

How to Talk to Your Child About Abuse

Discussing the topic of abuse can be a very awkward and tough conversation to have. But with the prevalence in today's society, it is something you cannot be passive about as a parent.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 67 percent of all sexual assault victims are children. The person most likely to abuse your child is a person your child knows ... and trusts. The sex offender looks for a child who trusts him and can be convinced to stay quiet about inappropriate physical contact. It could be a family member, close relative, neighbor or trusted youth worker.

Here are some practical ways to discuss this topic with your kids:

1. Establish a time to sit down and have this discussion.
2. Explain to your child that the body was designed uniquely by God but that some parts are private.
3. Point out which parts of your child's anatomy are private. If you have a younger child, consider discussing this during their bath time. You can also have your child dress in a bathing suit and show them that all areas covered by a bathing suit are "private."
4. Let your child know they must tell you if anyone touches them in the private areas—no matter who the person is or what the person says to them. Assure your child they will not be in trouble if they tell you they've been touched inappropriately; rather, you will be proud of them and help them through the situation.

As parents, we can never rule out the possibility that our children will be abused. There are too many external forces that are out of our control. Parents can be proactive by walking their child through this conversation with truth and love. Getting past the awkwardness or desire to simply not have this conversation with your child can save them, and you, a lifetime of pain.

Security

Security is a peculiar thing. Too little of it leaves one open to all sorts of intrusion. Too much can squash capabilities and intelligent growth. Needless to say, walking this tightrope carefully and thoughtfully is very important in child rearing. Most certainly, your children require feeling loved and safe. Those are the primary goals of a parent when it comes to providing security. Create the atmosphere upon which they are able to thrive and grow. Here are some thoughts to help.

Here are 10 ways to help your child feel secure:

Time. The absolute most important aspect to having a child feel secure is the giving of your time—real time spent together talking, sharing, laughing and learning. Time = Security.

Affection. Physical contact does not come easy to all men. For some, it goes against long developed strands of DNA. Children need affection from a father as much as (if not more than) the affection from their mother. Dad should be seen as a strong protector. Most men get that part. What some men don't get is that part of that strength is best displayed with a gentle hug or a kiss on the forehead or in holding hands as you walk together. By showing your love and affection in these ways, your child feels safe and warm. In regard to child development, affection makes a world of difference.

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Say it loud; say it proud. Do you verbally praise your children for the great things they do? There are many ways to discipline children. Positive discipline is just as important as punishing negative behavior. When we praise our children it builds their self-esteem and self-worth. When it's warranted, always be sure to praise them loudly and proudly. Your verbal encouragement will provide the security they require to flourish.

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Tough love. While praise is of great importance, it's just as important for you to scold and punish a child when appropriate. Children test limits repeatedly. When you enforce boundaries, you make them feel secure. It's like double-checking a locked door—you know it's locked, but checking again makes you feel safer. Our society is full of narcissistic adults who have never simply been told no. Being consistent shows your children that you care for them deeply. Tough love is still love, but there is an enormous difference between disciplining with tough love and abuse. Toughness is highly required. Cruelty is criminal.

All ears. Your kids have a lot to say to you, and when they're talking, make sure that you're all ears. Even during those times of just nonsense, you can learn so much about who they are and who they'll become. Your kids need to feel secure talking to you about anything under the sun. That level of trust benefits everyone involved.

Let the good times roll. Laughter is the cure to many troubles in this world. Some would even say it's more powerful than the strongest medicine man can create because laughter heals and nourishes. Be open, funny and kind to your children. Play with them. Joke with them. Just be downright silly. Child behavior is based greatly on the behavior of parents. Provide them with a happy and loving home, filled with laughter and joy.

Special talents. We are all blessed with special gifts and talents to offer the world. Sometimes they are obvious, but other times they are more discreet. Sometimes parents get so focused on their hopes, plans and dreams for their children that they miss the special talents their kids naturally possess. This can be hurtful and confusing for your child because they think that maybe they're not what you wanted them to be. To truly feel secure, your children need to know that you love them for exactly who they are. In searching for your kid's true gifts, you need to have eyes like a hawk. When you see the first hint of a special talent, swoop in to acknowledge and nurture them to the fullest. In clinical terms, it's behavior management. In real terms, it's called being a very good parent.

Balance. Remember the original *Karate Kid* movie? The main objective of Mr. Miyagi's lessons was to teach Daniel balance—in martial arts and in life. A family that feels secure and happy is generally a family that is properly balanced. Just enough love. Just enough discipline. The right amount of everything. To secure balance in your home, you must treat it like a delicate recipe. Too much of one ingredient will spoil the whole dish.

The rock. The true test of character is how you react when the chips are down, when failure comes knocking. When these moments happen with your children, Dad needs to be there to offer a strong hand to lift them back up. Not as a savior or a crutch, but as a rock that will not be moved. Pick them up, dust them off, give them a hug and start all over again. That is an example of unconditional love. They should know without question that, no matter what happens, you will love them.

The greater purpose. "The family that prays together stays together." There is pure truth in that proclamation. There is great security in knowing that we have a higher and greater purpose on earth, in knowing that our Creator loves us and made us for a reason. So in your parenting, don't just focus

on feeding the flesh and bones of your family, but feed their souls with the light and Word of God.

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