

Sara Says “No”



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NOTE TO READER

Child sexual abuse can affect any child including those with disabilities. Children with disabilities are at greater risk due to their cognitive or communication challenges which may affect their ability to understand or disclose abuse or to ask for help. In addition, being placed in institutions or needing a lot of physical care can also increase this risk.

This story involves Sara, a girl with cerebral palsy (CP). CP is a condition which affects a person's ability to move, maintain balance and posture and also sometimes their ability to understand. Symptoms of CP can vary from mild to severe. For example, lack of muscle control and coordination, trouble speaking clearly, cognitive deficits, and problems with chewing and swallowing.

Sara Says “No”





Every morning, 9-year old Sara waits with her father for her van ride to an activity centre for children with cerebral palsy.



Sara has cerebral palsy and has difficulties in walking, holding things and speaking clearly.



Today, Uncle San, a driver from the Centre, is taking Sara and her two friends, Abu and Maria, to the Centre.



When Uncle San arrives, he helps Sara get into the van. Sara is happy to see her friends in the van.



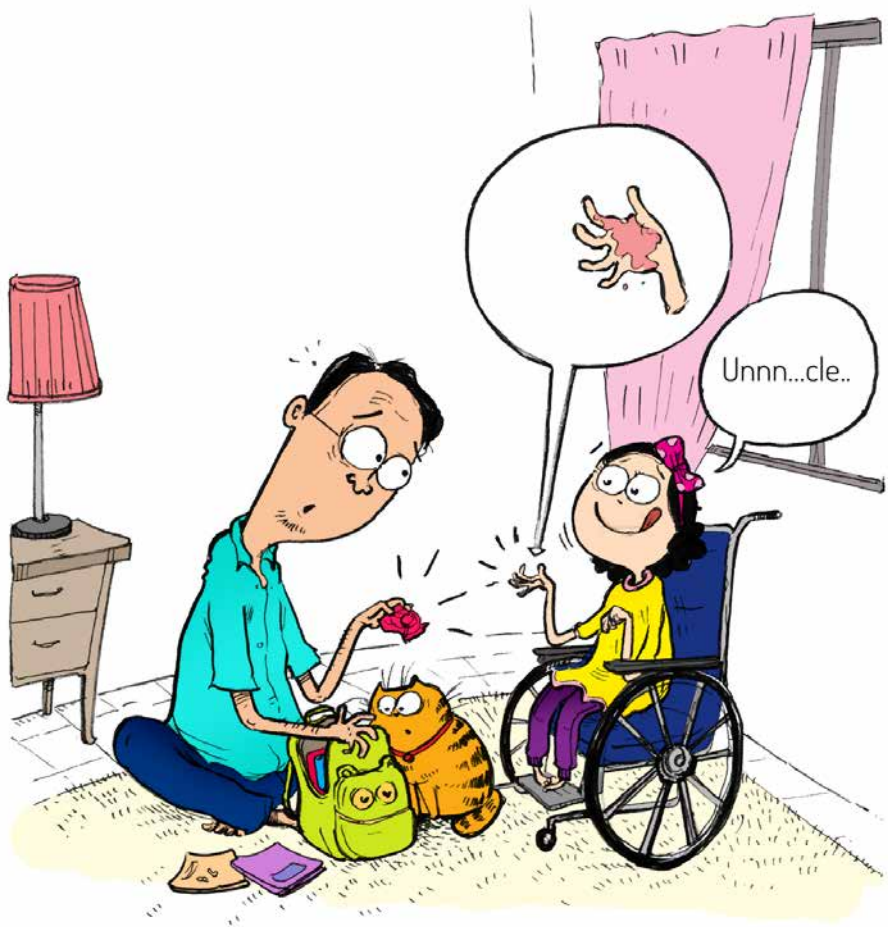
At the Centre, a speech therapist helps Sara to speak more clearly. She also uses communication charts.



When it is time to go home, Uncle San drops Abu and Maria off first before taking Sara home.



The following week, after dropping off Abu and Maria, Uncle San gives Sara a lollipop. Sara is very happy.



When Sara gets home, her father notices her sticky fingers. He finds a lollipop wrapper in her bag. When he asks her about it, she says, “Unnn...cle”.



