



What's Up With Those Bodies?

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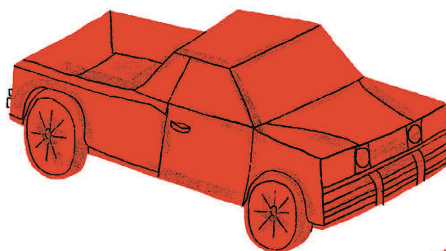
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Age: 10+

A child and a cat love to chat with each other constantly. And they get along like a house on fire, as well. The child is curious and clever, so they know how to ask all sorts of questions. The cat, however, has lived with humans for a long time and has hidden a lot of human wisdom between its ears over the years. This is why the cat is able to answer any question the child asks. Even the questions about bodies, sex, love, safety, and becoming yourself. For example, the cat knows very well what puberty is and how it changes the body. It also knows how to take care of the body and how to stand up for oneself when necessary.



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Different Bodies

“It’s totally weird that people’s bodies are so different. We’re all human, but you answer every one of my questions saying that this thing or that thing can vary depending on the person. Can that really be true?”

“Well, here – let’s look out the window together. Do you see how different people’s noses are? Some are pointy, some are flat, some are a little crooked, some have tips that point up, some are curved. And just like noses, everyone’s other body parts are also unique. Can you even pick out two identical bodies down there on the sidewalk? There are bodies with two arms, bodies with one leg, bodies with fingers that come right out of the elbow, bodies that are taller or shorter and have lighter or darker skin, fatter bodies, thinner bodies, bodies with green or gray eyes, some with straighter teeth and others with teeth that are a little crooked. Even cinnamon rolls that are made by the same person and come out of the same oven can be completely different. So, it’s only logical that people who grow from different parents’ cells and are born from different bodies are just as different as any cinnamon roll!”

“Or flower!”

“Right, or flower. Or snowflake.”

The Child giggles. **“Only you gobble cinnamon rolls up when they’re finished, but you don’t eat people.”**

The cat stretches luxuriously before speaking.

“You’re absolutely right, but at least a cinnamon roll stays the same till the very end. You humans, on the other hand, change over your lifetime just like all the rest of nature!”

“You’re the one who changes!”

“And you do, too! Compare the bark on young and old trees, for example: it’s smoother at first but it turns rougher and more gnarled over the tree’s lifetime, just like a human body. And if you consider the kings of the wild (cats, obviously!), well, their fur gets grayer and grayer as they age, just like your hair. Even your favorite stuffed animal, although it isn’t alive, has become saggy and stretched over time because it’s gone along on so many adventures and you’ve hugged it so much and with such great care. Bodies that are alive develop features of wear and tear over their lifetime, too. Before you know it, there’ll be longer and thicker hairs growing on your face and in your ears and around your genitals and on your legs and your belly and your toes and... At some point, the hairs will change color, getting whiter and grayer, and some will even fall off like leaves before winter. Your skin will gradually become drier and more spotted, you’ll get stretch marks from when your body gets bigger, you’ll have cellulite where fatty tissue rearranges itself under your skin, and wrinkles will form on your body and face when your skin begins stretching less and less. No 15-year-old’s body is the same as it was when they were five, nor any 50-year-old’s body the same as when they were 25. The only sad thing is that lots of people are afraid of ageing because they think that only youth is beautiful. It’s actually

an absolute delight to live with your body your entire life. And you know, it's not a person's body that makes them beautiful, but the things they think, say, and do!"

The Child picks their nose for a bit and then announces:

"We went to the sauna when we were visiting somebody a couple days ago and I saw so many different naked bodies sitting together on a single bench! Hairy ones, smooth ones, wrinkled ones, chubby ones, sle der ones, short ones, tall ones... But I wasn't naked myself."

"What, you mean you wore your jumpsuit to the sauna?"

"Aw, don't be silly! I wore my bathing suit."

"People did used to go naked, you know. I can remember you sitting in a little tub in the washing room, trying to splash water at me. Believe me, I'll never forget it."

"That was fun, right?! When I was in the sauna, I just felt for some reason like I'd be a little bit uncomfortable if I were naked. Should I have undressed anyway, you think?" the Child asks worriedly.

"You don't have to do anything you don't want to – your body is yours and yours alone. If you feel uncomfortable being naked, then stay dressed, but if you feel it'd be fun to be naked with other people around, then go ahead and be naked. And other people can decide for themselves whether they want to be naked with others or not, because their body is theirs and theirs alone, too."

"But you definitely can't be naked everywhere!"

"Tsk, humans can't because you've all made that agreement with each other for some reason. Cats make somewhat more reasonable agreements amongst ourselves, in my opinion. But generally, people can be naked when they're at someone's private sauna or on their local beach if there aren't any strangers around, though even that's just an agreement you all make. Just please don't undress in the store, on a bus, on the sidewalk, or during class."

"I wonder why, though?" the Child asks, frowning.

"I think it's because for one thing, that means your genitals are protected from all kinds of dangers and for another, lots of people feel uncomfortable when they see someone else's naked body."

"But women who have breasts have to wear a shirt, too, even though breasts aren't genitals. Why?"

"We cats have been trying to understand that for a long time, and the only thing we've managed to figure out is that someone simply decided it sometime. No matter that those same breasts often keep babies alive, for example, and are in no way so dangerous that they should have to be covered up. I'm telling you – cats are much more reasonable."

"I guess I agree," the Child sighs and scratches the Cat behind its ears until it starts to purr.