

# JUST IN CASE:

Information Every Child Should  
Know To Prevent Sexual Abuse

*A resource intended for children age 10 years or older or for adult presentation to younger children.*

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Know To Prevent Sexual Abuse

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Safety plans are important to know *“Just in Case”* something bad happens. We hope it never does, but it is good to know what to do IF it *does* happen. When we have a plan we can keep ourselves safe.

You may already know a few *“Just in Case”* plans:

IF a stranger tries to get you to go with them; you should know about *“Stranger Danger”* and not to fall for the tricks they might try.

IF a tornado siren blares; you should know plans for where go. You get low in a secure place away from windows.

IF the fire alarms ring; you should know the plans to safely get out of your home or school.

IF your clothes catch on fire; you should know how to *“Stop, Drop, and Roll”* to put it out quickly.

And IF someone tries to break sexual boundaries; you need to have a plan for this too...

“Why would I need a special plan for that?” you might wonder. Sadly, more children are affected by sexual abuse than by tornadoes, fires, and even strangers.

Your “*Stranger Danger*” training will not protect you from sexual abuse. Most people who sexually abuse kids are not strangers. Over 90% of abusers are personally known to the children they abuse. That is why you need another plan.

Before you can make this plan you will need to know a few other things first. In the same way knowledge of fire and tornadoes helps us to plan what to do IF those things happen; knowledge of personal boundaries helps kids to know if someone is doing things to them they should not be doing.

**In the following pages I will explain:**

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## Caring Touch and Harmful Touch

Many kids like hugs, kisses, high-fives, hand shakes, pats on the back, and many other caring touches too.

What touches do you like?

Does it matter who it is? Can just anyone give you a kiss? People usually like caring touches from people they care about and trust.

Most kids don't like hits, kicks, smacks, touches on their private parts, or any other harmful touches.

What touches do you not like?

**Your Body Belongs to You!** Say it to yourself, "My body belongs to me." You have authority over your own body. You get to say if you want to be touched or not.

Sometimes a touch may start out as a touch you like. Maybe you like to be tickled, but not if it goes on too long. Maybe you like to wrestle, but not if it gets too rough. You can still speak out, even if you started the touching. It is your body and if you say "Stop", whoever is touching you should respect you and stop that instant. Your body belongs to you.

Even if a person intends for a touch to be caring, if you are not comfortable you need to let them know. Did they do something wrong? No. But it is wrong if they keep touching you after you asked them to stop.

## Personal Space and Body Ownership

Just like your body belongs to you, so does the space around your body. People are different in the amount of space they need between themselves and another person to feel comfortable. It may be the span of your arms out-stretched, or it may be twice that amount. The amount of space you need to feel comfortable is your Personal Space.

How much space do you need? Stand facing another person and move toward them until it starts to feel “too close”. Take a step back. That distance between you and them is your comfort zone. That is how much Personal Space you need to have with others.

No one should be in your personal space without your permission. If someone is too close, and they didn't ask, you need to tell them how you feel about it. You could say, “Please, get out of my space” or “Please, back up, you're too close”. The first time you say something, be polite. They may not be aware of personal space. If they continue to not respect your space, tell a grown-up who will enforce this rule for you.

Everyone has Personal Space, and you should show the same respect for the comfort of others. You want a hug? Ask for it. You want to give one, ask the person. Make sure they are comfortable with it. And if anyone wants to touch you in any way, for any reason, they should ask your permission. When asked you should check with yourself “Would I like that? Would it be comfortable?” Decide how you feel about it and give your answer. Even if a person asks permission you can still say “No”. Your body belongs to you.

One situation this seems awkward is when you play a game. People make contact in many games. If you participate in a game you are giving your permission to whatever touch is involved in the game. If it is tackle football, you must be okay with being tackled if you play the game. Any touch that is not part of the game is still off-limits without permission. Speak up for yourself.

## What “Private” Means and does not Mean

Most of our life is “Public”. Everyone knows our name, and maybe even a nickname or two. They know our face and maybe even what family members we look like. People may know where we live, who our family and friends are, or where we go to school. Most of your daily life is public. It’s okay for people to see and know about.

But some things are Private. “Private” just means that it belongs to you and no-one else. No one should touch it or look at it without your permission. The thoughts you keep in your head are private to you. Some people like to write their thoughts out in a journal or diary. These are also kept private. You may have special collections: coins, stamps, trading cards, or other treasures. Many special things can be regarded as private. There’s nothing wrong with them, but they are guarded because they are special. These things belong to you and no-one else.

Just like most of our lives are public, most of your body is public too. When we go to the pool or beach we see arms and legs, bellies and toes, bare backs and the chests of boys and men. These are all public body parts. The private body parts are covered by our swimsuits. Those parts are good and have a good purpose, just like the rest of your body parts. But these parts are also special for you alone, and no-one else should look at or touch them- without a good reason or without your permission.

Sometimes our private parts may get hurt or irritated, and need a parent or doctor to look at them, and maybe put medicine on them. Parents need to clean the private parts of babies until they are big enough to do it themselves. These are good caring reasons that someone may need to look at and touch private parts.

