



TIP SHEET

Teaching children and young people personal safety

Bravehearts
Educate Empower Protect
Our Kids

As trusted adults in children's and young people's lives, the most important role we have is to keep them safe. We want to be there to catch our children and young people before they fall, shield them from harm and to give them a life that is free from hurt and pain. The reality is that we cannot be with them 24/7. One of the most important things we can do is to educate them to identify when something doesn't feel right, and to talk to a trusted adult without fear of consequences.

Teaching children and young people simple strategies about keeping safe, can help them build confidence, resilience and empower them to be safe in a variety of situations. It is not difficult to educate children and young people about personal safety. All it takes is the willingness to start, some help with content, and time.

Research shows that teaching children about personal safety:

- Reduces the likelihood of a child entering into an unsafe situation.
- Clearly demonstrates how to respond to an unsafe situation.
- Increases a child's sense of confidence and in doing so increases their resiliency.
- Increases a child's knowledge of their personal rights i.e. "I have the right to feel safe with people".
- Increases the likelihood that the child will speak out if they feel unsafe and tell someone they trust.
- Can interrupt or prevent grooming.

THE 3 RULES OF PERSONAL SAFETY

Parents should instill in their children the following three personal safety rules:

1. We all have the right to feel safe with people.

This rule teaches children and young people that they have the right to feel safe and secure where they live, play, and learn, and that no one has the right to make them do something that makes them feel unsafe or unsure.

2. It's OK to say 'NO' if you feel unsafe or unsure.

This rule teaches children and young people that it is OK to stand up for themselves and to be assertive if something doesn't feel right.

3. Nothing is so yucky that you can't tell someone about it.

One of the reasons that children and young people fail to disclose harm is because they are afraid of getting into trouble. This rule helps to encourage them to speak to a trusted adult, even if something seems scary or terrible.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY

- Speaking with your child about personal safety should not be a one-off conversation. Rather, create opportunities that allow talking about personal safety to be part of an ongoing dialogue between you and your child. Always let your child know you are there for them, and keeping them safe is your number one priority.
- It is recommended that you teach your child the correct language for their private parts. Emphasise that those parts are private and belong to them.
- Try not to scare or alarm your child. Speak calmly and confidently, keeping a neutral, natural tone, ensuring that you allow time for your child to process the information and ask questions. Never make them feel ashamed or embarrassed about sexuality or body parts.

If you have any concerns and wish to talk with one of our trained staff, contact the Bravehearts Information and Support Line on 1800 272 831.