



calmly and support the child through the reporting process. Tell the child it wasn't their fault and express belief in the child's disclosure by simply stating, "I believe you." This will further support and validate the child's statement. You do not need details from the child. However, you should get the following information:

- Name and address of the child alleging abuse, if known
- Name and address of the alleged offender, if known
- Location of the alleged abuse
- Nature (e.g., sexual, physical, emotional) and extent of the alleged abuse
- Approximate date of the last incident (if an older child)

Parents Reporting Violations of BSA Youth Protection Policies

If an adult leader or someone else in Scouting is trying to convince your child that their advancements or awards are solely dependent on that person's approval, or if that person is asking your child to do anything that seems inappropriate, contact your local council Scout executive immediately.

EXERCISES ON PERSONAL SAFETY AWARENESS

Now that you understand the types of abuse, the barriers that we have put in place to minimize abuse, and the steps to take when you suspect abuse has occurred, let's focus on helping you empower your child. Concerned and connected parents and caregivers are a strong component of all child abuse prevention strategies. You have an important role to play in prevention!

Many parents find it difficult to talk with their child about abuse. However, it is important to provide a foundation for a child to understand personal safety and encourage them to come to you with questions and concerns. The personal safety exercises in this section, to be used in conversations with your child, will help you with this process. They focus on five very important areas that can minimize the chances of abuse for your child:

- Why should I check with a parent first?
- Who are my *trusted adults*?
- What are my personal boundaries?
- What if someone asks me to keep a secret?
- How do I talk about touches and private parts?

Five Topics to Cover With Scouts

NOTE: Completing the exercises described in these pages fulfills the requirements for your Scout to earn their Scout badge. The BSA recommends that these exercises be conducted on a regular basis throughout the year.



Why should I check with a parent first?

Many abusers are known to the child as a family friend, relative, Scouter, or older youth, so it is important to focus safety messages on the behavior of a person, not the relationship to the child. Teach your child to check with you first before agreeing to go anywhere with another person. Tell your child never to go anywhere with anyone who will not let them check with you first. If the person refuses, your child has the right to step back from the person, make noise, say “No,” run away, and tell someone.

Tell your child that your permission is required before they may accept an invitation from a Scout leader or another parent to an activity outside of Scouting and that all such invitations must be



reported to you. The BSA recommends that parents not allow one-on-one contact and insist that two adults are present (two-deep leadership) at any Scouting activities for their children.

Try this exercise to help your child remember to check first. Brainstorm times and situations in which your child should always come to you before going somewhere with someone. Include such situations as going into a house or vehicle, changing plans, being offered gifts, and being asked for help.

Talk through and role-play the following scenarios:

“What if a neighbor asks you to come into his house to see his new gaming system?”

“What if you are at the mall and someone asks you to help carry their packages?”

“What if a teacher invites you to their home to play one-on-one basketball after a group study session?”

What are my personal boundaries?

Try this exercise to help your child learn to create and maintain personal boundaries that make them feel safe. This exercise is designed to empower kids to tell people that they are uncomfortable and want another person to leave their personal space immediately. Discuss what private parts are and where they are located. Lessons on personal boundaries should begin early in a child’s development and should cover belongings, emotions, and their body. Focus on asking permission and receiving consent. Tell your child that any time someone touches them in a way that they do not want to be touched, they have your permission to take some big steps back and say “NO,” and then go tell a *trusted adult* what happened. Explain that stepping back can give them room to think and move. Then have your child practice taking big steps away from a person and saying “NO” in a firm voice. Explain to the child that regardless of what the adult or teenager says—or what your child was doing or has done—you will believe and protect them.

Talk through the following scenarios. Ask them how they could use “NO” to create space for themselves in these situations.

“What if someone drives up, gets out of their car, and starts walking toward you to ask you for directions?”

“What if another kid your age continues to hug you even though you have asked them to stop?”

“What if you are spending the night or on a campout and someone touches your body while you are sleeping?”



How do I talk about touches and private parts?