Some people think “private” means that something is dirty, bad, or wrong. That’s not right. Private things can be good and special. Some people think “private” is the same as a secret. The difference is that secrets are kept between people, but private things are no-one else’s business but your own.

## Sexual Boundary Rules

Sexual Abuse is when anyone breaks any of The Sexual Boundary Rules without a good reason for doing so, and without your “consent” or permission.

### The Sexual Boundary Rules

- 1) No one should try to look at my private parts!
- 2) No one should try to show me their private parts!
- 3) No one should try to touch my private parts!
- 4) No one should try to make me touch their private parts!
- 5) No one should show me pictures of private parts: in magazines, videos, TV, cell phones, or computer!

It is against the law for anyone to break these rules with a child. Looking at or touching private parts requires permission; children can not legally give permission to an adult or older child to break any of these boundaries without a good non-sexual reason for doing so.

Children are not developmentally ready for sexual activity mentally or physically. They have no natural interest in it and no clear knowledge of it... unless they are introduced to it too early. Some people so strongly don't want to believe sexual abuse happens that they find it easier to think children make up lies about sexual abuse. Young children should not have enough knowledge to make up lies about sexual abuse, and if they do someone has likely introduced them to sexuality through breaking Sexual Boundary Rules.

That boundary violation may have been direct and intentional, using their body to break the rules. Or it may have been passive-not having good boundaries with their own sexuality: exhibiting sexual behavior in front of children; having sexual magazines or movies in the home; viewing sexual content in the presence of a child; or not restricting or supervising a child's internet activity. All of this can have harmful affects on children.



## Misconceptions about Sexual Abuse

### Some people think...

“Only girls get sexually abused.”

“If you are abused by someone of the same gender it will make you gay.”

“People can tell you’ve been abused just by looking at you.”

“Only strangers sexually abuse kids, after snatching them from parks or malls.”

“If you asked for or started the touching with an older person then it is your fault.”

### But the truth is...

Although girls are slightly more likely to be abused; many boys have also been sexually abused.

Sexual abuse does not make someone homosexual. It can cause very confusing feelings for a child, but ultimately you get to decide this for yourself.

No one can tell you’ve been abused by looking at you. That’s why you must tell someone to get help.

Most sex-offenders are known and trusted by the child. They have regular contact and access to them. They may be family, friends, baby-sitters, etc... They are almost always known to the child.

It is always the older person’s responsibility to make sure sexual abuse does not happen to children.

**It’s Not Your Fault!**

## It's Not Your Fault...

**Even if the abuser told you it was your fault,**

or told you that people will think it was your fault, or told you that you will be in trouble if you tell. Abusers are likely to tell many lies to make you afraid to tell.

**Even if you don't say "No" right away.**

Kids are used to doing what they are told, and showing respect to those who are older than they are. It can be very hard to say "No" to an older kid, and extremely hard to say "No" to a grown-up.

**Even if the touch felt good sometimes.**

Sometimes touch can feel good even if we don't feel good about the way someone is touching us. Private parts are especially sensitive to touch.

**Even if you tell someone and they don't believe you.**

Many people don't want to believe that sexual abuse happens to children, and have trouble believing when they are told about it. Keep telling until someone makes it stop.

**Even if you think you like or love the person.**

Chances are you were tricked into thinking better of the person than they really are. Getting you to like or love them is part of keeping the abuse secret. If the person was in a parental role, the love may be from a genuine bond with them that their sexual actions have betrayed.

It is always the older person's responsibility to make sure sexual abuse does not happen. Anyone who breaks sexual boundaries with a child has a problem and needs help to stop. They may go to prison to prevent them from continuing to abuse, and to pay for the crimes they have committed. Child and teenage offenders are more likely to get treatment as the consequence for their offense. The older person is responsible. It's not your fault.

## “Grooming” and What Abusers are Up-To

Grooming is what offenders do to gain the comfort and trust needed to take advantage of you with confidence that you won't tell anyone. They treat you special and create a good image to make it hard for anyone else to believe they could do anything wrong. They don't want to get caught, but they need to get caught.

### What Offenders Do WANT:

**TRUST (yours and your caregivers):** They might give you gifts or special treatment. They act nice hoping you will like and trust them. Is it okay for people to get in your personal space just because they are nice to you? Who is okay to hug you? Kiss you?

**ACCESS (to you):** Offenders are usually family members because it is easiest for them to get time with you. They may take jobs in the community or positions in a family that gives them access to children. It is very rare for a stranger to break boundaries.

**PRIVACY (with you):** When are you alone? Wherever you are have a plan to reach a safe person quickly. Offenders don't want witnesses. If it's their word against yours they still have power.

**SECRETS (with you):** The only good secrets are surprises like parties or presents. If someone asks you to keep any other kind of secret someone's safety is likely at risk. Offenders often will make threats to keep you from telling the secret.

