

PEERS AGAINST VIOLENCE

PAVE

TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR

3-6
YEAR OLDS

ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

ELIMINATE SECRETS

The idea of not keeping secrets should be introduced early to children. Explain that surprises are okay, but secrets are not. Kids keep things from adults when they think they'll get into trouble. Let them know you're glad they told you something, even when it's something you didn't want to hear.

PRACTICE "WHAT IF'S"

Young children have a hard time with abstract concepts. Instead of the broad "If anyone ever hurts you, tell me," rephrase it as a "What if."

LIMIT SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS

At this age, children can incorporate hints or possibilities into their beliefs about a specific situation. Asking questions over and over again can communicate to a child that something is wrong, when nothing may have happened.

BE RELAXED

Children tend to interpret anxiety in their caretakers as an indication that something bad has happened or that they did something wrong. They may also try to read you and tell you what they think you want to hear. You don't want them to feel like this conversation is scary.

PRACTICE SKILLS

Playing out scenarios can help children learn how to deal with relationships. Use puppets, toys, or examples from TV shows or movies to help your child act out scenarios and resolve conflict. Provide them with feedback on what they do well.

Learn more about
creating healthy
relationships:

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HOTLINE
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Developed by REACH
Beyond Domestic Violence

PICK YOUR TIME AND PLACE

Begin this conversation during a time of day when your child is awake and alert. You can even make it a regularly scheduled time, once a week during a drive somewhere. Your child doesn't need to know that you've scheduled this time to talk with them; they'll appreciate being engaged by you.

REMAIN CALM AND NEUTRAL

If your child feels like you are expecting certain answers from them, they may shut down or only tell you what they think you want to hear. Giving them the space to talk about issues creates trust.

LET THEM SAY NO

Just like children have to practice saying "please" and "thank you", they have to learn to say "no". Let them know it is okay for them to say no in situations where they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Teach them that you won't get angry at them if they tell someone no. Children are often afraid that they will get into trouble if they say no. Let them know that it is okay to come to you if someone is making them uncomfortable.

EMPHASIZE SAFETY

Sometimes the world can feel overwhelming for small children. You can remind them of all the ways in which people work to keep them safe. Emphasize that there are adults who care deeply for them and that if they ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe, they can seek out those adults for support.