

Talking to a Child About Abuse: General Guidelines

When a child shares something difficult, your response matters. A calm, supportive reaction can help the child feel safe and believed, and it can be the first step toward healing.

Listen With Care

- Let the child speak freely. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Be patient. Let them use their own words.
- Use their language if you need to report or explain what was shared.

Offer Reassurance

- "I'm really glad you told me."
- "This is not your fault."
- "You're not in trouble."
- If they ask you to keep it secret, explain:
- "I care about your safety, and that means I might need to tell someone who can help."

Stay Calm and Supportive

- Stay composed. Avoid showing shock or anger.
- Don't criticize the abuser. Children may still care about them.
- Offer kind, affirming words:
- "I love you." "You're brave." "I'm here for you."

Be Mindful of Your Reactions

- Don't ask leading or probing questions. Just listen.
- Check in with your own emotions. Avoid projecting fear or anger.
- Always report suspected abuse to law enforcement or child protection services.

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Remember:

Your job is not to investigate—it's to support, believe, and report