

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS

Parent Guide: Conversation Tips and Topics

TIPS

Have conversations beyond asking about their school day, homework, or their teachers. Ask open-ended questions like, “What was the best part of your day?” Begin talking about something they enjoy, like their friends, hobbies, or sports. When you show interest in things they enjoy, they will start to open up more about what might be weighing on them. Remember the goal is to have an open dialogue rather than a lecture. Talk with your child in a curious and conversational way rather than in an interview format.

TOPICS

How to Get Out of a Relationship and Signs of Abuse

Young people can sometimes be lured into trafficking by their boyfriend or girlfriend, and it may start with abuse. To be clear, abuse is different from trafficking, and not all abuse will lead to trafficking. Examples of abuse can include physical, sexual, or psychological violence, as well as stalking, and financial control. Children may not understand what healthy relationships look like and expect that abuse is “normal.” Leaving a relationship that is violent or controlling can be incredibly dangerous for the victim of abuse. To see more information about this topic in our Dating Violence Toolkit, scan the QR code on the back.

It’s Never Too Late to Ask for Help

Regardless of what has already happened, there is never a situation where your child can’t ask for help. Children sometimes avoid telling their parents things because they don’t want to get in trouble. Some parents implement a “no discipline when you ask for help” approach to encourage their children to come to them in their time of need.

The Importance of Listening to Your Gut

If something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t. When we give someone too many chances or ignore the voice in our head telling us that this isn’t safe, it can lead to bad outcomes. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is. Teach them that if someone offers to take modeling photos or says they’re a talent agent, trust their gut. It could be a reason for caution, not excitement.

What is Blackmailing?

Blackmailing is when someone makes threats to do something harmful to a person or someone they care about. For example, releasing intimate images of them to their family or to others if they don’t do what the blackmailer tells them to do. Explain to your child that if someone is trying to blackmail them, it is important they tell you or another trusted adult. Even if they feel there is no way out of the situation. Emphasize that adults can help them find ways to get the blackmailer to stop. Let your child know this is not something they need to deal with on their own.

How to Respond if You Suspect Trafficking

If you suspect your child is being trafficked or they tell you they are being trafficked, try not to panic. Your child needs to feel safe with you and if they think you can't handle this knowledge, they may withdraw from you and your help.

- 1. Remain calm.** Assure your child they did the right thing in telling you, and they are not to blame for the abuse.
- 2. Believe them.** They need to know that you are on their side. Let your child tell their story if they want to, but leave the questioning to the professionals.
- 3. Make sure you and your child are in a safe location away from the suspected trafficker.** If in immediate danger, call 911. Never confront the trafficker or the trafficker's family.
- 4. Do not make promises about what will happen to them or the trafficker.** Instead remind your child that you will be with them every step of the way.
- 5. Most importantly, report it to law enforcement and The Department of Family and Protective Services immediately.** You can also reach out to the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 (text: 233733) or browse their directory at [humantraffickinghotline.org](https://www.humantraffickinghotline.org) to find resources and help.
- 6. Seek additional support and resources as needed.** Examples include medical care, trauma-focused counseling, victim services, and housing.



Taken from the Human Trafficking and Dating Violence Toolkits

