

PERSONAL SAFETY AGE-APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Step-By-Step Guide for Parents and Caregivers

It's important to talk to your children often and consistently about how to stay safe. But how you do have effective conversations, from which children absorb valuable information that they may need later? Make sure the information you deliver is easily understood for your child's stage of development.

TEACH YOUR CHILD

- Family password – in case someone is sent to pick up child
- Create a list of five trusted adults to call about any problem
- Buddy system – safer and more fun to stay with a friend
- Online safety
- It's not okay to keep secrets from a parent
- Correct, age-appropriate information about sex

CHALLENGES AT THIS AGE

Children will begin learning about sex from their peers, so it is important to give them proper understanding early on. Books may be used to help begin conversations, but it should not replace discussions.

Approach the topic with concrete explanations and use proper terms. As uncomfortable as it may be, providing correct information will help them understand that they should go to their parents with their questions about sex instead of the kids on the school bus. Tell your children that they can tell you anything or ask about anything and you will still love them.

HAVING THE CONVERSATION

When your child is around five or six it is important to inform him/her in a non-threatening manner that some people do hurt children. This is not intended to make your child afraid of everyone, but instead make them aware so they listen to their feelings and make safe choices. Do make sure they know that the good guys outnumber the bad guys – most adults want them to grow up healthy, safe and strong.

Involve your child in creating “what if” scenarios to help get an idea of the situations that make them uncomfortable or nervous. Above all, reinforce that they can always leave a situation that causes their uh-oh feeling to go off and find a parent/caregiver to help. This is a great age to begin having twice-a-year family safety nights to go over rules for your home.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“What do you do on the playground? Can you think of something that might happen there that would make your uh-oh feeling go off? How about if older kids showed up and started playing a game that doesn't feel right?”