



7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

THE NO THAT MATTERS

A Story by Arkedelic



Parents' Guide

STUDENT CONC

THE NO THAT MATTERS

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THE NO THAT MATTERS

It started with a new assistant coach.

Coach Adil had left for two months to care for his sick father, and a temp coach took over the Sunshine Squad's evening football training.

He was loud. Too loud. He smiled too much, and laughed a little too hard at things that weren't funny.

On day three, he ruffled Nik's hair so often it left it flat on one side. Nik didn't like it, but he didn't say anything.

When he offered to show Sam how to "position her hips properly for a stronger kick" and moved behind her to adjust her stance, Sam wriggled away.

"Let me try it my way," she said quickly.

The temp coach laughed. "Feisty one. I like that."



Something about that line made Sam's stomach drop.

Later, Sam told Jane and Mario.

“Maybe he's just being encouraging?” Jane said, unsure. “But yeah... that sounded weird.”

“It's not what he says,” Sam muttered. “It's how he says it. And how close he stands. Even when no one's around.”

“Does your stomach twist?” Mario asked. “Mine did once when a grown-up tried to playfully grab me from behind and wouldn't stop when I said 'enough.'”

Sam nodded.



Jane leaned forward. “That feeling is real. My mom says if something feels wrong, it probably is.”

“Even if the person hasn't ‘done’ anything exactly wrong?” Nik asked, joining them. “I mean, what if we overreact?”

Sam looked at him sharply. “It's not overreacting if it's your body.”

The next evening, the temp coach tried to joke with Sam again. This time, she took two steps back.

“Please don't touch me,” she said — clearly, and loudly.

A few other kids turned to look. The coach's smile faltered.

“Woah, relax, kiddo. I'm just—”

“I said no,” Sam repeated.

That night, she told her father. Calmly. Factually. Clearly.

He looked at her for a moment, then said, “Thank you for telling me. That was the right thing to do.”

By the next week, Coach Adil was back.

No explanation. Just a quiet change.

But Sam noticed something else: the team now had a small poster by the entrance.

Your body belongs to you.
No one gets to touch you without your permission.
If something feels wrong, say something. To someone you trust. Always.

“Did your dad speak to the school?” Jane whispered one day.

Sam shrugged. “I think he did. I didn’t ask.”

“But aren’t you curious?”

“A little. But mostly, I’m... relieved.”

Nik smiled. “I’m proud. You said what I was too nervous to.”

Sam looked at him. “You can still say it. Anytime. To anyone.





Loudly.”

Mario grinned. “We should make wristbands. Like a team motto. My body, my rules.”

“Or a chant,” Jane added. “No means no — even if it’s whispered!”

That week, something shifted.

Not just in football.

Sam stood taller. Nik spoke firmer. Even Mario started saying “no” when people took his fries without asking.

Because saying no isn’t about drama.
It’s about dignity.

And sometimes, the bravest play on the field... is standing your ground.

THE END

VALUES FROM THE STORY



1. How can I help my child be aware of and stay safe from inappropriate touch or behaviour from others?

Context in the story: Sam feels uncomfortable with the assistant coach's touch and inappropriate comments. At first unsure, she slowly gathers courage — backed by her friends, her gut feeling, and her dad — to speak up clearly, calmly, and firmly: “Please don't touch me.” Her ‘no’ becomes a turning point.

Real-world connection: Children may often feel unsure or second-guess themselves when an adult makes them uncomfortable, especially if the behavior doesn't seem “wrong enough.” This story makes it clear that discomfort is enough. Their body is their own.

How parents can use the story: This story opens a powerful yet age-appropriate door for discussing safe and unsafe behaviour. Parents can reinforce that if something “feels wrong,” it probably is, even if it looks normal on the outside. Instead of overwhelming children with fear, the story empowers them with clarity: it's okay to say no, walk away, and talk to a trusted adult. Parents can also use this moment to share their own family code — who are the safe adults, what to do in a confusing situation, and most importantly, how to listen to your own body's signals.



2. How do I help my child feel safe again after a scary experience — even if it wasn't a “big” thing?

Context in the story: Even though Sam wasn't “hurt,” the experience shook her. But she talked to her dad, made her voice heard, and saw a real shift in her environment — from the coach's quiet removal to the poster on the wall. Her sense of safety returned through action and support.

Real-world connection: Scary moments don't always look big from the outside. But they can cause lasting hesitation or fear in a child. Helping them feel safe again means honoring their experience, not dismissing it.

How parents can use the story: This story helps parents understand that “bouncing back” takes time, but also that small steps (like being believed, or seeing change happen) can rebuild trust quickly. Parents can reassure their child that being scared is never weak, and that being heard, supported, and protected after the fact is part of the healing. With this story, children learn that they are not alone in facing their fears, and that courage doesn't always look loud. Sometimes, it's a quiet “no” that shifts the ground beneath you.





3. How can I teach my child to be alert, more observant and stay safe?

Context in the story: It's not just Sam who notices the temp coach's behaviour. Jane listens carefully, Mario empathises, and Nik questions his own discomfort. Their shared awareness helps Sam make sense of her gut feeling and act on it.

Real-world connection: Many safety lessons focus only on the child being affected, but safety is a shared responsibility. Teaching children to be observant of their environment and their peers helps them build empathy, protection, and community strength.

How parents can use the story: Parents can use this story to talk about staying alert — not just for themselves but for their friends, too. It reinforces the idea that being observant isn't about suspicion, but about tuning in to your instincts and checking in with others when something feels off. Children who learn to notice small signals — tone, distance, unease — are better prepared to navigate real-life interactions with confidence and caution.

Assessment Questions for “The No That Matters”



1. What made Sam realise that the new coach’s behaviour wasn’t okay?

Purpose: To help children trust their instincts and recognise when something doesn’t feel right.

Follow-up: Have you ever felt uncomfortable around someone or something? How did your body tell you?

2. How did Sam find the courage to say “Please don’t touch me”?

Purpose: To show that saying “no” clearly and calmly can protect both safety and self-respect.

Follow-up: What would help you feel brave if you needed to say no in a difficult moment?

3. How did Sam's friends show respect when someone said no or felt uneasy?

Purpose: To teach that “no” isn't only for danger — it's part of mutual respect.

Follow-up: How can you show respect when a friend or classmate says “no” to something?

4. Who did Sam talk to after the incident, and why was that important?

Purpose: To remind children that they should never keep uncomfortable situations a secret and can always reach out for help.

Follow-up: Who are the safe adults you could talk to if something ever felt wrong?

5. How did Sam's action inspire her friends, and even change the team's rules?

Purpose: To show that when one person speaks up, it helps others feel brave too.

Follow-up: Can you think of a time when someone else's courage made you feel stronger?

See you next Monday with another interesting story!

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