

'We all have the right  
to feel safe all  
the time'.

'Nothing is so awful that  
you can't talk with  
someone about it'.



# Protective Behaviours



## HOW DO I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS?

This week we have the last of our ten safety tips for parents on how to talk to children about protective behaviours.

### 8 Play "What-if" games and practise how your child might respond.

<p><b>Practice how your child might respond in risky situations.</b></p> <p>Situations might include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being locked out of home;</li> <li>2. If mum, dad or a family member were late picking them up from school;</li> <li>3. Somebody at school bullying them; or</li> <li>4. Someone approaching them in the park.</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⚙ Make sure that your child knows that part of what they must do in such situations involves telling an adult.</li> <li>⚙ Give children permission to break "the rules" in risky situations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Talk to children about "tricks".</b></p> <p>Explain to children that some people, both known adults and strangers, might try to trick them by offering a present, money, sweets or an outing to make them do something they don't like.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make sure they know to say something like "I must ask mum / dad / my teacher" and then get away quickly to seek help.</li> <li>2. Tell children that you want to be told if anyone offers bribes or tries to trick them.</li> <li>3. Advise kids to get away to a safe place first and then to tell someone they trust.</li> <li>4. Caution children not to tell the offender that they will do this.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Prepare your children for overnight visits or when they are being baby-sat.</b></p> <p>Be cautious about who looks after your children when you can't, or if they stay somewhere else overnight.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet their friend's parents and other adults who may be in the home.</li> <li>2. Encourage children to talk about how their time was after they've been away from your care.</li> <li>3. Try to make sure that your child is always supervised well, as this helps to prevent unsafe situations.</li> </ol>
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### 9 Don't panic if your child or any other child discloses any threat to their safety to you.

How adults respond to children telling them about a threat to their safety from another person can be an important factor in how much they are affected by it in the long term. The following actions by adults could be helpful for children in these situations:

<p><b>Do:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stay calm and in control of your feelings;</li> <li>2. Listen to the child;</li> <li>3. Tell the child you believe them;</li> <li>4. Tell the child it is not their fault and that they are not responsible for the abuse;</li> <li>5. Tell the child they did the right thing by telling you</li> <li>6. Let the child know what will happen next; and</li> <li>7. ABOVE ALL: Show your care and concern.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Do not:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising the child that you won't tell anyone. To make sure they are safe you will most certainly have to involve other people;</li> <li>2. Make predictions about outcomes; or</li> <li>3. Show overt anger towards the perpetrator or family members.</li> </ol>
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### 10 Above all, ensure your children know you will listen, and that they know they are never to blame.

Children often believe they will 'be in trouble' or not be believed if they tell someone about inappropriate touches or sexual abuse. Depending on the types of tricks or threats used to keep a child from telling, he or she may be feeling:

- ⚙ **Scared** about getting the offending person into trouble;
- ⚙ **Guilty** that they are to blame for the abuse;
- ⚙ **Ashamed** that they have been abused;
- ⚙ **Angry** that they have been abused and not protected;
- ⚙ **Powerless** to change their situation; or
- ⚙ **Confused** about the consequences of telling.