

# Parenting Ideas To Consider

## After Sexual Abuse Occurred

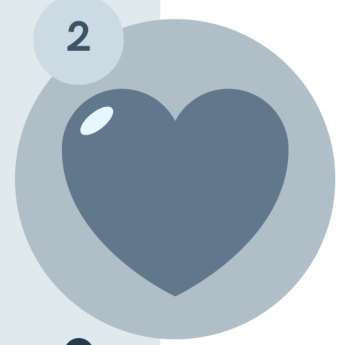


### "Don't talk to strangers" is not enough

This is useful in helping kids understand who is in their circle of care, how to gauge if you can trust someone, how much personal information you share with someone, and ultimately defining what a stranger is. But most children are sexually abused by someone they know and who is in their circle of care, not strangers. Encourage your child to speak up, ask questions, and talk about their concerns with others.

### Touch, affection & physical closeness

Not all forms of touch and physical closeness are wrong or lead to harm but after sexual abuse has occurred it may have a whole new meaning. Spend time reading your child's cues and current limits. Letting your child express affection on their own terms. It's about helping them to navigate what contexts and situations they can say "no", distinguishing nuance in situations, and looking at your community, culture, and family expectations.



### Know their peers & surroundings

Your role is to guide relationships and teach social skills. A great opportunity is to make efforts to get to know your child's friends, the friend's caregivers, and the environments your child is entering. Honour your instincts (even your own "uh oh" feelings), then speak up, ask questions, talk through your concerns with others.

### Trust & privacy

It is often useful to create a list of adults in case you are not available to your child. You can say, *"It's totally OK to tell someone else when you don't feel safe."* Distinguishing with your child who they can talk to about the sexual abuse practices how to have trusting relationships with others and it take away the shame related to sexual abuse.



### Open communication

It's important for your child to hear you say, *"You can come to me with anything you are worried about or feeling uncomfortable about and I promise I will listen."* We may have strong feelings when they tell us, so say, *"If I'm upset or angry, it wouldn't be at you."* Showing anguish that your child was hurt creates a good boundary for kids that what happened was not ok.

### Establish a "No Secrets" motto

Secrets vs. privacy: Sexual abuse thrives on secret keeping. Having a *"No Secrets"* motto is a protective one. Secrets are things we keep without an expectation of ever telling anyone. Safe secrets are actually surprises, are found out, and don't risk safety. Privacy is something we hold closer to us and talk with some chosen people. Consider saying, *"It's ok if you don't tell your teacher or best friend that you experienced sexual abuse because it is a private experience you talk about with your family and helpers"*



# More Parenting Ideas To Consider

## After Sexual Abuse Occurred

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### Listen to your "gut" & "uh oh" feelings

Our body and threat receptors in our brain "feel" that something is not right before we can put a thought to it. It says, "something's off here", "I'm not sure about this", "I feel wary about this". If abuse or distress has been persistent in a child's life, they can lose the ability to listen to the signals their body is giving them. So we need to focus on this idea of listening to the signals of our body because our body and brain are only looking out for our safety and how to keep us alive.

### Navigating technology

Technology and the Internet are here to stay and very useful to us. As such, we have to teach our children the skills to navigate these necessary resources safely and be good digital citizens. Teaching online safety is critical.

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### Boundaries

Sexual abuse is a violation of, injury to, or ignoring of a child's personal boundaries that are physical, mental, and emotional. We have to support a child to distinguish nuance. Nuance means: *a subtle difference in, or shade of meaning, expression, or sound*. So, it's about figuring out what the subtle difference is between "being quiet" when we are at a gathering of adults vs. "being quiet" when someone makes you uncomfortable or touches your private parts.

Boundaries have to be adjusted with these two things in mind:

1. Rules: Everyone is safer when we are all on the same page about what's safe and acceptable behaviour.
2. Respect: Treat others kindly and stick to the rules, especially when it comes to how we treat children.