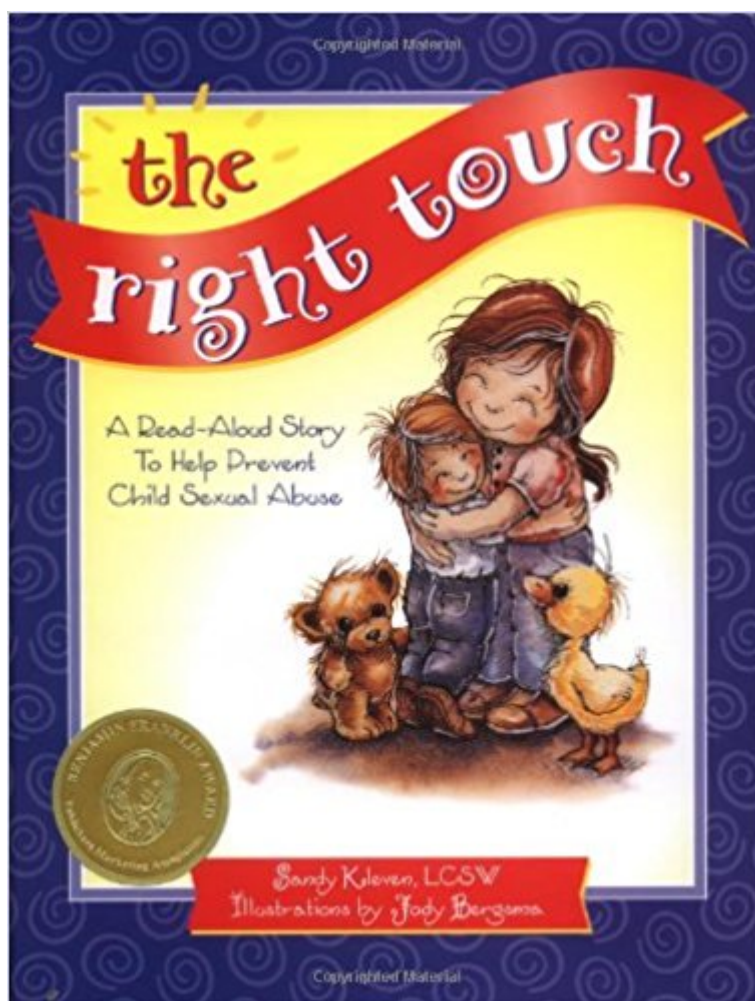


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# The Right Touch: A Read-Aloud Story To Help Prevent Child Sexual Abuse (Jody Bergsma Collection)



## Synopsis

The Right Touch reaches beyond the usual scope of a children's picture book. It is a parenting book that introduces a very difficult topic--the sexual abuse of young children. This gentle, thoughtful story can be read aloud to a child by any trusted caregiver. In the story, young Jimmy's mom explains the difference between touches that are positive and touches that are secret, deceptive or forced. She tells him how to resist inappropriate touching, affirming that abuse is not the child's fault. The introduction provides valuable information about sexual abuse and guidance on what to do if your child experiences an abusive situation. Jody Bergsma's gentle illustrations soften the impact of this story; yet this portrayal of a dangerous situation is very realistic. If your child is old enough to sit still and listen to a story, he or she is old enough for The Right Touch. Used by parents and teachers nationwide to help children avoid sexual abuse, this book won the 1999 Benjamin Franklin Parenting Award. It was a finalist for the Small Press Award and was also "Selected as Outstanding" by the Parent Council, Ltd.

