



rape and abuse crisis center

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Tips for Teaching Personal Safety Skills to Children

Parents, teachers, daycare providers, or anyone who works with children, can teach personal safety skills.

Children need to be taught that their bodies are their own, and they have the right to say “No” when it comes to who touches them and who they touch. If children are ever touched in a way that is confusing or frightening to them, they need to tell someone about the touch. They need to learn three steps: Say NO, Get Away, and Tell a Helper.

The keys to effective training are repetition and active rehearsal. Children need to practice say no, getting away, and telling helpers.

The following are additional tips that can help you teach effective personal safety skills:

- Teach personal body safety when you talk about other personal issues. For example, when you teach children how to brush their teeth, also teach them not to get into a car with someone they don’t know or not to leave their play area without asking permission.
- Teach children the correct names for body parts. Just as they have arms and legs, they have a penis or vagina. Children can’t tell you if they’ve received an inappropriate touch if they don’t have the words to describe the touch. Also, if something does happen to them, they sound more credible and believable if they use proper words instead of slang terms.
- Teach children how to use body language. Have them practice standing tall while saying “NO” in a strong and firm voice. Help children develop strong eye contact.
- Play “what if” games with children. For example, ask them “If you are outside playing and a neighbor says they want you to go to their house for cookies, what would you do?” You can use role-play scenarios to teach such lessons. If you are role-playing with your children, it is important to develop “what if” situations which are pertinent to your family. One of the purposes of “what if” games is to stress to children the importance of always getting a parent’s permission before going anywhere.
- Have children practice remembering colors, numbers, or features of people and things. This will help them give accurate descriptions if something does happen to them.

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F: Education/Revised Handouts/Teaching Personal Safety Skills to Children

- Assure children that most touches are appropriate and most people are good people. But if someone touches their private parts or they get a touch that scares or confuses them, they need to Say No, Get Away, and Tell a Helper.
- Remember if children receive an inappropriate touch from someone they know (a relative, babysitter, coach, etc.), they may not be able to say no or even get away. However, they can ALWAYS tell someone about the touch. Emphasize the importance of telling a helper. Teach children that if the helper they tell doesn't believe them, they need to tell another helper and KEEP TELLING until someone listens and believes them.
- Have a written list of people who the child knows it is okay to go with. Share the list with the child's school and daycare.
- Show children safe places to go if they ever get lost (library, police station, McGruff house, etc.).
- Do not put a child's name in visible places, such as the back of sweatshirts or on backpacks. Someone could see the child's name and then assume a familiarity with the child that could put the child in danger.
- Talk about setting boundaries. No one can touch a child's body without permission and a child can't touch someone else's body without permission. A child can NEVER consent to a sexual touch.
- Let children know it's okay to challenge adults. Assure them that adults are not always right. Teach them there are things adults should never do.
- Review "what if" scenarios on a regular basis. Practice how to be safe as often as you can. Remember the "Three Rs of Personal Safety:" ROLE-PLAY, REHEARSE, and REPEAT.

Keep the lines of communication open. Above all, listen to what children tell you and don't discount what they say to you. Keeping children safe and healthy is everyone's responsibility.