

# Noses Are Not for Picking

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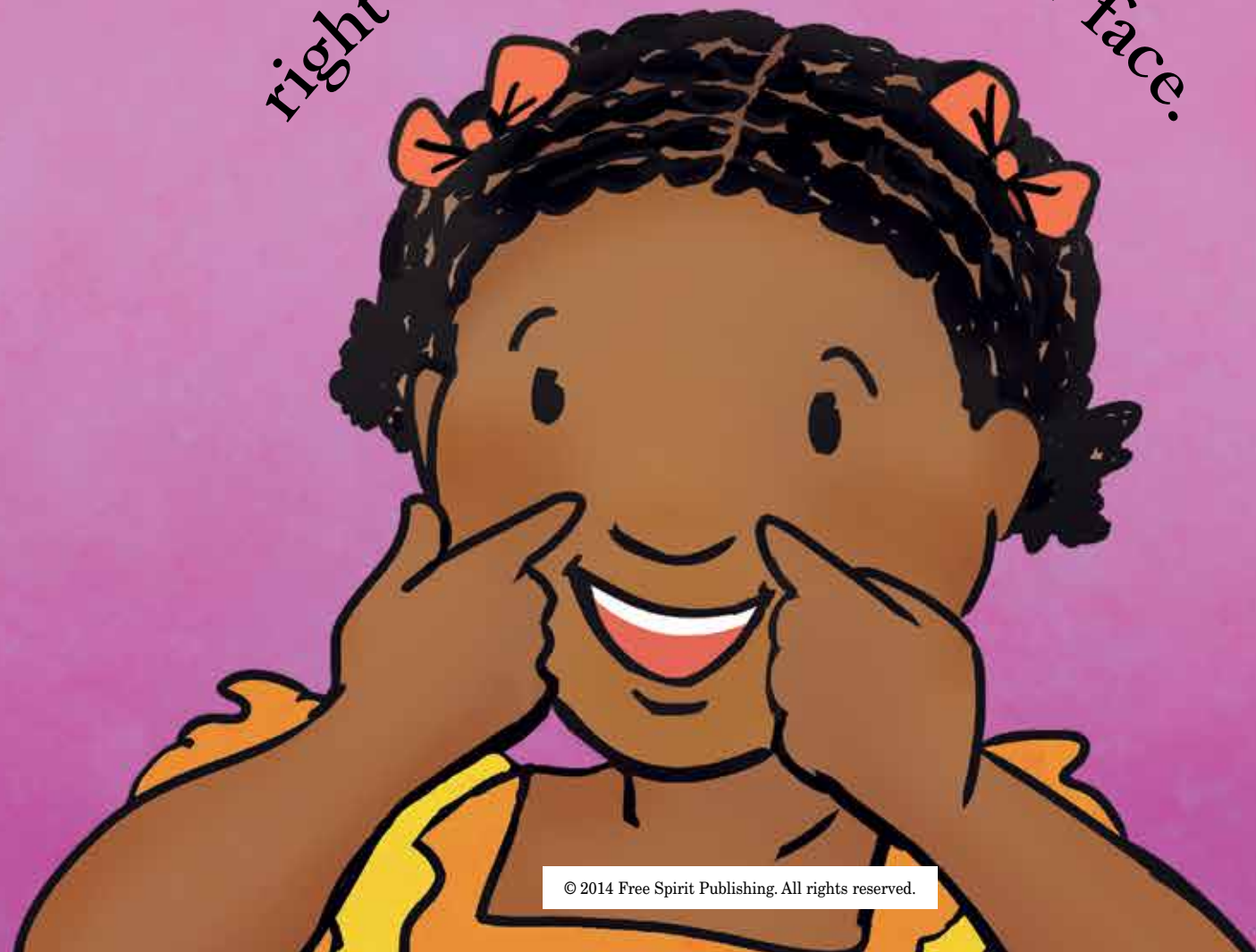
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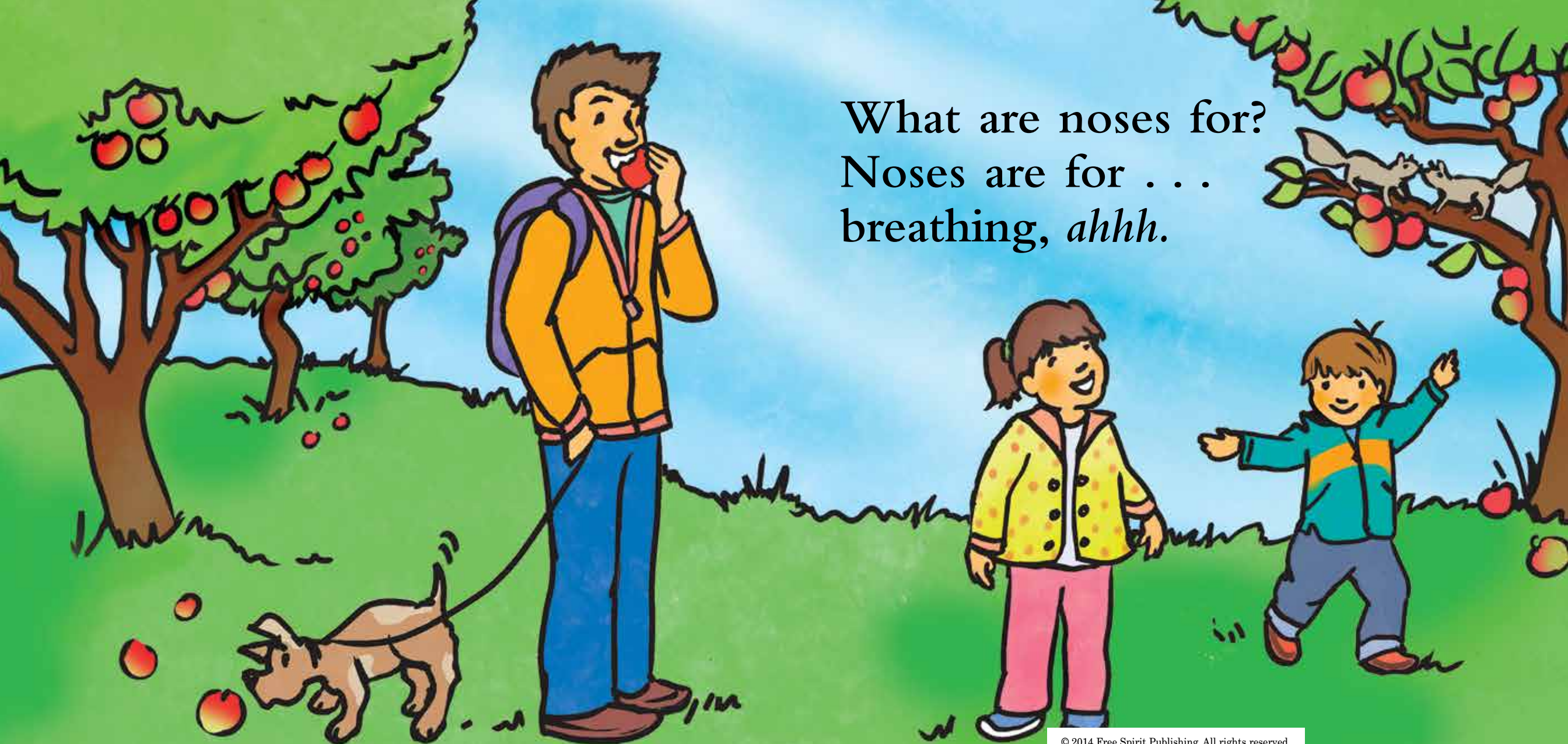


