



As a Parent, What Can I Do to Reduce the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse?

Establish boundaries

- Help your child understand his/her role in the family. Your child should be separated from adult issues.
- Begin talking to your child about personal body space and privacy by age three and about sex before age 10.
- Set rules for using the bathroom, bathing, and changing clothes, i.e. only one person should go to the bathroom at a time; you should change clothes in the privacy of your room, etc.
- Designate a personal space in the home for each person (including belongings as well as personal alone time.)
- Do not force affection. Do not force your children to hug or kiss people they don't want to. Let them know it is okay to choose who they want to hug.
- Remember respect does not mean teaching obedience, sometimes it is okay for a child to say no.
- Teach children the correct names of body parts.
- As they grow, teach your children to bathe, dress, wash, and go to the bathroom by themselves.

Monitor exposure to adult topics

- Set age appropriate limits with regard to TV, radio, music, adult conversations, games, and the internet.



Teach assertiveness

- Create opportunities for children to practice matching their body language with strong verbal messages, i.e. come up with different situations where your child might need to be assertive and practice with them what they should say and do.
- Teach children it is okay to say “no, stop, or I don't like that.”

Teach your child to tell you if someone does anything that makes him/her feel uncomfortable, including:

- Asking to touch or look at your child's private parts or asking him/her to touch or look at another person's private parts.
- Wanting to take pictures of your child with no clothes on (or to show him/her pictures of people without their clothes.)
- Telling your child sexual jokes or talking to your child about sex.
- Going to the bathroom in front of or with your child.
- Wanting to bathe your child.
- Making the child feel scared, hurt, sad, or uncomfortable.





Talk about secrets

- Explain the difference between surprises, which are meant to be told, and secrets that are unsafe and can never be told.

Identify safe adults

- Help your child identify safe adults in his/her life. Help them think about who they can go to for help, such as a teacher, aunt, uncle, etc.

Teach about healthy relationships between adults and children.

- Discuss what friendship is and what it is not.
- Talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Remember children need affection and attention; this can be used by offenders to get close to your child.

Teach your children how to identify and label their feelings.

- Name the feeling: Help your children name their feelings by giving them labels to use. “Mommy had to go to work, you are sad. You said you want your Mommy.”
- Identify feelings in themselves and others: Talk about feelings they have and those you see in others. “I hear you laughing, are you happy?” or “She fell down, how do you think she feels?”
- Talk about how feelings can be expressed. Lead by example. Talk about your own feelings and how you can express those feelings. What do you do when you get mad? How do people know you are happy? Talk about ways your child can express their emotions.



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