

Let's Talk!

Tips for Talking About Personal Safety and 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 behavior is okay 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 tips.”

“Just in case you need me for anything, I want to make sure you know the family 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.”

“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 the Family Safety Plan

Use everyday moments, like time together in the car or kitchen, to make sure your child knows how to respond in unsafe situations without your supervision. When your child is getting ready to go somewhere, remind them about your family safety plan and be sure they know how to reach trusted adults if they need help.

2 Go Into More Detail About Privacy

Talk matter-of-factly about privacy, using anatomical vocabulary for body parts. 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 anyone can give unwanted touches—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. Let them know they need to tell a trusted adult as soon as they can.

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 your 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

1. Summit, R., & Kryso, J. (1978). Sexual abuse of children: A clinical spectrum. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 48(2), 237-251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1978.tb01312.x>

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**