

Protective Behaviours Parenting Tips



- 1. Ensure your child knows their right to feel safe all of the time** – talk about it, act it, say it often, use resources books movies, all opportunities to talk about the right to feel safe. Role model everyone’s right to feel safe, including your own and talk about responsibility to uphold others’ rights to feel safe.
- 2. Start using the language of “safe and unsafe”** rather than good and bad –we would rather our children were safe, rather than “good”. And safe is how they determine it.
- 3. Create an environment where your child knows that he or she can talk with you about anything no matter what it is.** Practise this by talking with and listening to your child without judgement. If you listen to the little things they will be more likely to tell you the big things.
- 4. Talk with your child about the difference between “dobbing” and “telling”.** Dobbing is to get someone else in trouble. Telling is because they feel unsafe/need help – they can always tell you anything.
- 5. LISTEN to your child.**
 - Sometimes it’s hard when we are busy, and your children want to talk. If you can’t speak at that moment. Ask your child “Do you feel safe? What are your Early Warning Signs (EWS) telling you?”
 - If they are feeling ok tell your child that you can speak at a certain time, after dinner, in 10 minutes, after 5pm), then you can give them your full attention.
 - If your child’s Early Warning Signs are telling them they need to speak right now, stop what you are doing and listen. If this option is not at all possible, help your child identify someone else on their network that they can speak to, until you get away from what you are doing.
- 6. Help your child to identify and listen to their Early Warning Signs.**
- 7. Use the language of safety when talking to your child.**
 - Take ownership of your language and its affect on others and yourself
 - Be careful using command language
 - Use quality language – no “isms”
 - Ensure you are clear
 - It is best to check in at all times to make sure you have shared meaning. You may get a different response when you ask “What do you understand about what I just said?” rather than “What did I just say?”.
- 8. Always use the correct names for body parts.**



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- 9. Make sure your child knows about private and public**, spaces, clothing, behaviours and body parts.
- 10. Speak about feelings.** Make your first question to your child “How did you feel today? Did you have any EWS?”. Help your children to identify and recognise their feelings, encourage emotional intelligence, safety awareness, empathy and connectedness.
- 11. DO NOT HAVE SECRETS in your home, especially if you have young children.** Explain that secrets are not ok and use surprises in your family – “We don’t have secrets in our family –just surprises”. As children get older, there may be some safe secrets that they need to keep. **Have the discussion about safe and unsafe secrets with older children.**
- 12. Help your child identify networks**
 - Their personal safety network
 - Their organisational networks - (school, sports groups, OSHC)
 - How to borrow a network if need be
 - State networks - Safety Commission, Kids Help Line, Lifeline, Police. Practice with your children so they know these numbers and know how to access help.
- 13. Your child needs to know your phone number and where they live.** Remind them this is PRIVATE information and does not need to be given out to others.
- 14. Remind your child of their strengths as a person.** Build their capacity to be the best and most confident person they can. Perpetrators often prefer a select set of characteristics in their victims (victim selection) that does not include confident, strong individuals.
- 15. Create safe word or a phrase that’s known only within your immediate family.** If used it means I need help now. Talk about it being okay to break the rules in an emergency (being safe rather than “good”).
- 16. Start conversations about unwritten rules to start breaking down the myths around them.** A good place to start is talking about rules in the playground – this is important critical thinking skills as well as resilience building.
- 17. Do not make your child kiss or hug people.** Respect your child’s personal space and teach them they have the right to say who is allowed into their personal space.
- 18. Teach your child the five types of NO** and practice using them. (See next page).