



Global Children's Fund

Reflective conversation

Please enjoy this parent safety brochure, compliments of your child's school or child care facility. Keep in mind though, this is but one small part of child safety, not intended to be complete safety education. Please visit us online at WWW.KEEPYOURCHILDSAFE.org, for a variety of free book downloads covering all aspects of child safety.

SAFETY BRIEF---SAFETY BRIEF---SAFETY BRIEF---SAFETY BRIEF---SAFETY BRIEF---SAFETY BRIEF---

If I were to tell you to talk to your kids you would probably become defensive, angry, and tell me where I could stick your boot. Of course, every parent talks to their child. And every parent assumes they have good conversation with their children. But looking critically at conversation between parents and their children, brings out a few critical vulnerabilities. Some studies show that the average amount of quality time for working families is down to about 8 minutes per day for dads and 11 minutes per day for moms. Some of our own inquiries has shown that the only type of talk that uncovers sexual abuse is sometimes virtually non-existent in families.

Types of conversation

There are many types of conversation, but generally only one type that will work to uncover sexual abuse. Unfortunately, it is also the one type of conversation that is frequently neglected.

Authoritative

This is basic parenting conversation by giving your children instructions, telling them what to do. "It's time to get your shoes on so we can go to the park."

Responsive

Conversation in response to your child's words or actions. "I see you got your homework finished" or "Dinner will be ready when it's ready" are examples of responsive conversation.

Current Event

Talk about the current surroundings. Talking about a dog you see at the park, discussing how the water feels while you are at the lake, basic talk about what you and your child are doing at the time.

Reflective

Reflective conversation is conversation about past events, and the only type that will uncover sexual abuse, generally speaking. Asking about games your child played at school, or what they did at a friends house.

Open ended conversation

Open ended conversation is learning to speak in a manner where every comment will elicit a unique response from a

child, one that they are encouraged to elaborate on and can't answer with a yes or no. While we cannot get into techniques for encouraging this in this flyer, we include a chapter on helping parents to develop open ended conversation in our "parents guide to sexual abuse prevention".

Looking critically at conversation

It is important for parents to take a critical look at the conversation that they have with their children. Truth is, we all could improve, from the most humble parents, to the most renowned educators. While many parents ask reflective *questions* all the time, the amount of time actually spent in reflective conversation is usually very little. Children often reply "fine" to a question of "How was your day" and it is left at that. Even some of the best parents in the world are lacking in their reflective conversation. Most instances, it is relegated to 10 or 20 minutes a week of quality talk at the most. This has to improve.

What to do

We encourage all parents to take a conscious look at the conversation they engage in with their children. There are several activities you can do to test this. Carry around a small tape recorder for a few hours a day and record what the majority of your conversation consists of. Take a look at it, and note areas for improvement. Quality teachers do this all the time so they can analyze the way they talk and respond to the kids. It makes a great tool for parents as well. Or, simply write down all the things you know your child did while they were away from you during the week. Ideally, you should be able to get 9 or 10 pages about their activities and how they described them to you (for a school aged child or a child in day care who is away from you). If you can't, don't panic, it doesn't make you a bad parent, but it does mean that your reflective conversation could use some work.

More info...

You can find more information on this subject online by downloading your free copy of "A Parents Guide to Sexual Abuse Prevention." In it we have more detailed information about better communication with your child, as well as other aspects of abuse prevention.