## Book Information

Series: Jody Bergsma Collection

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 66 customer reviews

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Age Range: 4 and up

Grade Level: Preschool and up

## Customer Reviews

PreSchool-Grade 3AA picture book that clearly instructs children on how to deal with unwanted and

inappropriate touching through a heart-to-heart talk between a little boy and his mother. The author sensitively distinguishes between the loving touch we all need and "secret, deceptive, or forced touching." Children are encouraged to listen to their own feelings, assert their right to stop unwanted contact, and get help from trusted adults "even if it is supposed to be a secret." An informative foreword to adults gives valuable information on communicating personal safety to children and advice for helping those who report abuse. The illustrations of big-eyed children, comfy teddy bears, and fuzzy pets are not distinguished but do contribute to the cozy, safe tone of the book. The primary audience will be parents looking for materials to help them introduce this important topic, but older children will find the clarity and warmth of the message reassuring on their own. A Carolyn Lehman, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Teaching prevention skills really does help children. When they know this problem exists in the world, they are less apt to go along with the lies and manipulation of the perpetrator. But there are more subtle positive impacts from the book. Accounts told to me personally over the course of a long career, accounts supported by research on the subject, show that when children disclose to a parent, the response is often dismissive. "You must have misunderstood him," "He wouldn't do that." Or even, "Don't let me ever hear you say that again." THE RIGHT TOUCH, also educates parents. It demonstrates an appropriate loving response to a disclosing child. Sure, there are other dynamics a-foot when parents won't listen. A disclosure often comes as a world-shaking shock and if a parent has at least been exposed to the idea of listening, believing and helping, they have these ideas to fall back on. When a child discloses, a jarring image of what they are saying flashes in the mind, with the stunned sense that asks "How could someone do this?" These disclosures are hard to hear. The mind wants to retreat. I think this is why so many readers post violent responses to the news stories about a sexual abuse arrest. As disclosures play out in life, adults in the circle around the disclosing child, do not necessarily display the same vigilant abhorrence. The response is, in a sense, just as violent, and it may come from the same root -- they want to expunge it, make it disappear -- so they decide it never happened. They say "I can't believe it," and they don't, because the child is often disclosing to the non-offending partner of the one accused. Telling Mom about Dad. Telling Mom about her boyfriend. Given the accounts of adults victimized as children, speaking to me personally, or in the extensive literature on the subject, I have to believe that not believing the child is more common than belief and action. THE RIGHT TOUCH helps with this knee-jerk denial, this "head in the sand" reaction. It introduces the possibility of such harm and prepares

a parent for an appropriate response.

First, I was not given ANY incentive to right this review. Here goes....another wonderful book to use when you are discussion body awareness and safety. When our child entered a local nursery school, we talked with a good friend and nurse who encouraged us to gently talk about good and bad touch. We wanted our daughter to know and be prepared at a young age, "just in case". That said, we didn't want to "freak" her out, or to make her frightened. We purchased a series of books that do just that. It isn't just about touch, it is also about when you just don't feel "safe"...or that things just don't feel "right". It also gives permission to not hug or kiss if that is not what you want to do. It is about empowering a child. It is about giving your child permission to say "no". You will see a number of books that we have purchased through that have followed our child starting age 4. Best thing we ever did.

I chose not to read this book to my 5 year old after reading the first 6 pages and then flipping through the rest of the illustrations. I bought 2 other books on this subject that were a huge improvement over this one. "No Trespassing-This is my body" is a nice basic introduction to the topic for very young children. For kids who are 4 or 5 or older I recommend "I said NO" which is much more detailed about saying no to bribes, threats, and lies without creating any scared or uncomfortable feelings. "The right touch" had a creepy scuzzy feel to it. I personally don't like the huge eyes with almost no whites of the eyes showing, but I was willing to overlook that if the content was good. In the beginning of the story the mother is tucking her son into bed and she's hugging him, gently tickling him, and then it says, "I like to pretend to bite your ear." And then "she nuzzled his earlobe and made turkey sounds." The hug and the gentle tickle was fine but I thought the ear thing isn't something that everyone does and my son wouldn't have understood this reference as playful, but probably would have just thought it was weird. I would have skipped those lines if I had ever read it to my son. A few pages later the mother begins to tell a story about a little girl who got tricked by a man in her neighborhood. It describes how she was lured into his home to see some baby kittens. As the story goes on it says, "The man said, 'If you sit on my lap, I'll show you the kittens.'" Then the little girl got an uncomfortable feeling. She was about to go home when the man tried to put his hand down her panties." I felt this was overly descriptive and overly scary because it was an attempted attack and described by the mother as a true story. I think doing general what-if scenarios about what to do IF a stranger, a friend, a baby-sitter, etc. tries various bribes, lies, or threats works better than a personal story that really happened. Just because it's important to be

