

15 Tips for parents

that will help your child feel safe...

- 1 Use 'Safe' and 'Unsafe' to describe situations or touching. Use the thumb up sign for 'Safe' and the thumb down sign for 'Unsafe'.
- 2 Use feelings words as often as possible to help increase your child's emotional vocabulary and encourage them to talk about how they are feeling.
- 3 Don't make your child kiss adults goodbye. Also, if they are tickled and they say "stop" then listen to them.
- 4 Make time to listen to your child. If a child can't talk to their parents, who can they talk to? If your child says they are scared, find out why.
- 5 When asking your child "How was your day?" encourage them to say what they didn't like as well as all the things they enjoyed.
- 6 Help your child to establish a 'Safety Team' (five adults they can talk to, and who will listen, if they feel unsafe).
- 7 Nurture your child to use their words rather than getting physical, to resolve disputes. Teach them to say "Stop it. I don't like it when you..." Once they have mastered that you might add "it makes me feel..." to encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- 8 Encourage your child to persevere with the activities they undertake. This life skill is particularly important if they need to tell an adult that they feel unsafe. Teach them, if an adult doesn't listen the first time, then they need to tell them again, or tell another adult, until someone helps.
- 9 Teach your child the difference between 'Public' and 'Private'. It is essential to use the correct anatomical names for private body parts.
- 10 Start age appropriate sex education as young as possible. A great teaching resource is the book Talk soon. Talk often.
- 11 Support your child to be a risk taker, as long as they have choice, control or there is a time limit on the activity.
- 12 Have a secret family codeword. If you are unable to pick up your child from school and someone your child doesn't know has to pick them up, then they will know that it is OK to go with that person. Or, if your child doesn't feel safe they can use the secret codeword and you will know to stop what you are doing and listen to them.
- 13 It's important that children know that they can say "no" to anyone, if they feel unsafe.
- 14 Before going to a major public event, talk to your child about a safety plan in case they get lost. For example, they could tell a shopkeeper, security guard or a police officer. If no one like that is around, then a lady with a pram or children would be the next safest person to tell.
- 15 Setting clear boundaries helps children to feel safe.