

Survivors Healing Center

A Welcoming Place for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and Their Supporters

Prevention Tips

Educating Your Children

- The typical advice "Don't Talk to Strangers" doesn't apply - most sexual perpetrators are known to their victims, often including relatives, or other trusted authority figures. Be sure to screen babysitters, caregivers, teachers, volunteers, and others with access to children.
- Teach your children basic sexual education. Teach them the proper names for all body parts, including their "private" parts. Teach them about good touch, bad touch and secret touch and to let you know when someone asks them to keep a secret from you.
- Teach your children that their bodies are their own and that no one should touch their "private" parts. Let them know that it is okay to say "No," if they do not want a hug or certain kinds of contact which makes them uncomfortable. Do not instruct children to give relatives hugs and kisses. Let them express affection on their own terms.
- Teach your children that sexual advances from adults and other children who are older are wrong and against the law. Give them the confidence to assert themselves against anyone who attempts to abuse them.
- Develop strong communication skills with your children - do talk to your children, but remember it's especially important to listen to them. Pay attention if they don't want to go somewhere or be with someone. Encourage them to report "suspicious behavior." Work with your child if they do report a problem - do not be critical.
- Stress personal safety to your children and give examples of possible problem areas such as video arcades, malls, locker rooms, and out-of-the-way places. Instruct your child to never get into a car or go to someone's home with anyone else without your permission.

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What Parents Can Do

- Make an effort to know your children's friends and their families; be involved with your children's activities.
- Check to see if schools provide programs and roles for parents to make them part of their children's safety and security at school and while going to and from school.
- It is important to remember that physical force is often not necessary to engage a child in sexual activity. Children are trusting and dependent and will often do what is asked of them to gain approval. Notice when someone pays a great deal of attention to your child/gives them gifts.
- Pay attention to changes in your child's behavior or attitude. Look for small clues and cues that something may be wrong.
- Be sure that computer use is supervised and that computer protocols are established at home and school.
- Involve community resources - use the sex offender registry and community notification programs. Mobilize community groups to make your community more "child safe." Advocate the use of Code Adam (a powerful search tool for lost and possibly abducted children).
- Trust your instincts.
- Identify your abusers so that children are not left alone with them.

Sources:

- "Understanding Child Sexual Abuse - Education, Prevention, and Recovery" www.apa.org/releases/sexabuse/protect.html
America Academy of Pediatrics "Sexual Abuse Prevention"
www.medem.com/medLB/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZ7PP1YA7C&sub_ca...
"Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Children" National Center for Missing & Exploited Children