



Stop It Now![®]

Together We Can Prevent the Sexual Abuse of Children

PREVENTION TOOLS

Have questions?

Need resources?

Get Help Now!

Call the Stop It Now! Helpline:

1.888.Prevent

or visit: <https://www.stopitnow.org/help>

Stop It Now![®] prevents the sexual abuse of children by mobilizing adults, families and communities to take actions that protect children before they are harmed.

Create a Family Safety Plan

The guidelines below can help you create an environment to better protect your family from sexual abuse. By understanding what puts children at risk of sexual abuse, we can take actions to counter those risks. Together we can create a community safety net with information and assistance to protect children from being sexually abused.

Educate everyone in the family

- Make sure each family member knows what healthy sexual development in children is, and what sexual behaviors might be of concern.
- Learn to recognize warning signs that a child may have been sexually abused or that an adult, adolescent or child may be touching a child in a sexual way. Some abusive behaviors may not involve touching; for example showing pornography to a child is abusive, even if the child is not touched.
- Teach children the proper names for body parts and what to do if someone tries to touch them in a sexual way.
- Make sure young children know that no one has the right to touch their private parts (unless for medical reasons) and that they should not touch anyone else's private parts.

Start talking with your family about sexual abuse

- Adults need to take the lead by opening discussion about what is healthy sexual behavior and what is abusive sexual behavior.
- Talk more than once with all family members—children, teenagers and adults—about appropriate and inappropriate sexualized behaviors to ensure that they understand and remember the information.
- Let everyone in the family know they can ask questions during the discussion, or talk further about any of these issues in private, at a later time.

Set clear family boundaries

- Set clear family guidelines for personal privacy and behavior. Discuss them with all members of your family and model respecting these guidelines.
- Discuss these guidelines with any other adults who spend time around or supervise the children (e.g., if a child does not want to hug or kiss someone hello or goodbye, then he or she can shake hands instead).
- Let children know that if they are not comfortable being around a particular adult or older child, then you or another adult will let that person know this (e.g., tell him or her that you don't want your child to sit on his/her lap).
- As a child matures, boundaries may need to change (e.g., knock on the door before entering the room of an adolescent).

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Get safe adults involved

- Identify one or more support person for each member of the family to talk to if there is a concern. Be sure that no one in your family is isolated. Research shows that having someone to talk with and confide in plays a key role in how well a child will bounce back from stressful events. Having a safe, responsible and consistent adult for a child or adolescent to turn to is critical.
- If someone is “too good to be true,” ask more questions. Even a close friend or relative may not be a safe person to trust with your child.

Know your local resources and how to use them

- Learn about the agencies in your area. Know who to contact to make a report if you know or suspect that a child has been sexually abused.
- Make a list of resources you can call for advice, information and help and include the phone numbers. Start with our list of helpful resources (www.StopItNow.org/help).

Care enough to reach out for help

- If you are concerned about the sexualized behaviors in a parent, cousin, sibling or other family member, care enough to talk with them. Read our Let’s Talk guidebook (www.StopItNow.org/guidebooks). If you are concerned about your own thoughts and feelings towards children, help is available (www.StopItNow.org/gethelp).
- Make sure everyone knows that they can talk with you about any inappropriate behavior that may already have occurred; that you love them and will work to get them help.

Original content by Joan Tabachnick