

# TALKING TO YOUR 9-12 YEAR-OLD

## IMPORTANT SAFETY RULES

- My body belongs to me. It's important to keep my body safe and private. It's OK for me to expect others to treat it with respect, too.
- It's never OK for anyone to make me feel uncomfortable and to ask me to keep it a secret, even if it's someone I know and like.
- It's important for me to say, "No" if I can, to anything that makes me feel uneasy. I can speak in a firm voice; my parents would want me to.
- If I ever have a problem, or I'm feeling troubled, it's important for me to tell an adult I trust.
- If I ever have a funny feeling about something, a gut instinct, it's OK for me to act on that instinct.

## WHAT CAN THEY DO TO KEEP SAFE

- When you go somewhere, always let someone know where you will be and check in with them regularly.
- Use the routes that you and your family decide are best when going to and from school, a friend's house, and other places.
- When appropriate, use the "buddy system."
- When you feel uncomfortable in a situation, talk with your parents if you can; they want to know about your concerns.
- Sometimes you may have to tell more than one person to get help, so keep telling until someone is able to help you.

**Tip for parents:** Remember to have an OPEN DOOR POLICY with your children. Let them know that if they need to talk your door is always open and you're always ready to listen.

## AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULES?

My friends and I were at the playground after school. As we headed for the play shed, a man walked up to us and said, "Hi." I recognized him as my new neighbor. I introduced him to my friends and told them how he helped me fix my bike chain last weekend. He started to ask some questions about the school and the afternoon activities. I stayed to answer him even though my friends kept on walking.

One of my family's safety rules is, "use the buddy system," which means I should have stayed with my friends. But my neighbor was really friendly and I knew he was a nice guy. I kept talking to him and when he asked me to show him the basketball courts and where the restrooms were, I did. When we got near the restrooms, my neighbor grabbed my arm and said he wanted me to go inside with him. I didn't know what he wanted and I felt scared. I said, "No! Let go of my arm!" I pulled away and ran to find my friends. Then my friends and I went inside the school and told a teacher what had happened.

When I was showing my new neighbor around the school, I liked feeling helpful and in charge. I didn't like being grabbed and feeling scared and confused. I'm glad I could get away and find help. I learned that day that the "buddy system" is a good safety rule to follow, even when everything seems safe and okay. I also learned that I'm safest when I remember to use all the safety rules, even with people I know and trust.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF?

- If you find yourself in trouble, who would you call for help and why?
- If someone asked you to do something to them or to yourself that made you uneasy or gave you a funny feeling in your belly, what would you do?
- What if someone you know and trust tried to bribe you or scare you into keeping a secret? What would you do?

## WHY HAVE SAFETY CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR KIDS?

- It's important to talk with our children about personal safety. This should be an on-going discussion because as they get older they will strive for their independence.
- Many times as children get older they assume they know it all. To the best of our ability, we as parents should try to give them the best information available.
- Children will begin to spend more time with their friends and less time with you.
- Talk to your child while in a moving vehicle. This way they have no choice but to listen.
- Try to ask open-ended questions instead of closed ones. For example, "Tell me about your day?" is better than, "How was school today?"
- At every opportunity available, tell your children you love them!

**Tip for Parents:** Do you want your children to get important information from you? Or from an unreliable source?