START THE CONVERSATION.

EverBright

A guide for parents and caregivers, with simple ways to help keep kids safe.

WHAT TO SAY, AGE BY AGE.

Five conversations that grow with your child. Kids feel safer when adults name safety out loud, in words that fit their age.

TOPIC	AGES 2-4	AGES 5-7	AGES 8-10	AGES 11-12
YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU Teach your child that they decide who touches, hugs, or sits close, even in family.	"These parts of your body are private. They're yours."	"Private parts are private. No one should ask to touch or see yours, and you shouldn't ask to touch or see theirs."	"Your body belongs to you. You get to decide who hugs you, sits close, or tickles you."	"Your body is yours, online and in person. You don't owe anyone access to it."
IT'S OKAY TO SAY NO Give your child the words to set a boundary, and to accept one from someone else.	"You can say no to hugs or tickles, even from people you love. And you have to listen when others say no, too."	"Even if it's family, you can choose a high-five instead of a hug."	"You can say no, and you don't have to explain why."	"Boundaries matter, both yours and other people's. You don't owe anyone access to your body or your time."
TELL ME IF SOMETHING FEELS WRONG Ask about the small stuff, so your child trusts you with the big stuff.	"If anything ever feels confusing or scary, you can always tell me. You won't be in trouble."	"After playdates I'll ask if anything happened that felt funny or confusing. You can always tell me."	"It's never too late to tell me something that felt uncomfortable, even if it happened a long time ago."	"If something has happened, or you're worried something might, you can tell me, or another trusted adult."
SECRETS VS. SURPRISES Help your child tell the difference between fun surprises and secrets that aren't safe.	"A surprise is fun. A secret can hide things that aren't okay."	"Some secrets aren't safe. If someone says, 'Don't tell your grown-up,' tell me."	"No one should ever ask you to keep a secret about your body or things that feel uncomfortable, not even a grown-up you love."	"If someone, online or in person, tells you to keep something just between the two of you, that's a sign to come to me."
USE THE REAL NAMES FOR BODY PARTS Model the real words so your child has them if they ever need to tell you something.	"We use the real names for body parts, the same way we say arm or knee."	"When you have questions about your body or need to talk about something that has happened, I will always be here for that."	"As you get older, your body will grow and change, and you'll have questions."	"Bodies change as we get older. I want to make sure you know how to talk about yours so you can get the help you need."

More conversation starters and resources: **ShineEverBright.org.**

WATCH FOR PATTERNS.

People who may harm a child usually start by crossing boundaries.

Getting close to your child

- Gifts, money, or attention that single out one child
- Wanting a lot of one-on-one time with your child
- Telling your child secrets, or asking them to keep secrets from you
- Tickling, wrestling, or piggybacks that continue after your child says stop
- One-on-one DMs, video calls, or private online contact outside group settings

Testing the limits

- Letting a child break rules, or breaking rules with them
- Meeting your child outside of school, practice, or their normal role
- Being dishonest about where they went or what they did together
- Giving a child alcohol, vapes, or drugs

Clear red flags

- Sexual jokes, stories, or content around your child
- Showing or sending your child sexual images
- Asking your child to talk about sex, their body, or someone else's body
- Taking photos of your child without clothes, or asking to
- Wanting to be around when a child is changing or bathing, past the age they need help

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR IN YOUR CHILD.

- Sudden changes in mood, sleep, or appetite
- Regression to younger behaviors (bedwetting, thumb-sucking)
- New fear of a specific person or place
- Sexual language or knowledge beyond their age
- Withdrawal from friends or activities they used to love
- Reluctance to participate in routine things they used to be fine with

Trust your instincts. You don't need proof to take a concern seriously.

IF YOUR CHILD TELLS YOU SOMETHING.

Believe them. First and always.

- Stay calm. Your face and tone matter more than the exact words.
- Say: "I'm so glad you told me. This isn't your fault. I'm here to help."
- Don't press with questions. Just listen.
- Make a report. Call the Texas Abuse Hotline (below). They'll guide what comes next.

Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400
Available 24/7. You don't need proof to call.

In an emergency, call 911.

This guide is just the beginning. Visit our website for more tools, resources, and expert guidance for parents and caregivers.

ShineEverBright.org.