

Empower to Protect

Simple 'protective behaviours' strategies to help empower your child.



Name body parts

Use the correct names, for your child's body parts, such as penis or vagina.

This gives them the vocabulary to talk about all parts of their body without shame.



Avoid 'secrets'

Children should know that they never have to keep a secret from trusted adults, and that trusted adults won't *ask* them to keep secrets. The word 'surprise' is a less loaded option when you want your child to keep something private temporarily.



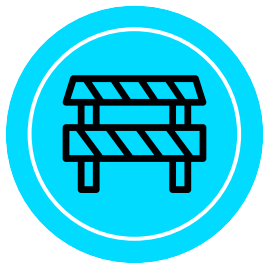
Identify 5 safe adults

From an early age, help your child to think about 5 trusted adults in their life that they could talk to if they needed help, and what makes them a safe, trusted person. Make a game of listing them every now and again to reinforce the message.



Seek consent, accept when it isn't given

Encourage your child's body autonomy from a young age. Even before they can verbalise consent, respect if they pull away from a touch. Help them understand a trusted adult will never ignore their discomfort.



Model your boundaries

You can use your own interactions with your child to teach them how to respect the boundaries of others. You can use games to do this, like playing tickles but when you shout 'stop' they have to freeze! Then take turns the other way so your child can use their voice.



Help your child hold their boundaries

If your child is expressing discomfort or saying 'no', show them that you respect this. For instance, if they do not wish to hug a family member goodbye, validate this rather than forcing your child into this contact.



Take on tricky topics

The more comfortable that your child feels about speaking to you about tricky topics, the safer they will be throughout their lives. If your child 'confesses' to something potentially upsetting (eg. "I drew on the wall"), try to stay calm. Start by saying you are glad they told you, and you can fix it together.



Speak without 'shame'

If your child has questions about 'sensitive' subjects like bodies, try to answer factually and positively. These questions are natural. Refusing to answer can cause a child to associate those topics with a sense of shame, and they may be reluctant to reach out to talk again in future.



Don't assume

There is no 'type' of perpetrator. You shouldn't assume someone is a risk because of a stereotype. Nor should you automatically assume someone is safe because they don't fit that stereotype. If your child expresses discomfort about an adult, **believe them**.