Your nose has  
an important  
place—

*right in the middle of your face.*



What are noses for?  
Noses are for . . .  
breathing, *ahhh*.



# Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Nose picking is a not-so-nice fact of life. Toddlers pick up the habit on their own or by watching others. They may stick their fingers in their nose when bored, anxious, or simply curious. Young children who have colds or allergies may pick their nose often to relieve irritation. Whatever the reason, you want it to stop—and quick!

Scolding a child or expressing disgust isn't the answer. Young children are still learning about their bodies and behaviors. They may feel ashamed or guilty if you speak harshly. Or, they might start to view nose picking as a way to get (negative) attention.

Here are some positive ways to help put a stop to the picking:

**Be aware of the reason.** A child with a cold or allergies is likely to have itchy, congested nasal passages. Keep tissues handy at home and the childcare center. Most toddlers need to be taught how to use a tissue. Demonstrate how to wipe or blow the nose, throw the tissue in the trash, and wash and dry the hands afterward. *Tip:* Many young children need extra help learning to blow their nose through their *nose* and not their mouth. (They hear a blowing sound and imitate it using their lips without realizing this is incorrect.)

**Encourage hand washing.** Experts agree that one of the best ways to curb the spread of germs among children and adults is frequent hand washing. Wash your hands after wiping or blowing your nose, after sneezing or coughing, and after contact with someone who's ill. Make sure the children in your care do the same. To get the job done right, use warm water and plenty of soap, and then rinse well and pat dry on a clean towel. The recommended amount of time for hand washing is at least twenty seconds, which is as long as it takes to sing the Alphabet Song or Happy Birthday twice.



**Be a good role model.** If your child sees you picking your nose—even if it's during a private moment—the image will stick! She will probably imitate you or question why *you* can do it but she can't. Make a point of keeping tissues handy so you can use them yourself or quickly grab one for a toddler in need. If you see your child start to pick, say “Tissue time” and offer a clean tissue for use. (Used tissues crumpled in your pocket are a source of germs.)

**Be respectful.** Avoid yanking children's fingers out of their nose or yelling. Nose picking may not be fun to watch, but many children keep up the habit into the school years. Sometimes, you may want to use a little humor if you catch a child in the act: “No picking . . . ick!” Other times, you may want to talk to the child privately. At home and in group settings, repeat the phrase “Noses are not for picking.” Soon enough the children will use it themselves and remind each other.



**Redirect your child.** Sometimes nose picking is due to boredom. Distract the child with a more interesting activity—give him something better to do with his hands!

**Keep an eye on it.** A child who is more of a chronic nose picker may aggravate the lining of the nose enough to cause bleeding and scabs. Explain that the “owies” or “boo-boos” are caused by fingernails; emphasize that fingers should stay out of the nose altogether. If the problem continues, enlist the help of your healthcare provider. Your child may pay closer attention if the nurse or doctor is the one giving the same “no nose picking” advice.