



## Prevent Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence

### *15 Tips for Parents*

1. Start talking to your children (age appropriately) about sex - as early as 2 years of age. This will help facilitate open communication about sex throughout their growing years into young adulthood.
2. Teach your children the correct names of body parts including genitals.
3. Encourage children to start bathing and using the toilet independently as soon as possible.
4. Teach children it is not okay for *anyone* to touch them in areas that are covered by their bathing suit and it is not okay to touch others in those areas either. Safe touches vs. unsafe touches.
5. Remember 90% of the time abuse happens by people we know and trust. Get to know ALL adults in your child's life and supervise interactions. Drop in unexpectedly even with individuals you know well. Be open to the *impossible* happening.
6. Reduce private interactions with peers and adults. Provide supervision for all ages and stages of growth. Have an "open door" rule during young children playdates and teenager dates. Teach children to interact with adults, teachers, and coaches in groups (emails and texts included).
7. Teach children to trust their instincts. If someone feels "creepy" to them, honor that feeling and support your child. Even if it is family member or close friend.
8. Allow children by the age of 2 to choose with whom they will share physical affection. Support this decision with family and friends.
9. Instead of creating your own list of safe adults, ask your children which adults they feel safe with. Encourage them to talk to those individuals when they need help.
10. Pay close attention to adults that are *overly* interested in your child's life and request/offer private time with your child.
11. Teach children the difference between a **safe secret** and an **unsafe secret**. Safe secrets make you feel happy and excited. Unsafe secrets make you feel uncomfortable, sad or scared.
12. Check in with your children *in private*, after they have been away from you. Ask them, "How was [Name] house?" "Did you feel comfortable at [Name] house?" "Who was there?"
13. Discuss family values about dating relationships and having sex when your children are adolescents. Include conversations about consent and healthy relationships. "Teens say parents most influence their decision about sex" more than peers and media.<sup>1</sup>
14. Discuss inappropriate uses of technology. "Sending pictures of your genitals (private body parts) is against the law". "People that ask for pictures of your genitals (private body parts) may share them with others and may not be who they say they are".
15. Create a safety word/statement to help assist your teen out of uncomfortable situations without embarrassment. "Mom what time is [my doctor appointment] tomorrow?"

***If you or your child needs support or more information please contact***

### **Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center**

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24-Hour Support Line **847-872-7799** | (P) **847-244-1187** | (F) **847-244-6380** | **[www.ZCenter.org](http://www.ZCenter.org)**

Resource: <sup>1</sup>Rosenzweig, Janet The Parent's Guide to Talking About Sex: A Complete Guide to Raising (Sexually) Safe, Smart, and Healthy Children. 2012 Skyhorse Publishing.