

Tips for Parents When Talking with Young Adults

Tips for Parents

This information is designed to help you talk to your child in situations where there is a possibility that he or she might reveal information about abuse or exploitation.

It may be difficult to do but it's important to try to stay calm when you speak with your child. Your demeanor will communicate more than your words. Young adults can be traumatized by emotional, angry, or accusatory reactions.

Things to consider before talking with your child about sensitive subjects:

- Timing and atmosphere are very important. Choose a calm, unhurried, private time to talk with your child.
- Before entering into this type of conversation, be sure you're ready. Be calm, emotionally controlled and confident. You want to communicate to your child that you are open to discussing this topic and that you can handle whatever comes up.
- If this is difficult for you to talk about, practice first with a friend, your spouse or in a mirror.
- Understand that your child may not be ready to talk about this. That's ok. Let them know that you are there for them and they can come to you if they need to talk.
- Don't make the talk upsetting or anxious. As much as possible, discuss this in a calm manner in an open atmosphere. This also increases the chances that your child will seek your advice in the future.
- If your child shares difficult information, **STAY CALM!** Do not say, "Why didn't you tell me?" Do let the child continue to talk. Say that you are proud that he or she chose to discuss this with you. If you are at all agitated, it may be best to wait until you have a chance to contact a local resource provided to you by Ohio State University to continue the discussion. Tell your child, "I'm really proud that you've shared this with me, and I think we should continue this discussion when we can get some extra help from a counselor who has helped other young adults with these things. How does that sound?"



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How to begin:

1. Start the conversation by simply stating that you want to talk with them about something important.

“Can we talk for a second about something important?” or “Can we talk about a letter you may have received from the Child Care Program”

2. Identify the circumstances in question.

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3. Questions if you and your child wants to continue to talk.

“Tell me more, I’m listening.”

Your child may be uncomfortable so you’ll want to do what you can to put him or her at ease. Sitting close, using a calm voice tone, giving a hug or keeping your arm around him or her will help.

You can also say something like, “Honey, you know I love you very much and I’m concerned that you might be upset about something. Can you tell me what you’re thinking?”

If your child stops talking or gets upset, continue comforting him or her.

3. If your child does disclose that something happened:

“I’m really glad you told me about this. You did the right thing by telling me. I know you’re upset but you know Mom and Dad are here for you.” “Would you like to speak with a counselor?”

4. After the conversation:

Write down notes about the conversation while it is fresh in your mind. To report concerns or suspected abuse, contact your local police department.