

What To Say At Every Age

Body safety, in words you can use tonight. You do not need one big talk. You need small ones that keep going.

Ages 2-4 The words come first

TRY SAYING

- Your body belongs to you.*
- The parts under your bathing suit are private.*
- You can say no to a hug. A wave is okay too.*
- No grown-up should ask you to keep a secret from me.*
- You will never be in trouble for telling me something.*

WHAT IS NORMAL AT THIS AGE

- Curiosity about their own body and other people's
- Touching themselves, including in public
- Asking where babies come from
- Wanting privacy sometimes, none other times

ONE THING TO AVOID

Nicknames for body parts. Use the real words. A child who says "he touched my pee-pee" may not be understood, and a person looking for a target notices which children were never taught.

Ages 5-7 Naming the safe grown-ups

TRY SAYING

- Who are three grown-ups you could tell if something felt wrong?*
- A good secret is one you get to tell. A bad secret makes your tummy feel funny.*
- If anyone asks you to keep a secret about your body, that is a bad secret, and you tell me.*
- Even if you said yes at first, you can always change your mind.*
- If someone says I will be angry with you, they are wrong.*

WHAT IS NORMAL AT THIS AGE

- Wanting privacy when changing or in the bathroom
- Giggly interest in bodies and bathroom words
- Playing doctor with same-age friends, briefly
- Asking direct questions with no filter

ONE THING TO AVOID

Stranger danger as the main message. About nine in ten children are harmed by someone the family knows, so a child watching for strangers is watching the wrong direction.

THE FOUR THINGS THAT MATTER MOST, AT ANY AGE

1. Real names for body parts, from the very beginning.
2. Three safe adults they can name out loud, and at least one outside your household.
3. No adult should ever ask a child to keep a secret about their body.
4. They will never be in trouble for telling you. Say it before anything happens, not after.

If you only ever do four things, do these. Everything else is detail.

Ages 8-10 Devices, sleepovers, and trust

TRY SAYING

Sometimes people who seem really nice do things that are not okay.

If an adult asks you to keep something from me, that is the thing I most want to know.

Nobody should ever ask you for a picture of your body.

If something happens online, I will not take your tablet away as a punishment.

What would you do at a sleepover if something felt wrong? Let us make the plan now.

WHAT IS NORMAL AT THIS AGE

- Strong need for privacy and modesty
- Curiosity about puberty, often asked sideways
- Looking things up you wish they had not
- Pulling toward friends and away from parents

ONE THING TO AVOID

Making the device the punishment. If losing the tablet is the cost of telling you, they will not tell you. Say this out loud, more than once.

Ages 11-13 Sextortion and secret relationships

TRY SAYING

If you ever send a picture you regret, come to me. You will not be in trouble. I will help you fix it.

If someone threatens to share a photo of you, that is a crime they are committing, not one you committed.

People online lie about who they are, including people who seem your age.

An adult who wants a secret relationship with a teenager is not in love. That is grooming.

You can leave anywhere, any time, and call me. I will never ask you to be polite instead of safe.

WHAT IS NORMAL AT THIS AGE

- Intense privacy, closed doors, shorter answers
- Interest in romance and in sexual content
- Testing boundaries and questioning your rules
- Confiding in friends before confiding in you

ONE THING TO AVOID

Shame as a safety strategy. Warning a child they will ruin their reputation is precisely what a person extorting them will use next. And do not assume boys are not at risk; sextortion targets them heavily.

IF YOUR CHILD TELLS YOU SOMETHING

You do not need proof, and you do not need to be certain.

Keep your face calm. A child reads your reaction to decide whether telling you was safe. Then say four things: I believe you. I am glad you told me. This is not your fault. I am going to get help. Do not interview them, do not ask leading questions, and do not promise to keep it secret. Write down their exact words as soon as you can step away. Then report it.

Report abuse **In Florida 1-800-962-2873**

Any other state 1-800-422-4453 Danger now 911