

REDUCING THE RISK FOR CHILDREN IN OUR CARE

The world seems to be an increasingly dangerous place to live. Television and print media concentrate so much time on the violent and scary happenings in our communities that even as adults, we can become overwhelmed. Child sexual abuse is especially frightening. It is a difficult topic to talk about with our children, but we must overcome our discomfort so they have the information they need to be safe. Children rely on us to help them build skills to negotiate through life safely. Though we cannot eliminate the danger in the world, we can reduce the risk of abuse to our children if we:

- Give them clear and matter-of-fact information.
- Develop open communication.
- Teach them personal safety skills.
- Help them develop a strong sense of self.

That is, however, the smallest part of our task as caregivers. More than 85 percent of the time, a child who is sexually assaulted knows the offender.

The perpetrator might be a family member, babysitter, coach or family friend. Children need clear and direct instruction focused on developing skills to increase their safety.

REDUCE CHILDREN'S VULNERABILITY

Enhance Supervision of Children

- Identify approved routes for children to and from school, homes of friends, neighborhood parks etc.
- Encourage children to use a “buddy system.” Children are safer in a group.
- Agree on pre-arranged “check-ins” by children with a supervising adult at school or when with friends.
- Refuse to leave children in the care of someone you do not trust, even if that person is a family member.

The “dangerous stranger” is easiest to talk about and easiest to identify as a potentially harmful person. However, we must also teach children to use their safety skills with the people they know.

Strengthen Communication with Children

- Have daily conversations with children about things that interest them.
- Increase children’s decision-making skills.
- Teach children about privacy: yours, theirs, and others’.
- Listen to your children respectfully so they feel safe talking about their feelings and problems.

Support your children’s efforts to voice their concerns, objections and feelings. Help them to speak freely by being open to all concerns.

Remember, communicating with your children will nurture their sense of self-worth.

Increasing Safety Skills of Children

- Remind children that their bodies belong to them.
- Give children accurate information about appropriate touching and behavior.
- Talk to kids about safety skills.
- Teach children they have a right to say “No” to unwanted touch.
- Help your child identify resources.
- Encourage children to tell a trusted adult if they have any concerns or questions.

THE STRENGTH OF GOOD PARENTING

Simple rules can help children remember the personal safety information you have taught them. However, they cannot be effective without discussion and support.

KIDS' SAFETY RULES

- My body belongs to me. It is important to keep it safe and private.
- It is never okay for anyone to touch the private parts of my body and to ask me to keep it a secret, even if it is someone I know or like.
- It is never okay for anyone to ask me to keep a secret if it makes me uncomfortable, or I know it's wrong, even if it is someone I know or like.
- I can say "No" to touching that is not okay. I can say "No," or "Don't do that," or "I'm going to tell."
- If I have a problem, it is important for me to tell an adult I trust about it.
- Children who feel safe talking about their feelings or problems can gain skills with the strength of parent support.
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RESOURCES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Two adults my child could ask for help:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____