

# TALKING TO YOUNG CHILDREN ABOUT EVENTS IN THE NEWS

## News coverage of a high-profile child sexual abuse case can open the door for parents and caregivers to talk with children about sexual abuse.

The reality is that our children are exposed to headlines every day, whether on the TV or in the classroom. It's important for parents and caregivers to know the questions to ask to help their children interpret current events. Here are some tips that can help guide the conversation.

### TALKING TIPS: AT A GLANCE

#### TIP ONE

Ask open-ended questions to discover children's knowledge about the event, and any opinions that may have already been formed. It will also give you an opportunity to clear up any misinformation.

#### TIP TWO

Let children lead the discussion. Listen more than you talk and let them know you value their beliefs and opinions. Ask follow-up questions ("And then?") to keep the conversation going.

#### TIP THREE

Keep your tone light and conversational to ensure children feel safe to open up.

### TALKING TO CHILDREN AGE FIVE AND UNDER

Very young children may overhear something about the event and have questions.

They simply need to know that the action is bad and is never the fault of the abused child.

Then, tell them that if anyone ever touches them in a private place or makes them uncomfortable, to tell mommy and daddy immediately.

#### Have more questions?

You can reach out to the Darkness to Light Helpline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 866-FOR-LIGHT.

### ALLOW THE CHILD TO DIRECT THE CONVERSATION

Start by asking one of the following questions. Choose one that feels right to you, and then let your child be your guide:

- *What have you heard about this case?*
- *What do you know about child sexual abuse?*

These questions will help you determine your child's depth of knowledge on the subject, as well as clear up any misinformation or gaps in understanding.

- *What would you do if anyone made you uncomfortable or asked you to keep a secret from me?*
- *What would you do if a friend tells you someone touched him or her in a way that felt uncomfortable?*
- *How can kids help other kids who are being bullied or abused?*

### RECOGNIZING TRUSTED ADULTS

Encourage your child to tell a trusted adult and provide them with examples, such as yourself or trusted school employee.

- *Do you know of anything like this happening at your school, or anywhere else?*
- *Is there anything else you want to talk with me about?*

Be prepared in case your child discloses knowledge of abuse. If this does happen, remain calm and report immediately. Visit [www.D2L.org/reporting](http://www.D2L.org/reporting) for information and resources.

Remember to listen more than talk, and keep your tone conversational. This promotes mutual learning and create open dialogue that can continue in the future. One or two questions may be all you need for a robust conversation!