Young people should be told that the parts of their body covered by their swimsuit are their private parts, and they have the right to say no to being touched there. Body parts should be called by their appropriate names to assist in developing a healthy and positive body image. Encourage your child to say no and then tell you if someone tries to touch or look at the child’s private parts, or wants your child to touch or look at their private parts.

It is important to remind children that if they get tricked into a scary or confusing touch or if they freeze and are unable to say no, it is OK and not their fault. Children should be encouraged to tell as soon as they feel comfortable doing so. Keep the lines of communication open by reminding them that they can talk to you about touches, even a long time after something happened.



Try this exercise to help your child resist someone who is trying to touch their private parts. Pose these scenarios, and then discuss the solutions.

“What if an older guy starts to wrestle with you, but then the wrestling turns into private part touching?”

“What if that same guy yells at you as you are leaving that you should keep what happened a secret?”

“What if you are at a party and you see some of your friends carrying someone who isn’t awake into a room?”

For more information, see “Hot Chocolate Talk” under “National Resources.”

Who are my trusted adults?

Young people should have at least five adults you have identified with whom they can talk freely about their feelings and problems and who provide healthy attention and affection. A child who has such a network of *trusted adults* will be more difficult for an adult who abuses children to groom. The list of five adults might change depending on the child’s circumstances. Prior to Scouting or other activities, parents should discuss with their child who they will turn to if someone is violating a rule or making them uncomfortable.

Try this exercise to help your child identify trusted adults. Explain that a trusted adult is someone the child knows well who is willing to listen and offer advice when needed. Create a list of five trusted adults with your child. Explain that if a situation occurs where a trusted adult is needed, your child needs to remember this list. And if one of the people on the list cannot help, or is the one causing the problem, your child should go to another person on the list. Remind them that they can also say “NO” if a trusted adult is making them feel uneasy or uncomfortable.

Ask your child these questions, making sure the options are understood. Ask who their trusted adult would be and how they could talk to them about what happened.

“What if something happens on a camping trip (or at a neighbor’s house, or at a friend’s house) that makes you feel afraid or confused?”

“What if someone is making you feel uneasy or uncomfortable, and the first person you tell can’t, doesn’t, or won’t help you?”

“What if one of your *trusted adults* is making you feel unsafe or uncomfortable?”

What if someone asks me to keep a secret?

Adults who abuse children often try to groom children by convincing them to keep secrets about activities that they would not want their parents to know about (drinking, smoking, pornography, etc.). A child wanting to keep those activities secret might also see any abuse as something to keep secret. Your child must feel like they can come to you and be heard about little concerns as well as big problems. Tell your child it is not OK for people to ask them to keep a secret from you or another caregiver. Give your child a simple, automatic solution. Let your child know that they can come to you about anything and that you will still love and support them.

Try this exercise to help your child understand the difference between *secrets* and *surprises*. Tell your child that a secret is something that is hidden from others. A surprise is something that we keep quiet about for a short period of time and then everyone finds out together, like what you bought someone for their birthday. Surprises are usually OK, but secrets can be harmful if they cover up something unsafe or scary. Say that if your child is not sure whether something is a secret or a surprise, they can always ask you or a trusted adult.



Ask your child what to do in the following situations. Ask them how they could determine whether this is a surprise or a secret.

“What if a counselor at an overnight camp starts leaving secret gifts for you on your pillow?”

“What if someone you know asks if they can email you a secret picture?”

For additional information, please see the BSA’s Cyber Chip tool and resources at www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/cyber-chip and the NetSmartz Scouting Portal at www.netsmartz.org/scouting/.

Putting It Together

Reviewing these five personal safety rules and allowing your child to design their own “What If” games can help make personal safety awareness less scary and more accessible for your child and the whole family. The most important points to make sure your child knows are as follows:

- Check with a parent first.
- Have a buddy with you at all times.
- Maintain your personal space.
- Avoid secrets.
- Know who your *trusted adults* are.

Consider having a “Family Safety Night” at the beginning and the end of every school year or new activity. Reviewing rules about bike helmets, fire escape plans, and calling 911 should lead into conversations about abuse, bullying, personal safety awareness, and online safety so that they can be treated like any other concern.

The BSA’s Youth Protection program is based on

- Parental involvement
- Chartered organizations