

# TOP TEN TIPS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual violence is an issue that impacts women and men of all ages, and can be a problem that is frightening and difficult to think about. All of us can reduce our vulnerability to sexual assault, however, by talking about the issue among ourselves and with our children, and by taking a few steps to enhance safety. Following are some suggestions for protecting both children and adults. Remember, it is not your fault if you are unable to avoid a sexual assault. Support is available. Talking about it can help. King County Sexual Assault Resource Center is available 24 hours a day at 888.99.VOICE.

## PERSONAL SAFETY FOR CHILDREN

1. Encourage children to feel that they are in charge of their bodies. Tell children that they can decide who touches them. Teach them about privacy and help them identify the private parts of the body.
2. Teach your child safety rules about touching just like you would teach about other kinds of safety rules (like wearing a bike helmet and holding an adult's hand to cross the street).
  - Give children accurate information about what is and is not appropriate touching and behavior, no matter who is doing it. Say, "It's not OK for an adult or older person to touch a private part of your body for no reason and ask you to keep it a secret."
  - Teach children that they have the right to say "No" to unwanted touch.
  - Encourage children to tell someone (a trusted adult) if they are confused or upset or if they have any concerns or questions.
3. Reinforce using the "buddy system" even on family outings, or outings with friends.
4. Always be sure you know where your children are and whom they are with. Make sure they check in regularly with you.
5. Maintain an environment in which children feel safe talking about their feelings and problems.

## PERSONAL SAFETY FOR ADULTS

6. Be aware of your surroundings. Take note of threatening situations or behaviors that intimidate you or make you uncomfortable. Remember that relationships can be abused. If someone stops respecting your wishes or limits, they may be the kind of person who would take advantage of you.
7. Plan ahead. Always let someone know where you are, where you are going, and when you expect to return. Arrange to have someone available to help you in case of an emergency.
8. Trust your instincts. Don't second-guess your gut feelings. If a situation does not feel right, leave. Remember that even people you know well may try to hurt you.
9. Be confident. Stay alert, make eye contact, be assertive.
10. Take action! If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, speak out immediately. Name the behavior and say you want it to stop, e.g., "You're standing too close. Move away." In a strong, clear voice say "No," "Enough," or "Stop." Get away, call out for help, and fight back.