


How Do I Talk to My Kids about Abuse Prevention?

We want to help our children be safe, but sometimes it's hard to know what to say. Here are five conversation ideas that might help.

Equip children with correct vocabulary

Knowing the correct names of body parts and which are considered private will help your kids better understand their bodies and communicate if there's a problem. Emphasize that they shouldn't take pictures of private parts and should tell you if anyone has looked at, touched, or taken pictures of their private parts.



For young children, explain that parts of the body covered by underwear are special, meaning that we shouldn't touch them on other people, and other people shouldn't touch them on us.

Teach kids to follow the Spirit and any warning instincts

Encourage children to walk away from people or situations that give them an uncomfortable feeling and to tell an adult they trust about what happened. Emphasize that they need to be especially careful online and should not share any pictures or personal information without your permission.

Some parents of young children find it helpful to use the phrases “tricky people” to talk about potential predators and “uh-oh feelings” to talk about the warning instincts their child may experience.

Encourage talking

When something scary or embarrassing happens, your child might not want to talk about it, but help them understand that’s precisely when they *most* need to talk with you. Emphasize that you will always love them no matter what they tell you.

Help kids practice saying, “No!”

While teaching our children to be respectful and polite, we should also help them understand that it’s OK to be bold when saying no to someone or something harmful. Emphasize that they can kick and scream or do anything else to get away from someone trying to hurt them.

Explain consent

Some peer abuse occurs when one kid mistakenly thinks another is a willing participant in a sexual or physical interaction. Make sure your child understands that they can say no when they feel uncomfortable doing something. Emphasize that they also need to respect the boundaries of others and listen when someone else says no. This applies to friends and family members—respect is important inside and outside the home.

Teach young children that if someone asks them to keep a secret, they should tell you right away. Reassure them that they won’t get in trouble for telling the secret.

Practice with young children politely saying, “No, thank you,” and then role-play situations where it’s OK for them to yell, “No!”

Help your children get in the habit of respecting their friends during playtime and noticing if someone isn’t having fun. Encourage empathy.

WHAT IF I THINK MY CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED?

If you think a child has been abused, reach out to civil authorities right away. Some countries have national hotlines that can help you connect with local resources. You may also want to talk with your bishop, who can help you access counseling professionals. Reassure your child that you love them and that Heavenly Father does too.

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
- “Protecting Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2019, 64–69.
- “Saying No, Hearing No,” *Friend*, Oct. 2020, 24–25.
- “Telling Secrets,” *Friend*, Mar. 2015, 44–45.
- “When Should I Tell?” *Friend*, Mar. 2015, 46.