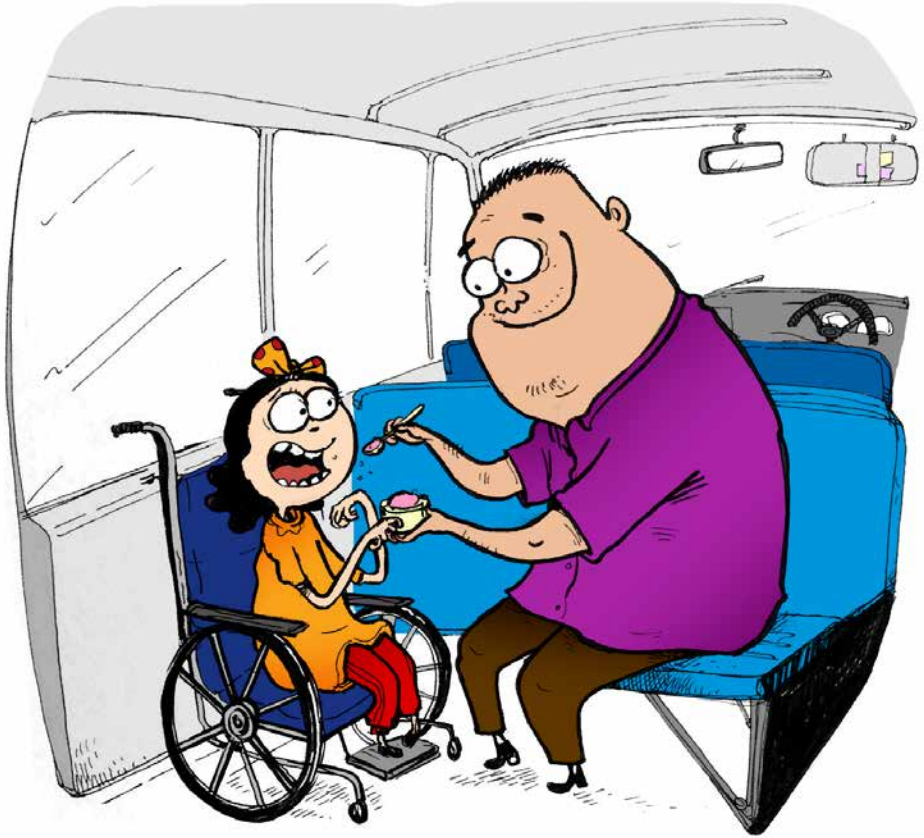
As time goes by, Sara's father notices that Sara often comes home with a treat from Uncle San.



One day, on the way home, Uncle San tells Sara he wants to give her a special treat. Sara is really excited.



Uncle San buys Sara ice cream.
He then parks the van in a quiet lane.



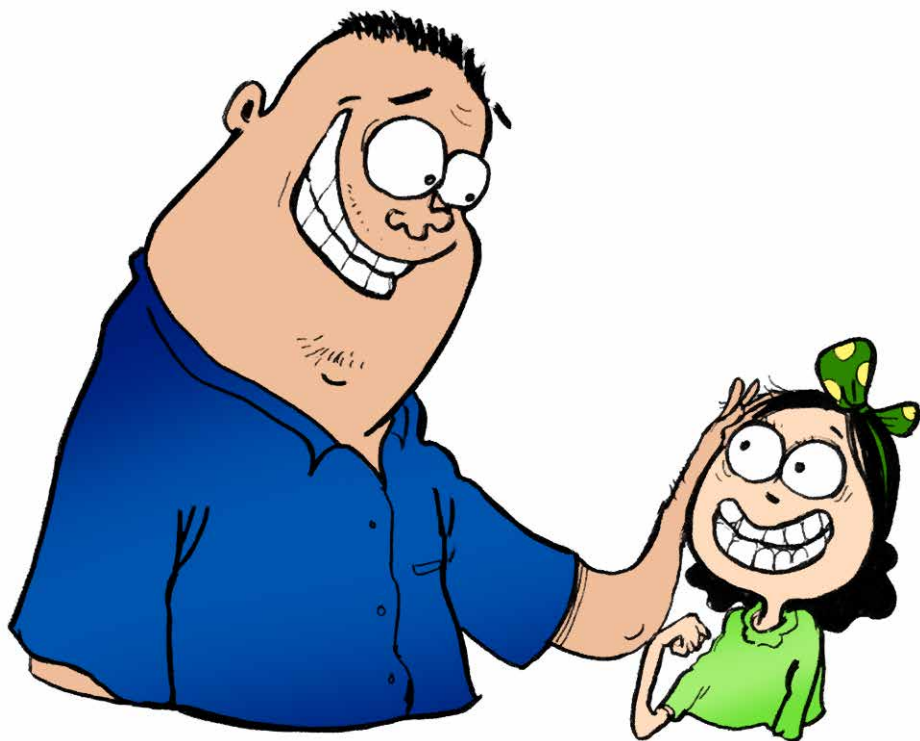
Uncle San helps Sara eat her ice cream
as she has difficulty holding the spoon.
Sara is happy.



