

Let's Talk!

Tips for Talking About Personal Safety & Sexual Abuse with Kids Ages 9-10

9-10

Get Comfy and Start the Conversation

As children approach adolescence, they often have questions about what's normal and need to know how to stay safe from abuse. These tips can help ease important conversations about personal safety and let your child know you're there for them, especially when it's awkward.

What You Can Say

“Let’s have a quick chat before you leave. I want to go over a few safety rules.”

“Just in case you need me for anything, I want to make sure you know the safety plan and have all of our emergency contact information.”

“No one should take or ask for photos of your private body parts or show you photos of other people’s private parts, in person or online.”

“If anyone ever makes you feel uncomfortable, you can tell me. I will believe you and keep you safe.”

“You are the boss of your own body. You don’t have to hug, kiss, or touch anyone if you don’t want to.”



HOT CHOCOLATE TALK®



1 Review family safety rules

Use everyday moments, like time together in the car or kitchen, to make sure your child understands and internalizes safety rules so they know how to respond in unsafe situations without your supervision. When your child is getting ready to go somewhere, this can be your cue to remind them about personal safety rules.

2 Go into more detail about privacy

Talk matter-of-factly, using anatomically correct vocabulary for body parts, about privacy. Let your child know that not all abuse involves touching. It's also inappropriate for someone to show or ask to see private body parts. Talk about how to recognize and refuse any inappropriate behavior, whether it's in person or online.

3 Talk about secrets

Let your child know that people who break rules about touching can be anyone—coaches, music instructors, friends' older siblings, even relatives—and they may want to keep it a secret. Your child needs to know that secrets are not okay and that it's not their fault if someone breaks a rule. Let them know they need to tell a safe adult as soon as they can and keep telling until someone believes them.

4 Pay attention

When you prioritize open and ongoing communication, you're making it easier for your child to disclose abuse. But many children still don't want to tell. Listen and watch carefully for hidden messages, such as a child not wanting to visit someone, showing changes in behavior, or showing signs of discomfort. If your child opens up, believe them. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse.¹

IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEED HELP

Childhelp 800-4-A-Child

National Sexual Violence Resource Center 877-739-3895

National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888 or text HELP to 233733.

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network 800-656-HOPE

1. Summit, R., & Kyrso, J. (1978). Sexual abuse of children: A clinical spectrum. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 48, 237-249. <https://www.secasa.com.au/pages/is-the-child-victim-of-sexual-abuse-telling-the-truth>