aware of sexual crimes doesn't mean that I should sit down and read detailed reports about what happened to a person in a sexual crime. It's more important to read about safety precautions, what to do if a situation arises, and ways to prevent it. I just felt like this story puts all the focus on the yucky details of what happens instead of what to do and how to handle potential situations. Also, it goes on to describe how the man got into big trouble because he broke the law. The book does talk about how no one, including family members, baby-sitters, and older kids should try to touch them, but with the story that implies that the man went to jail, I think it would discourage children from telling when the person touching them is someone they care about. Overall it seems to gloss over the issue when it comes to family members or other children and has more of a "stranger danger" approach. I want my child to know that anyone; teachers, family members, kids his own age or older may try to get him to play private part games too, so that he's prepared for any scenario, not just a stranger in the neighborhood. "I said NO" is perfect for this and is the book I recommend over "The right touch". Oh, one more note, this book has illustrations of boy parts and girl parts, which I'm not totally against, but I prefer using textbook quality human anatomy illustrations for this purpose. It's just weird with a full head-to-toe nudity illustration of a little boy and little girl standing naked with smiles on their faces like getting photographed or drawn completely naked is normal. I much prefer the scientific approach of human anatomy books, even though they are more detailed and of adults, it feels more appropriate to me.

This is a good book for every kid....all kids should know how to protect themselves....it is especially good for those who may have been abused to understand what is okay and what is not. Basic info, areas that cover your swim suit. Remember though that most children get abused by their family members and people they know well, so don't tell your kids to only think about strangers but everyone. They should feel comfortable to tell anyone including loved ones what they feel comfortable with or not.

The title says it all. It's hard to find the right kind of book for children to understand. And we all want to prevent anything from happening to our children. This book makes it clear in simple language the right and wrong touch. a great find!

This book is hard for parents to read I think. I find that it is scary and difficult to talk about, however, my 3 and a half year old loves this book. She wanted to read it every day for the first week we had it (this is pretty big since we have hundreds of books and live walking distance to our library). It's a

read along and talk story, so she can ask questions right along with us. I feel like she is too young for it, but she isn't uncomfortable and will talk about this book even randomly sometimes, so maybe she is the right age for it if she isn't scared or worried about telling me. This subject is a big deal for parents and I know we all just want to do right by our kids, I don't know if this is the best book out there, but it works for us.

Kids enjoy stories and I appreciate that approach in this book. Something that bugged me was that it only discussed a theoretical situation with a girl and didn't include one with a boy (would a sex abuser put their hands in a boy's underwear or is it different with boys?). I found myself having to stop several times during the story to elaborate on certain things because the book doesn't give as much situational information as it could. In my opinion, this book is NOT too "out there" and could actually use a refresh (doesn't say when it was published but reviews date back 13 years and how much more are we confronted by sex abuse now than we were then?).

As the non-offending parent of a three-year-old who was molested by her biological father, I have tried to find the best materials for my daughter and myself. Although this book is intended as a tool to help prevent abuse, I believe it is also good for opening the door for "talk" with a toddler who HAS been molested. That is a good thing when you know you are not supposed to ASK the child, or lead them, but yet you are instructed by the "professionals" to seek counseling and to TEACH THEM ABOUT GOOD AND BAD TOUCHES. I recommend this book. My daughter's play therapist felt the art was "dark" but I think it is fine, that it kind of goes along with the subject it is dealing with, and my daughter really LOOKS at the pictures because they are different than most of her books.

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