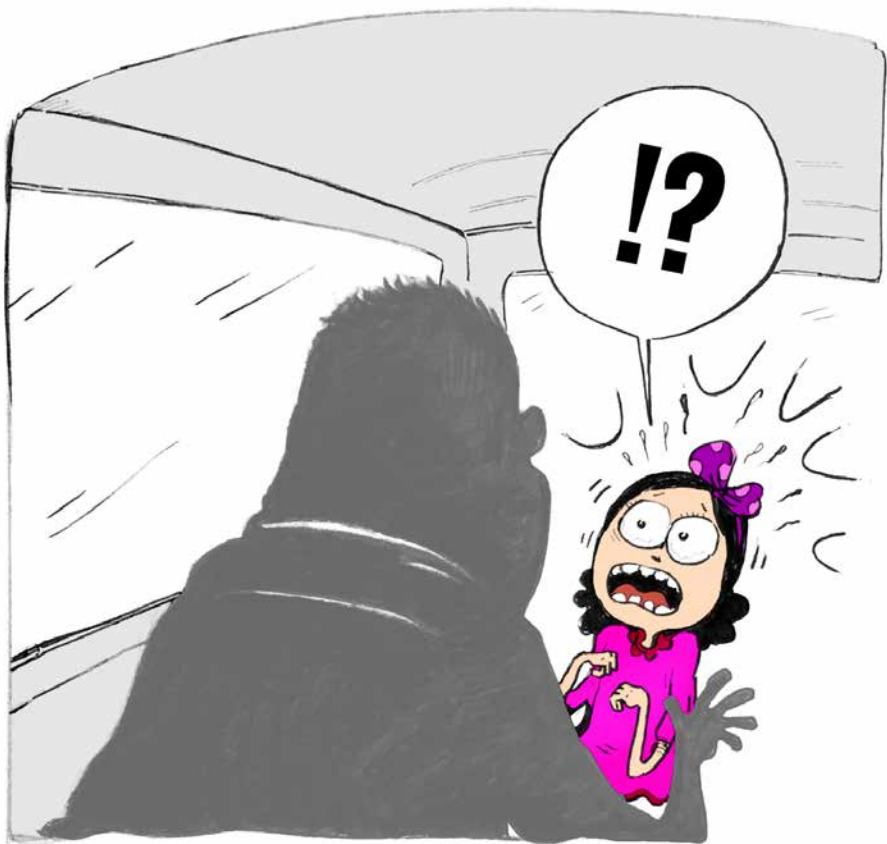
When Uncle San drops Sara back home,
her father asks him why they are late.
Uncle San replies, “Traffic jam lah”.



