



How Do I Talk With My Child About Human Trafficking?

Conversation Starters

- “What if?” questions are an opportunity to practice scenarios with your kids.
- Role playing is a powerful way to teach kids how to handle difficult situations.
- Act out with your child various situations at different familiar locations: sports practice, walking to a friend’s house, outdoor festivals, Halloween, at the mall, movie theater, etc.
- These “what would you do” conversations can take place at the dinner table or on the drive to school and may help ease apprehension about the topic. You will probably hear, “Oh mom, seriously?” In the end, it is better to upset your teen so that he/she thinks twice when potentially faced with a difficult situation.

Examples

- “What would you do if a good looking older guy came up to you at the mall and said he thought you were pretty enough to be a model?” Would you give him your phone number?”
- “Is it ok for a stranger to take pictures of you?”
- “Have you ever known someone at school that had an older boyfriend?”
- “Have any of your friends ever talked about getting paid to go on dates?”
- “Do you know what sexting is?”
- “Has anyone ever sent you a picture that made you feel uncomfortable?”
- “What would you do if someone sent you an inappropriate picture or asked you for one?”

Know the Warning Signs

Younger Children:

- Gradual or sudden changes in behavior
- Cruelty to others
- Cruelty to pets
- Recurring nightmares
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Fear of the dark
- Regression behavior like bed wetting
- Unusual interest in the knowledge of sex
- Expressing affection in ways that are inappropriate for a child of that age
- Sexual acting out/inappropriate sexual play (with self, other children)
- Fear of a certain person/intense dislike of being left somewhere
- Change in behavior around a specific person
- Afraid to be left alone
- Loss or lack of interest in friends, school, sports or other activities
- Fear of participating in physical activities at school

Teenagers

- Extreme and/or unexplained anger
- Running away
- Low self-worth
- Self-destructive behavior/self-harm
- Self-mutilation/cutting
- Seductive behavior
- Promiscuous behavior
- Low self-esteem
- Eating disorders
- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Suicidal thoughts
- Suicide attempts
- Happening to a “Friend”
- Has new, older friends
- Difficulty forming relationships
- Poor peer relationships
- Signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Sexually transmitted disease

Teach Children to Trust Their Instincts

With so much constant change in the internet space, the best way to equip children is to teach them to trust their own instincts. If something feels wrong, it probably is. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is. Children learn right from wrong at a very young age, and the internet must be added to their toolbox of life choices.

Talk to Your Children

Slavery is a common topic taught in school, and most kids believe that slavery ended with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. Kids can relate to the concept of slaves having to work without pay and not having the freedom to escape the situation. This is a logical way to address the topic of commercial sexual exploitation. You can share the fact that there are more slaves today worldwide than at any other time in history. Don't be afraid to talk about child trafficking. Read a book or watch a film together and talk about it afterwards.

When do I Start the Conversation?

Human sexuality is not openly discussed in many American households, yet the topic is glaringly present in all aspects of media seen by kids and teens on a daily basis. These are difficult waters for a child to navigate alone. Most kids under the age of 10 are usually naïve about sexuality and have limited knowledge about sex, and even more limited understanding of rape or sexual exploitation. Human growth and development at school likely occurs during the 5th grade, when students range from ages 9-11. In girls, puberty usually starts around 11 years of age and in boys, puberty begins around 12 years of age. The normal onset of puberty ranges in girls from 9-16, while in boys it is 12-15. It is best to have these conversations with your children after puberty has begun. Pre-pubescent children lack the physical and mental maturity to understand changes in the human body that prepare them for sexual reproduction. It is important to understand that girls who mature early may begin sexual activity earlier than those who physically mature at a slower pace. Where students may learn about reproductive health at school, it is up to the family to teach their kids to feel good about how their bodies look and feel. Parents can teach children at a very young age about physical touch and what is appropriate or inappropriate. Children should be taught what kind of touch is acceptable, what to do if someone tries to hurt them, and that it is okay to talk about anything that makes them "feel" uncomfortable.



"Stranger Danger"

Despite sensational media coverage, stranger abductions are extremely rare. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, only 115 children per year in this country are victims of "stereotypical" kidnappings, where a stranger takes a child to keep or harm him. Young children are less likely to be targeted by strangers than teenagers. Nevertheless, it is important to talk to your children about strangers, and above all, teach them to once again trust their own instincts. Children should never be left alone with unknown adults, and kids should always travel in groups, where there is safety in numbers.

Where is Your Child Right Now?

Nearly all teens have a cell phone, and most teens cannot function without their cell phone on hand. Cell phone tracking can help you locate your child's lost cell phone, and can keep you notified of your child's whereabouts at all times; especially in the event of an emergency. Most cell phone carriers have programs to assist parents with this task. Major wireless service providers such as AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint offer "Family Locator" packages that allow you to locate and track all the cell phones on your plan. In addition, if your child's phone has GPS capabilities (like an iPhone, Droid or Blackberry) you can download a tracking app directly from the phone.

If you believe you've seen a case of modern-day slavery, please call the National Human Trafficking Center's toll-free hotline at

1-888-373-7888

Text 233733 (Text "help" or "info")

