

Personal space



Personal space is about how close or far you are from another person when you are standing or sitting.

If you stand or sit too close to another person it might make them feel uncomfortable.

If somebody stands or sits too close to you it might make you feel uncomfortable.

But if somebody is too far away it can be hard to talk to them.

Personal space is important for everyone.

Personal space helps people feel safe and respected.

But it can be hard to get personal space right.



It is important to teach your child how to respect other people's personal space.

It is also important to teach your child what they should do if somebody is in their personal space.

What is on this page?

This page has easy to read information about how to teach your child about personal space.

It has information about:

- how personal space is different for different people
- why personal space is important
- how your child can tell if they are too close to somebody
- things you can try to teach your child about personal space



Personal space is different for different people

Personal space is different for everybody.



Some people need lots of personal space.

They like to be further away from other people.

Some people are OK with less personal space.

They like to be closer to other people.

When a person is in your personal space, it can make you feel uncomfortable.

Personal space can also be different in different relationships or in different places.



Example:

If you catch the train in the morning, you might have less personal space because the train is full.

You might have to stand close to people you do not know.

This is OK.

If you catch the train and it is empty, standing very close to another person is not OK.

It might make the other person feel uncomfortable.

Example:

You might stand very close to a good friend.

This is OK if your friend says it is OK.

You should stand further away from somebody if you just met them.





Why is it important to teach my child about personal space?

Learning about personal space will help your child to:

- learn social skills
- have healthy relationships
- be safe in the community

It is important for your child to learn about personal space before they are an adult.

People in the community might be OK if a small child is in their personal space.

They can feel uncomfortable and scared if an adult does the same thing.



When you help your child to practice personal space, you are also helping them to learn about:

- [consent](#)
- [healthy relationships](#)
- [appropriate touch](#)
- [public and private behaviours](#)

How can my child tell if they are too close to somebody?

Everybody is different.

Some people will tell you if you are in their personal space.

Other people might not feel safe telling someone to leave their personal space.



This is why it is important for your child to know what a person might look like if they are uncomfortable.

A person who is uncomfortable might:

- step or lean back
- cross their arms
- look upset
- turn away
- leave to do something else
- ask you to go away
- get angry



Things you can try:

Here are some things you can try to teach about personal space.

Show your child what personal space looks like

Parents and carers need personal space too!

If your child gets too close to you, you could say something like:

“You are standing a bit too close to me.

I’m putting my arms up to show you how close you are.

I’m going to take a step away so that we can feel comfortable”



Measure personal space in a clear way

Ask your child to hold their arms out by their sides to measure personal space.

If your child cannot do this, you can use a hula hoop or draw a circle on the ground to show them how far away they should stand.



Use things in everyday life to teach

You can use your child's favourite TV show or movie to show examples of when people are standing too close to each other.

You can also use TV shows or movies to show examples of what people look like when they feel uncomfortable.

This is a good way to see what your child already knows about personal space and social skills.

Resources for you to use

‘Who’s in my orbit’ activity sheet

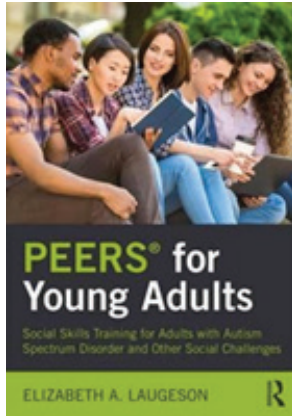
Planet Puberty

<https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Whos-in-my-Orbit-F.pdf>



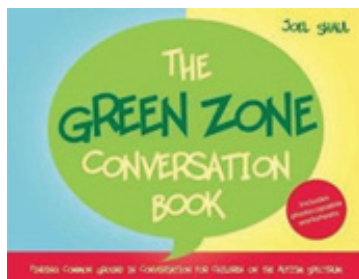
The Social Skills Picture Book

Jed Baker



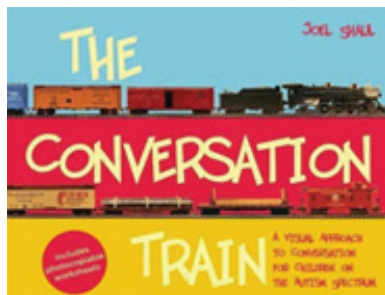
Peers for Young Adults

Elizabeth A Laugeson



The Green Zone Conversation Book

Joel Shaul



The Conversation Train

Joel Shaul



Raising Children Network

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/communicating-relationships>



<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-guide>



The Circles Program



What to read next?

- [Healthy relationships](#)
- [Consent in relationships](#)

For more information go to the Planet Puberty website

www.planetpuberty.org.au