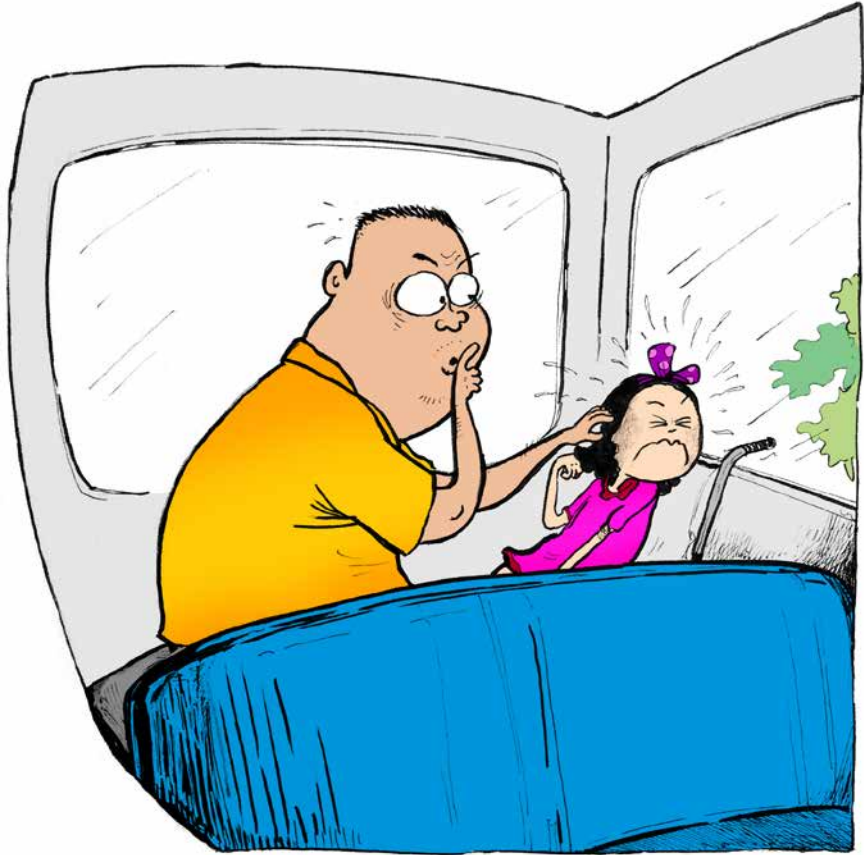
Over the next few weeks,
Sara has several ice cream
treats with Uncle San.



Uncle San makes her laugh.
He tells her they are special friends.
He begins to touch her head and
rub her shoulders.



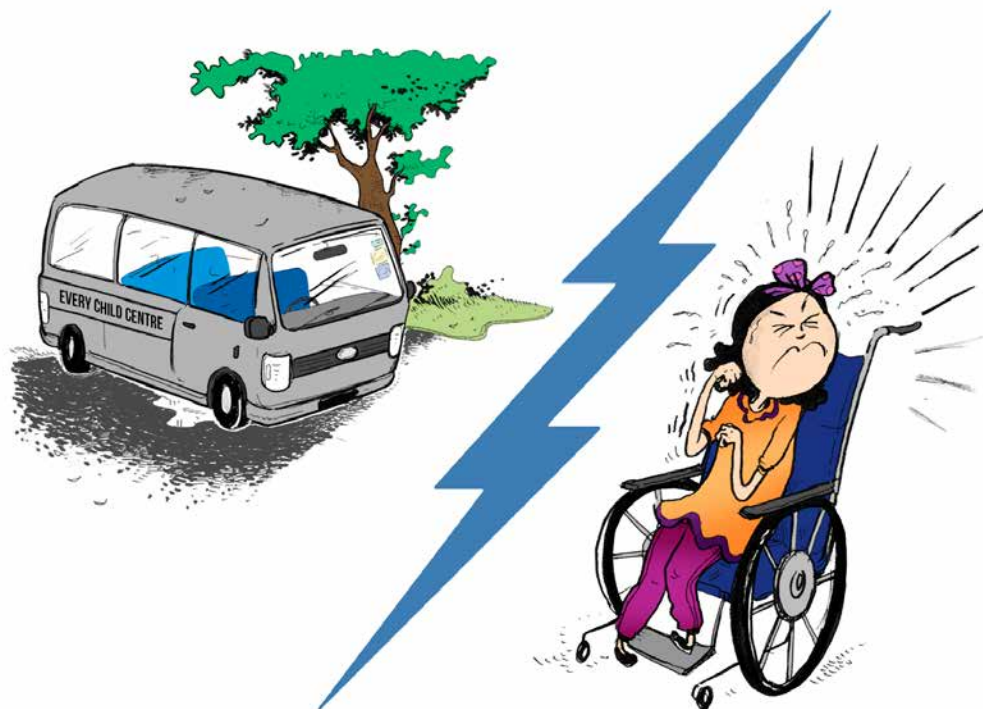
One day, after finishing the ice cream treat, instead of wiping Sara's hands, Uncle San puts his hand inside her blouse. And then into her pants.



Sara is shocked and frightened. Uncle San tells her, “It’s ok. This is a special game for special friends. Don’t tell anyone, ok?” He then drives her home.



That evening, Sara is quiet and does not play with her cat.



