



Safer Shabbat

Helping Parents Discuss Safety with Children

Communicating with your child is a key strategy in preventing abuse.

Teaching children about boundaries is one of the easiest ways to help keep them safe. A boundary is a basic guideline that a person creates to establish how others can behave around them. It is imperative to discuss boundaries and set limits because child abuse is an extreme form of boundary crossing. Child abuse, albeit physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual, is the harm or mistreatment of a child under 18 by any adult who in a caregiving role of that child. And while it may feel uncomfortable or uncertain talking about difficult topics like child sexual abuse, talking helps your child understand what sexual abuse is and gives your child language to talk about this issue too. Also, open and honest conversations send the message that your child can always talk to you and that you will listen no matter what.

Emergency Situations and Learning to Ask for Help:

Talk to your child about what constitutes an emergency and how to ask for help. It is important for children to learn the phone number of a trusted adult in addition to their home addresses. Plus, help children identify safe helpers in case they get lost at a store or supermarket.

- Help your child know how to dial 911 from your phone. Many cell phones can dial 911 even while locked. Practice with your child.
- When your family arrives at large stores or museums, help your child identify the employees. This can be done by identifying the color shirt they are wearing and/or their name badges. If your child is lost or separated from you, the ability to identify Safe-Helpers will help reunite them with you.

- Remind your child to never leave the main area of a store, museum, or public place with anyone, even a safe helper. Always stay visible to other people.

Answering Doors and Phones:

Encourage children to always check first with their parents or other trusted before answering the door or phone at home, getting rides from other people, changing a plan they had made previously, and accepting gifts.

- Sit down with your family and determine who (if anyone) is assigned to answer the phone or the door when you are home or away.
- Create a script detailing what your child should say when they answer the phone or the door (e.g., “My parent is not available at the moment”). Encourage your child to practice using those very words.
- Encourage your child to contact you before either accepting a ride from anyone or changing a plan they had previously made with you.
- Encourage your child to check with you or with a trusted adult before accepting a gift from anyone, even someone they know well.

Your Body Belongs to You:

Teach your child what to do if someone tries to touch them in the private parts of their body. It is imperative children understand if someone does try to touch their private parts or make them feel uncomfortable, they should yell “No” and immediately run to tell a trusted adult.

- Reiterate to your child in a calm, even tone that touching private parts is never a secret and never a game.
- Help your child understand the difference between a “secret” and a “surprise.” A surprise is something that everyone will find out about eventually. A secret is meant to be private. No child should ever keep a secret from a parent or trusted adult, even if they are instructed not to tell anyone about it.
- Try to be available when your child says that they have a something important to share. For example, make sure that they understand their body and sexuality is an okay topic to talk about with you and

that you welcome their questions. It is ok to feel nervous or uncomfortable when having these conversations. Just make sure to say, “If I seem anxious, it’s not because this is a not a good topic, but because it’s not something I talk about all the time. It’s important to me that I give you good information.”

- Every time your child comes to you to share something, positively reinforce their decision to confide with you.
- Review situations in which touch is appropriate, including a doctor’s appointment or when a parent gives a bath. Help children distinguish between safe and unsafe touches.