



Bravehearts
Educate Empower Protect
Our Kids

TIP SHEET

Teaching kids personal safety

As trusted adults in children's lives, the most important role we have is to keep our kids safe. Teaching kids simple strategies that through regular revision and practice become second nature, can help them build confidence and resilience to protect themselves in a variety of situations across the span of their lives.

Children can begin learning these personal safety skills and strategies from as young as three years old. Research supports that teaching children about personal safety assists with:

- Reducing the likelihood of a child entering into an unsafe situation.
- Helping a child know how to respond to an unsafe situation.
- Increasing a child's sense of confidence and in doing so, reducing the likelihood the child will be targeted.
- Increasing a child's knowledge of their personal rights and in doing so, increasing the likelihood that the child will speak out if they feel unsafe or unsure.

THE 3 RULES OF PERSONAL SAFETY

Parents should instill in their children the following three personal safety rules:

1. We all have the right to feel safe with people.

This rule teaches kids that they have the right to feel safe and secure where they live, play, and learn, and that no one has the right to make them do something that makes them feel unsafe or unsure.

2. It's OK to say 'NO' if you feel unsafe or unsure.

This rule teaches kids that it is OK to stand up for themselves and to be assertive if something doesn't feel right.

3. Nothing is so yucky that you can't tell someone about it.

One of the reasons that children fail to disclose harm is because they are afraid of getting into trouble. This rule helps to encourage your child to speak to a trusted adult, even if something seems scary or terrible.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY

- Speaking with your child about personal safety should not be a one-off conversation. Rather, create opportunities that allow talking about personal safety to be part of an ongoing dialogue between you and your child. Always let your child know you are there for them, and keeping them safe is your number one priority.
- It is recommended that you teach your child the correct language for their private parts. Emphasise that those parts are private and belong to them.
- Try not to scare or alarm your child. Speak calmly and confidently, keeping a neutral, natural tone, ensuring that you allow time for your child to process the information and ask questions. Never make them feel ashamed or embarrassed about sexuality or body parts.

NEED SUPPORT OR MORE INFORMATION?
Bravehearts Information and Support Line
FREECALL 1800 272 831
Mon-Fri 8:30am - 4:30pm AEST

bravehearts.org.au



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Keeping kids safe online

Today more than ever, our kids are learning, interacting, and communicating in an online world. There are so many positives for children online, however we want them to know that just like in the real world, the online world does require them to take care. Below are tips for keeping children of all ages safe online.

KEEPING KIDS SAFE ONLINE: TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Learn for yourself how to use the apps your child is using and the sites they are visiting. The more familiar you are with them, the easier it is for you to talk to your kids. Ask your kids questions - encourage them to teach you.
- Without alarming them, have conversations with your kids about the importance of safety online and why.
- Teach your children about what they should and shouldn't be sharing online and what happens to information once posted or shared. Talk about respectful interactions and encourage them to critically think about what they read and see online.
- Talk to your child about ways to not only stay safe, but also how to respond to anything that may concern them. Show them online safety resources they can access themselves to report suspicious online behaviour, such as Bravehearts' *Join the Dots* bravehearts.org.au/join-the-dots
- Ensure the computer is kept in an open family space (such as the lounge room) and not in the child's bedroom. Don't allow your child to play a connected iPad or mobile unsupervised.
- Install safety and security software - be sure to keep it updated, use internet and spam filters and pop-up blockers, install monitoring software and monitor downloads to your computer, enable internet browser security and regularly check the internet usage history.

ONLINE SAFETY: RULES TO TEACH YOUR KIDS

- **Never** tell anyone your full name, address, number or school.
- **Never** send a photo of yourself (or your friends or family) to anyone, especially one that identifies where you live, your name, where you go to school (including your school uniform).
- **Never** tell anyone your credit card or bank details (or any other personal details).
- **Never** friend or talk to someone online who you do not know in real life.
- **Never** make plans to meet in real life anyone you meet online.
- **Never** talk to anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.
- **Always** be careful who you talk to on social media. People are not always WHO or WHAT they seem online.
- **Always** tell your parents if someone says something to you online that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- **Always** stay away from websites that are not meant for children.
- **Always** be careful of your online footprint and remember that **WHAT YOU SHARE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE.**

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Responding to disclosures

This Tip Sheet provides a guideline of how to respond to a child's disclosure of abuse or sexual harm. Your response to any disclosure of an assault can be the first important step in stopping the assault and protecting the child from further harm. This initial response can vary depending on circumstances and needs. Responses may consist of implementing protective strategies, engaging appropriate support services or making reports to relevant authorities.

It is important to understand how difficult it can be for a child to disclose abuse or sexual harm. Offenders put a great deal of time and effort into ensuring the child remains silent. Some of the reasons a child may have trouble disclosing include;

- They think they will get into trouble.
- They feel guilty or ashamed.
- They feel that no one will believe them.
- The offender may be someone they heavily rely on (such as a parent or caregiver).
- They don't want the offender to get into trouble.

WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON DISCLOSES HARM TO YOU

If a child or young person discloses to you, try to follow these steps:

- Listen carefully to all they say.
- Tell them you believe them and it's not their fault.
- Let them know you will do everything in your power to help them, but do not make promises.
- Let the child know that you will need to tell someone to help keep them safe. Though this may upset the child, it is very important that you act protectively and in the child's best interest.
- Do not force them to talk about it, you are there to listen to what they want to tell you.
- Do not use direct or leading questions.
- Do what you need to do to make the child feel safe.
- Importantly: follow your obligation to report as soon as practically possible.
- When documenting, use the child's exact words as best you can.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IS BEING HARMED

Sometimes a child or young person's behaviour or words may lead you to suspect or become concerned that child is unsafe or being harmed. In this situation, it is important to:

- Not frighten the child or young person by asking confronting questions.
- Let the child or young person know that you are there for them if they ever need to talk.
- Record your concerns including any behavioural observations or conversations you may have had with the child or young person.
- Importantly: follow your obligation to report as soon as practically possible.

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