

# ***What Do I Say Now?***

**How to Help Protect Your Child from Sexual Abuse**

## **GUIDELINES FOR USE**

### **Video Overview**

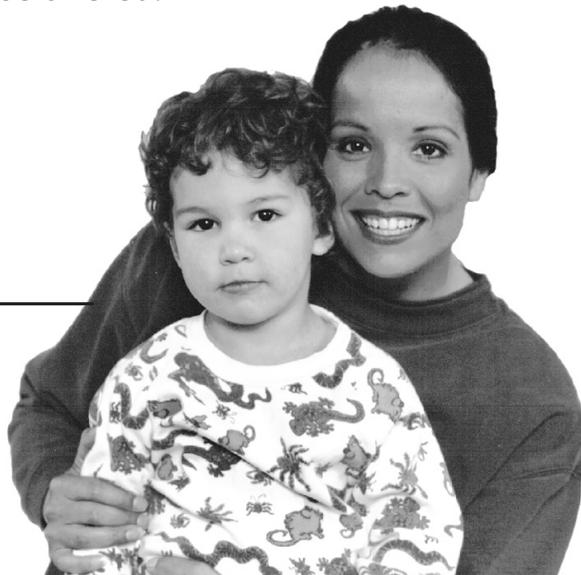
Committee for Children recognizes the importance of family involvement in teaching children personal safety skills that can help prevent child sexual abuse. The video was developed to offer the following to parents and caregivers:

- (1) Information about sexual abuse
- (2) Guidelines for providing a safe and caring environment for young children
- (3) Practical examples showing how and when to talk to children about safety and touching
- (4) Guidelines for responding to a child who discloses abuse

### **Using the Video**

*What Do I Say Now?* can be watched by families at home or shown in a group setting with or without a facilitator.

Discussion questions are listed inside. If families are watching the video at home, encourage them to answer the discussion questions themselves. If you are leading a discussion group, select key questions from those offered.



## Touching Rules

*What Do I Say Now?* shows a variety of ways to teach touching rules. Parents or caregivers need to decide how they will present the information based on their child's age, developmental level, and their own family values.

The video gives ideas for how to help children learn to set personal touching boundaries with both peers and adults. Encourage viewers to decide on wording for the rules that will work for them. For example, "If someone touches you and you don't like it, say words that mean 'No.'" "A bigger person should not touch your private body parts except to keep you clean and healthy." "No one should touch your penis/vagina or bottom except a doctor."

## *What Do I Say Now?* Handout

A reproducible master of a handout for families is included. The handout reviews the basic prevention strategies suggested in the video. A box on the handout provides space for local emergency phone numbers. Before making copies of the handout, add the phone numbers of your local resources.

**What Do I Say Now?**  
How to Help Protect Your Child from Sexual Abuse

committee for children

**Establish a Safe Environment**

**Who is with your child?**

Check references for:

- Babysitters.
- Child-care providers.

**Notice the behavior of other adults around your child.**

Be concerned about:

- Adults focused on child relationships more than adult relationships.
- Adults singling out certain children for attention.

**Discuss Touching Safety**

Answer your child's questions.

- Take advantage of natural teaching moments.
- Give age-appropriate answers.

Be approachable. Tell your child:

- If you ever have any questions, just ask me.
- It's never too late to tell.

Read a children's book about touching safety together.

Start a conversation with your child:

- Let's review the *Touching Rule* today.
- Before you go, let's practice what you would do if someone tried to break the *Touching Rule*.

**Teach Personal Safety Rules**

Introduce touching rules along with other safety rules. Talk about the rules often and practice them with your child.

Agree on family touching rules to use with other children and adults. Decide how you will teach these rules based on your child's age, developmental level, and your own family values. For example, you could say to your child:

- If someone is touching you and you want him or her to stop, say words that mean "No" (like "I don't like that" or "Stop that"). Then he or she needs to stop. If you are touching someone and he or she says "No," you need to stop.
- A bigger person should not touch your private body parts except to keep you clean and healthy. No one except to keep you clean and healthy. If someone does, say words that mean "No." Then get away and tell a grown-up.
- Do not keep secrets about touching.

**Respond to Disclosure**

Remain calm.

Reassure your child by saying:

- I'm glad you told me.
- It's not your fault.
- I am always here for you.

Seek help for your child and yourself. Possible resources include the following:

- Law enforcement personnel.
- Child Protective Services.
- Crisis hotline.
- Supportive friends and relatives.
- Professional counselors.

Remember, healing takes time.

**Where to call for help**

CPS \_\_\_\_\_

Police \_\_\_\_\_

Crisis Hotline \_\_\_\_\_

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

*What Do I Say Now?* presents guidelines for parents and caregivers of young children to help them protect children from sexual abuse. This video offers (1) information about sexual abuse, (2) guidelines for providing a safe and caring environment for young children, (3) practical examples showing how and when to talk to children about safety and touching, and (4) guidelines for responding to a child who discloses abuse.

## Discussion Questions

These questions are meant to encourage further thought by individuals who watch the video or to be used in a discussion group.

1. Why is touch important to children? (Touch communicates love, comfort, nurturing, and acceptance.)
2. What are some of the positive, safe touches you give your child?

## Protection Guidelines

3. Who are the people who spend time with your child when you are not there? How well do you know them?
4. What are some of the red flags that may concern you? (Child doesn't want to be with that person, person seems inappropriate in the way she or he acts with the child, person seems unusually interested in a particular child and wants to spend time alone with her/him.)

## Personal Safety

5. Why is it important to teach children that they can say "No" to touch they don't want? (Helps children establish boundaries, teaches them to be assertive.)
6. Do you have any family rules about touching? What are they? If you decide to add a new rule about touching, how will you introduce the rule?
7. The video suggests that you talk about touching in the context of safety. Why? (Won't scare children. Children understand the importance of rules.)
8. When would be a good time to talk to your child about touching safety? How would you bring up the subject?

## Touching Rules

It is important for parents and caregivers to decide how they want to state the touching rules based on the age and developmental level of the child and on their own family values. For example, the following rule could be stated several different ways.

**An older person should not touch your private body parts except to keep you clean and healthy. If someone does, say “No,” run away, and tell a grownup.**

9. What would be the best way for you to teach this concept? (Another way to word the rule would be: “No one should touch your penis/vagina and bottom except to keep you clean and healthy.”)
10. What are some examples of situations where it would be okay for an adult to touch a child’s private body parts to keep her/him clean and healthy? (Doctor, bathing for younger children, diapering, wiping after using the toilet for younger children.)
11. What can you do to ensure that this part of the rule is used appropriately? (Encourage your child to ask you if she or he has any questions or concerns about touching.)
12. You may not always be available for your child to talk to about questions or concerns. Who are other people in your child’s life that you could encourage your child to talk to if she or he has a question or concern?

Another touching rule is: **Don’t keep secrets about touching.**

13. Why is it important to teach children not to keep secrets about touching? (Secrecy allows the abuse to continue.)
14. How could you encourage your child to learn this rule? (Be approachable, practice “what if…” games.)
15. Where could you find books about sexual abuse prevention to read to your child? (School library, public library, bookstore, daycare center.)

## Disclosure

16. What are the key things to remember if a child discloses a touching problem to you? (Remain calm, reassure the child that he or she is not to blame and that you will get help.)
17. Who would you talk to if you had a question or concern about the safety of your child? (Doctor, Child Protective Services, police, sexual assault center, etc.) Would your response be different if the abuser was a family member? Stranger? Friend? (You still need to be sure children are safe from abuse.)