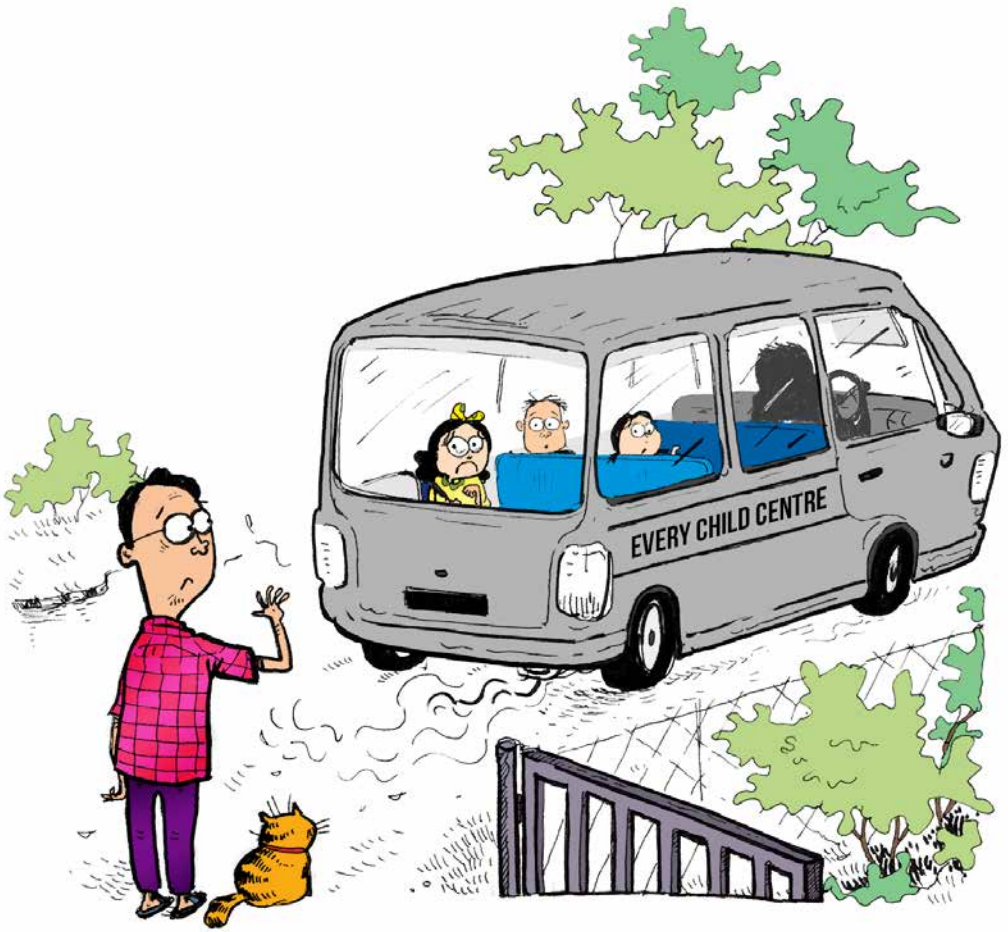
Over the next few days, Uncle San takes Sara for more ice cream treats and his 'special game'. Sara doesn't like Uncle San's 'special game'.



One morning when Uncle San comes to take Sara, she refuses to get into the van. She cries loudly.



Sara's father cannot understand what is happening. He pushes Sara's wheelchair up the ramp and straps her in.



Uncle San drives off. Sara's father waves to Sara but she does not smile or wave back. Sara's father feels uneasy.



Sara's father calls Teacher Aini at the Centre to find out how Sara is. Teacher Aini says, "She has become very quiet. Did something happen at home?"



That afternoon, when Uncle San brings Sara home, Sara refuses to let him help her down. She shouts, “Nooooo!” Her father has to help her out of the van.



As Uncle San drives off, Sara shouts,
“NO! NO! NO!” and starts to cry.



Sara's father takes her into the house.
He holds her till she stops crying.



Sara's father gently asks, "Sara, why are you so upset?" Sara says, "Unnn...cle baad..." while signing 'bad' with her hand.



Sara's father asks, "Uncle San bad? Why? Tell me." Sara touches her chest and slides her hand down her waist several times while saying 'Uncle' and 'bad'.



Sara's father asks, "What do you mean? Is Uncle San touching you?" Sara nods.



Sara's father brings out several communication charts. Sara tells her father what happened by pointing to diagrams and words on the charts.



