

## **Child Safety ~ Kids Often Talk When Adults Really Listen**

Kidpower is an educational charitable organization that, since 1989, has brought "People Safety" education to over 1.2 million children, teenagers, and adults, including those with special needs, from many different cultures - close to home and around the world. For publications; free articles, podcasts and e-newsletter; and information about our services and locations, please visit [www.kidpower.org](http://www.kidpower.org).

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Child safety from abuse, bullying, and other forms of violence can feel overwhelming for adults, and this can make it hard to listen calmly when children come to us with problems. Be sure that the children in your life know that you will listen and help them if they have a problem with anyone, no matter what your relationship is with this person.

A lot of times children do not want to upset or worry the important adults in their lives. Without direct, ongoing encouragement, some children will withhold information that is crucial to their personal safety, and adults won't get the information they need to help their children stay safe.

If you are distracted and busy, children are likely to try to solve their problems themselves, especially as they get older and especially if they think they might have done something that will make you mad at them. If you give lectures or get irritated when children try to talk to you about small issues, they are likely to get in the habit of not telling you about potentially big problems. Child safety is harder to protect when we don't know about the real situations our children are facing.

With younger children, just ask them from time to time, "Is there anything you have been wondering or worrying about that you have not told me?" and then wait for the answer.

With older children, keep reminding them, "I really want to know if you have a problem, even if it might have been your fault or even if it is with someone who is important to me. I promise to listen until you have had a chance to tell me the whole story. If I start to lecture, you can interrupt me and ask me to keep listening."

In Teenpower, we tell our students that it is normal for the adults who love them to get upset about a possible threat to their safety. We suggest that they give their adults a little warning by saying, "I have something to tell you that you are not going to like. Please listen to me until I am done."

Because young people are most likely to be bothered by people in a position of trust and authority, it might be hard to hear that someone you care about is being inappropriate or even dangerous with your child. Remember that child safety is more important than *anyone's* embarrassment, inconvenience or offense. So listen to children, no matter what they tell you or who the problem is with.

Child safety issues can feel overwhelming for adults to deal with alone, so remember that you can get outside help if the problem is a big one. There are many low cost and free resources for counseling if you look for them.