

HOW TO SPEAK WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT DIFFICULT SUBJECTS

The topic of abuse of any kind, including sexual abuse, is a difficult one for even adults to comprehend, so it can be understandably challenging for parents to discuss the subject with their children. Before you begin an age-appropriate conversation with your child, consider the points offered below.

1. Before starting a conversation, **compose your own feelings**.
2. Start the conversation and **ask questions** to find out what your child already knows.
3. **Listen carefully** to what your child is asking.
4. **Keep your answers simple and brief**. Address only the questions your child has asked in a way that is appropriate for his/her level of understanding.
5. **Acknowledge your child's feelings** and empathize with them. Tell them that it is okay to feel sad or confused and reassure them that you as a parent sometimes feel the same way.
6. **Reassure your child** that you and other adults in charge will do everything possible to make sure they are safe.
7. **Explain to your child** that we do not know why some people treat others badly. Show them positive examples in the media of community members helping one another.
8. **Teach your child** what they can do to keep themselves and others safe.
9. Technology is everywhere; **do your best to limit your child's exposure to the news or other media** about the subject. It is best if the information comes directly from you.
10. At the end of your conversation, keep the door open. **Tell your child they can come to you with any questions** about this, or other subjects, in the future.