

PERSONAL SAFETY AGE-APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS FOR MIDDLE 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 in 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

- Don't put personal or emotional information online
- Difference between a mentor vs. a relationship
- Cell phone (texting) guidelines – think before you send
- Responsibilities and rules for being home alone
- Respect is a basic right in all relationships

CHALLENGES AT THIS AGE

With the physical and emotional changes your child faces at this age, many conflicts may arise. This is the age where perpetrators attempt to use the attention and affection lure both online and in person. This lure involves grooming the pre-teen to believe that the adult is the only one who understands how special they are and what they are going through. Teach your pre-teen about this lure and explain that adults who really do care about them would not accept or expect sex.

Talk to your child about the difference between mentors and adults trying to create a sexual relationship. If a mentor ever begins to act in a way that a romantic peer would, talk to a different trusted adult right away. This is a very important age to update and maintain the list of five trusted adults so that your pre-teen is hearing positive messages from adults that you both trust. Be aware of who is on the list, and be understanding and supportive if the list does not include you.

HAVING THE CONVERSATION

Sex becomes a big topic at this age. It is important to discuss the emotional implications of sexual activity, as most of the media messages may portray sex only in a popular, positive way. As children age through this stage they should learn about precautions such as abstinence and protection (for older teens).

This is a good time to discuss more your family's personal or faith-based beliefs regarding sexual activity. Parents should discuss self-esteem linked with sexual activity, especially in terms of having control over one's body and not letting peer pressure influence bad decisions.

CONVERSATION STARTER

"What if you had a friend who told you that an adult chaperone from a school trip was pressuring her to spend time at their house alone? How could you help?"

