



Talking to your children about safety

Why should we talk to our children about their personal safety and self-protection?

- 266,745 reports of child abuse were made to Australian Child Protection Authorities in the 2005/2006 financial year.
- Most children are abused by someone they know. It may be an extended family member or in the context of their involvement in a club/organisation.
- The majority of children do not talk about their abusive experience.

How to talk to your children about safety?

- Start from an early age
- Talk about the word safe.
 - What does it mean?
 - What does being safe feel like? Remember that you can feel safe and not necessarily be safe.
 - Teach children that:
- We all have the right to feel safe
- Give children a language through which to talk to you if they don't feel safe
- Talk to them about their body signals
 - Butterflies
 - Jelly legs
 - Sweaty palms
- Teach children the correct names of all body parts including their genitals.
- Teach children that:
 - There is nothing so awful that we can't talk about it with someone.



Some important points specifically about sexual safety:

- Talking to children about sex does not make them more interested in sexual behaviours. It will however make it easier for them to approach you with their questions.
- Children need to learn that the sexual parts of their bodies need to be protected and that they need to give permission for their body parts to be touched.

Try using 'Even if...' situations:

- What would you do even if...?
 - The adult looking after you fell over and you could not wake them.
 - A dog was chasing you on your way home
 - Someone at school stole your lunch money
 - An adult in your family asked you to do something that you think is wrong.

Listen and Believe

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 7 boys are victims of child sexual abuse (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2000)
- Despite this 31% of Australian adults have said that they would not believe a child who disclosed being abused (ACF, 2006).
- It is so important that in the first instance you listen to your child and believe them, no matter how unbelievable their story seems.

Developing your child's safety network

- Recognise that your child may not tell you about their experience. This may be due to a number of reasons including your protection.
- Develop a safety network, of other adults, with your child – as many as possible (5 or more).
- Be led by your child in their choice of people and think about their capacity to be contacted.
- Review your child's safety network. People move and relationship change.
- Think about telling these people or asking your child to tell these people that they are on the safety network.