Supporting Children Who Experience Sexual Abuse

**Prevention**
- Teach children the correct and proper names for their body parts (genitalia). Try to avoid nicknames or made-up terms.
- Help children understand what their boundaries are and who is allowed to touch them.

**Response to Disclosure**
- Stay as calm as possible. If you get upset, you risk making the child upset, too.
- Limit the amount of questions you ask. Say "help me understand" to conduct a discussion rather than an interview.
- Gather enough information to make sure the child’s experience isn’t a misunderstanding.

**Support**
- Understand the potential impacts of sexual abuse and victimization.
- Tell the child “you are not alone” and “I believe what happened to you.”
- Recognize that no child is responsible for their own abuse. Reassure the child that it wasn’t their fault.
- Be an active listener to whatever the child wants to talk about.
- Use supportive phrases such as:
  
  - “I'm sorry this happened to you”
  - “I'm so glad you told me about this”
  - “We're going to work together to keep you safe”
  - “I'll always be here for you”
  - “I won't be upset if you tell me”
  - “Let's discuss who you can talk to if anything like this happens again”

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