

# Let's Talk!

## Tips for Talking About Personal Safety and Sexual Abuse with Kids Ages 11 and Up

11+

### Get Comfy and Start the Conversation

The changes and exploration of the tween and teen years can be both fun and challenging. Your adolescent may seem more grown up, but they still need your guidance. Use these tips to navigate and normalize personal safety conversations that can help your child stay safe on their journey to becoming a responsible, independent adult.

## What You Can Say

**“Relationships can be hard. Let me know if you ever want to chat about how things are going.”**

**“It’s always okay to say ‘no,’ even if you’ve already said ‘yes.’ Your feelings and safety come first.”**

**“I noticed you hanging out with some new kids at the basketball games. I’d love to hear more about them.”**

**“I know you have strong feelings for your girlfriend, so even though it may seem awkward, we need to talk about safety and consent.”**

**“It’s never okay for someone to use sex or your feelings to try to control you. If that happens, tell them it’s not okay, and then tell me so we can talk about it.”**

**“It’s important to watch out for your friends. If you see something inappropriate, say something.”**



HOT CHOCOLATE TALK®



## 1 Reframe Safety Tips

Personal safety tips might need to be framed in a way that's less directive than what you would teach a younger child. Focus on creating open, honest, and ongoing dialogue. Build trust and comfort over time and adapt your conversations to be more informative and nuanced as your child ages.

## 2 Connect in Side-by-Side Moments

Tweens and teens sometimes find it easier to talk when they're not looking directly at someone. The best time to connect may be while riding in a car or cooking a meal together. Ask open-ended questions and listen carefully for any comments that might hint at discomfort. Try watching the news or a movie together, using the content to bring up specific topics, such as new romantic feelings.

## 3 Discuss and Define What Is Appropriate

As your tween or teen explores relationships and touch, make sure they understand personal boundaries in the physical and digital world. It's estimated that nearly 36 percent of offenders are older children or teens,<sup>1</sup> so talk to your child about consent and what it means to be given consent. For example, the absence of "no" does not mean "yes."

## 4 Be Adaptive and Available

Every young person needs a caring adult they can turn to for support and guidance. If you talk to your tween or teen openly and often, you can be their trusted source of information and better prepare them for relationships and risks.

1. Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R., & Chaffin, M. (2009). Juveniles who commit sex offenses against minors. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227763.pdf>

## 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