Offenders use these tactics to lower defenses, gradually getting closer and closer to what they want. They might bump your arm as if it was an accident. Next they may touch your shoulder, brush your hair, or rub your back: seemingly innocent stuff to get you comfortable with their touch. They have 2 goals: 1) Treat you in a way to get you to have a sexual interaction with them. 2) Get you to keep it secret so they can keep doing this. Anyone who really cares about you would not violate your boundaries. Offenders are only thinking about what they want. They will betray you as soon as they think they can get away with it.

## Wishful Thinking VS Reality

*Ask yourself: Who is this person? How well do I know them?  
Why are they here? Why are they being so nice? What do they want?  
Is the way they treat you different than they treat other people?  
If so, why? Is their relationship with you age appropriate?  
Do they respect your privacy and personal space?*

You may want to imagine they really loved and cared about you, but their actions show that they do not. Not now.

Abusers trick children into thinking they are nice, and that they care about you. It's all a game to them, and you are just a toy to them. When they get tired of you they will find another.

You may think you would fight any grownup who tried to do these things. You want to believe you could beat anyone up because you would be so angry, but a child does not have the physical strength or weight of a grown up. Only a grown-up can stop another grown-up or teenager. You must get help!

And you might not be angry at the time. Because they tricked you there are many other feelings that may cause you to feel trapped: shame and embarrassment that you've been used and tricked; fear of what this person might do if you tell; fear of what will happen to you and your family if you tell; confusion because you may still think this is a good person- you may still want to protect them because you care about them; fear of the threats that have been made; guilt that maybe somehow it was your fault, etc... The list can go on and on. But you must tell. That is the only way to make the abuse stop. You must get help. Tell a Safe Person.

Remember- it is NOT your fault. Some hard things may happen when you tell, but it will be worth it. You will be kept safe, and even though it may be tough at first, things will get better once you have help.

## Safe People

So, who IS safe? How do you know?

Abusers look just like anyone else. They can be rich or poor, good-looking or ugly, have any color skin, and any kind of background. It would be so much easier to stay safe if abusers all had a big red letter A on their foreheads, but they don't. Most abusers are men, but not all of them. Many children have been sexually abused by women. Since it seems the only thing abusers have in common is sexually abusing children, let's look at who safe people are:

Safe People share ALL of these qualities:

- Grown-ups.** Only a big person can stop another big person. Your safe people need to be grown-ups, not other children.
- Are known to you.** Even though most kids are abused by people they know, Stranger Danger should still be practiced. A stranger might be safe, but you don't know for sure. Better safe than sorry.
- Consistent.** They treat everyone in their life with kindness, and don't single anyone out for special attention or abuse.
- Trustworthy.** Trustworthiness is only known through relating to a person over time. Do they make good choices for themselves? Have they hurt you in the past? Do they hurt other people?
- Dependable.** They have a history of making sure you are safe and taken care of. You know they'll be there for you to keep you safe.

Some people can be considered "Safe" even though you don't know them personally. These may be police officers, fire fighters, ambulance workers, nurses, doctors, teachers, principals, case workers, or counselors. They are required by their jobs to make sure you are safe, and take appropriate steps to insure your safety.

Think of the people in your life. Can you name 3 safe people you could tell "*Just in Case*" someone broke sexual boundaries?

What To Do: The Safety Plan

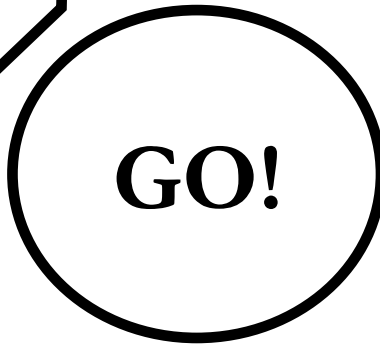
**If Anyone Tries to Break**



**Sexual Boundaries:**

**Say “No!” and  
Get Away!**

**Right Away!**



**Find a  
SAFE  
Person!**



**And TELL  
Them What  
Happened!**

**If you tell someone and they don't  
believe you or do anything about it,  
keep telling until someone listens and  
makes the abuse stop!**

## Concluding Information

You should memorize the phone numbers of at least 2 safe people you could call in an emergency. Whose numbers do you know? Whose should you learn?

Sexual abuse counts as an emergency and 911 is the number to call for emergency help.

Anyone who knows of or suspects the abuse of a child can and should report it. In 48 states in the U.S. teachers, doctors, nurses, counselors, social workers, and law enforcement officers are all specifically required by law to report knowledge or suspicions of abuse to their state's Department of Human Services or Child Protection Services.

In Oklahoma the Child Abuse Hotline number is:

1.800.522.3511

A National Hotline through Child Help USA is:

1.800.4 A Child (1.800.422.4453)

Sexual abuse can be very confusing, frightening, and emotionally traumatic for a child. All child victims of sexual abuse should be evaluated for treatment needs by a professional who is trained and experienced in sexual abuse treatment.

Offenders who admit what they have done and feel remorse are potentially treatable, but should have no contact with children until they have completed treatment specific to sexual offending; the child has completed treatment in recovery from the abuse; *and* the child is agreeable to supervised contact with this person during and after a period of "reunification" work in a clinical setting.

Exposure of children to known or suspected sex offenders could potentially result in the loss of custody of a child.