Sara's father is shocked. He says,
"What Uncle San did is wrong.
That's why you were so upset and angry!"



Sara's father is upset but tells Sara,
"It's a good thing you told me.
We have to stop this."



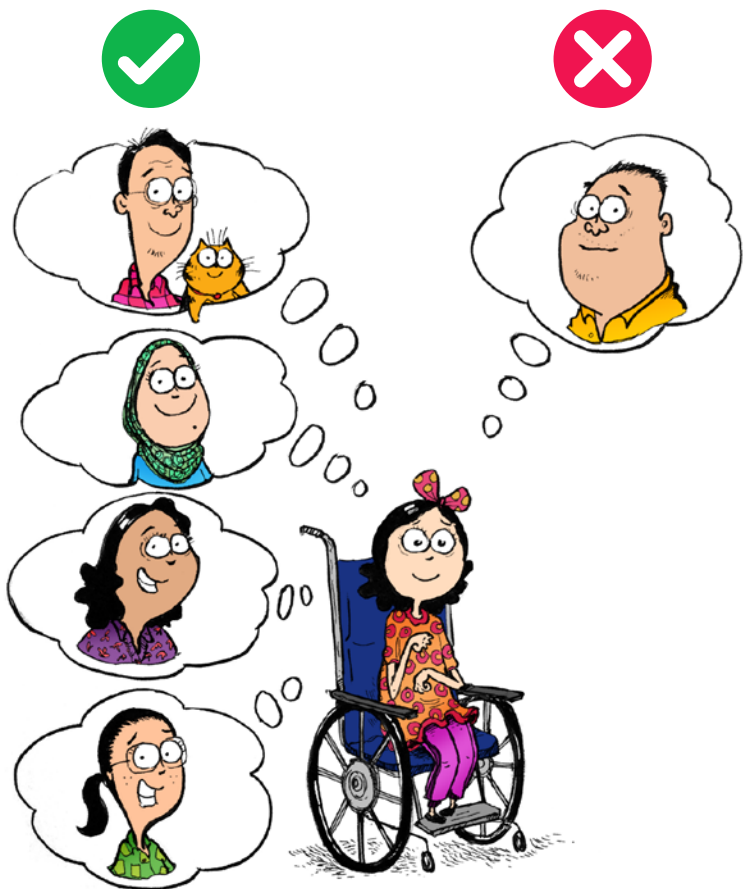
Sara's father calls Teacher Aini and tells her what has happened. Later that evening, Sara's father and Teacher Aini lodge police reports about the matter.



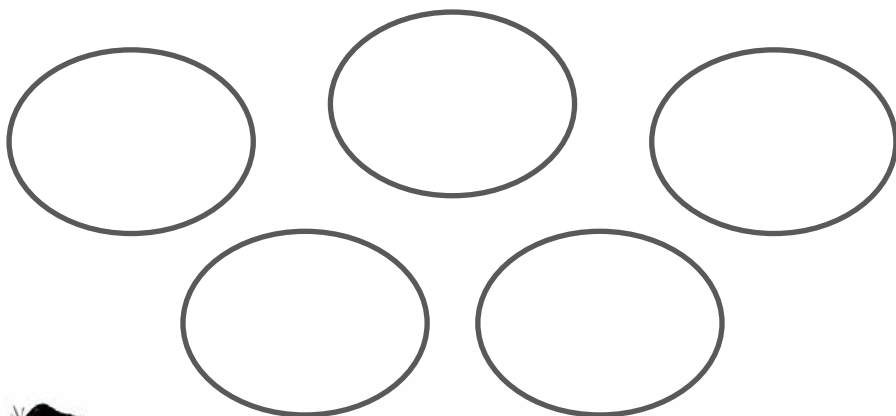
The following week, a new van driver comes to take Sara to the Centre. This time, a teacher from the Centre accompanies the driver.



At the Centre, the teachers hold a class on 'good touch' and 'bad touch'. They say, "Good touches make you feel happy and comfortable. Bad touches can hurt and make you feel scared or confused."



The teachers say, “If you receive a bad touch, quickly tell or show someone something is happening to you by drawing pictures, making noises or signs. You can get help to stop it.”



Fill in the bubbles with the names of people
whom you trust and who can help you.



The Women's Centre for Change is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to end violence against women and children, and promote gender equality and social justice.

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