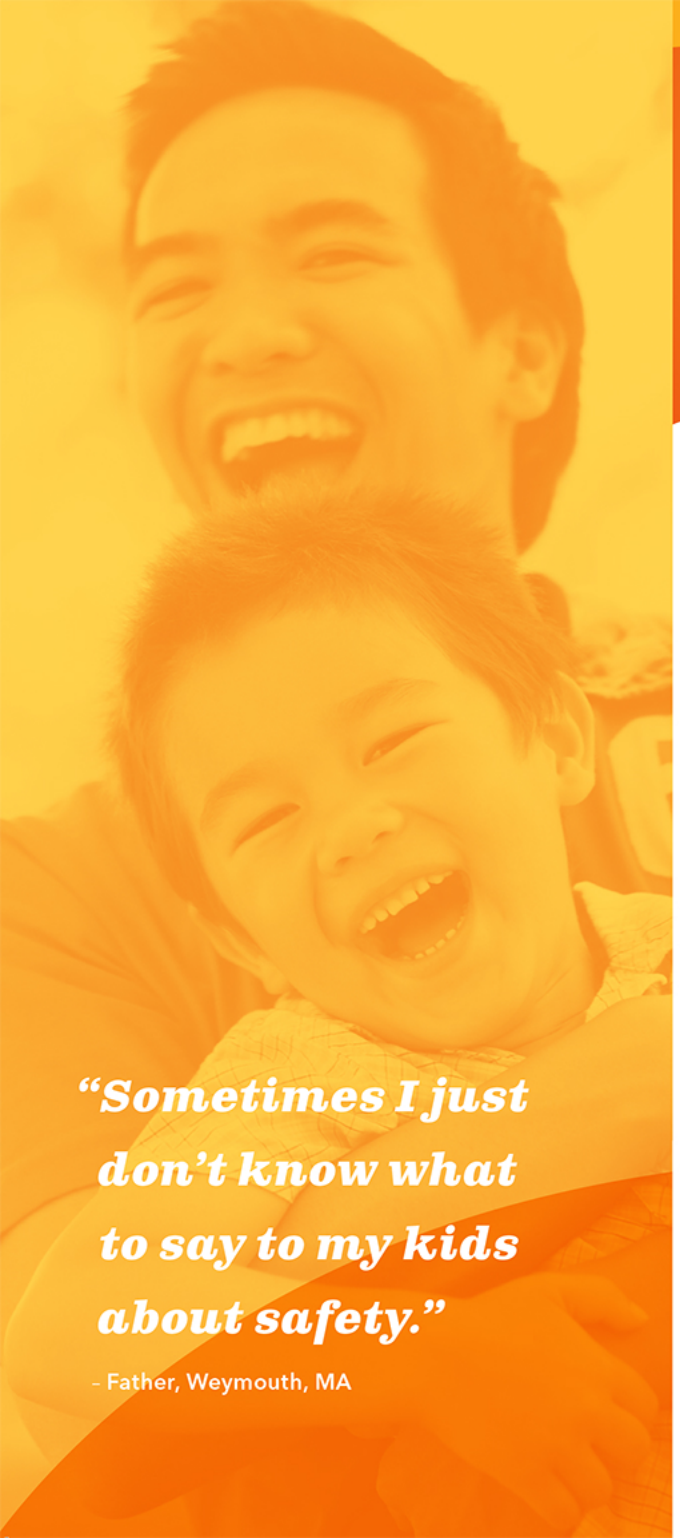

"Sometimes I just don't know what to say to my kids about safety."

- Father, Weymouth, MA

about the

children's Trust

The Children's Trust is on a mission to help stop child abuse in Massachusetts.

We partner with parents to help them build the skills and confidence they need to make sure kids have safe and healthy childhoods.

our programs

- Healthy Families Massachusetts
- Family Centers
- Parenting Education and Support Programs
- Child Sexual Abuse Prevention
- Family Support Training Center
- Fatherhood Initiative
- OneToughJob.org

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10 *ways*

to keep children safer

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10 ways to keep children safer

This brochure offers tips for parents and caregivers about basic personal safety skills for children. Educate your children as early as possible, just as you would teach them about traffic or water safety skills.

1 be calm and reassuring

Children should learn to be cautious, alert, and prepared - not fearful. They are less apprehensive when they have the skills, information, and confidence they need to act on their own behalf.

2 give permission to say "No" and tell

Explain that there are different kinds of secrets, "okay" secrets and "tell" secrets. Tell children that if they are asked to keep a special secret about touching, they should say "No, I'm going to tell." Tell them they have the right to say "No" even to someone who threatens them or to someone they know. (When children are hurt, it's usually by someone they know, not by a stranger.)

3 help children identify trusted adults

Talk openly about whom a child would go to in an emergency. Cite specific examples such as the person using a cash register at the mall, a mother with children, or a teacher.

4 set body boundaries

Teach children to guard themselves by setting body boundaries. Tell them that their private parts are the parts covered by a bathing suit. No one should touch their private parts. If someone does or makes them feel uncomfortable or confused, it's okay to say "No", and then they should tell a trusted adult.

5 teach children the buddy system

Children should learn that it is always safer to be with a friend or a trusted adult than alone.

6 teach children to check with others first

Teach children to check with trusted adults before changing plans or going anywhere - even with adults the child knows.

7 teach children telephone skills

Teach them your cell phone number and "911" for help.

8 role-play with children

Just as children don't learn to ride a bicycle by talking about it, they don't learn safety skills without practice. Children learn by doing. They need to role-play and see how it feels to say "No" in difficult situations.

- Play the "What If" game and help the child think of responses to various situations. Choose real-life situations such as confronting a stranger while walking to school, getting separated in a crowded store, or playing in the front yard. "What if the babysitter..." or "What if the school bus didn't arrive on time..."
- Have children practice what they should say and do if they feel threatened. For instance, children should learn to yell in a loud voice, "This person is trying to take me. I need help!"
- Have children practice staying an arm's length away from someone who approaches them.
- Have children practice ignoring strangers who ask for directions and walking away from them.

9 review and practice often

Children need to review safety skills often. Research shows that these skills need to be taught five to ten times a year. Review them during car rides and other moments together.

10 insist on a child assault prevention program at school

School programs, such as Talking About Touching, offered by the Children's Trust, provide children with structured opportunities to practice skills, as well as additional information for parents. Make sure your child's school offers one. For more information, contact the Children's Trust.

For more on keeping children safe and other parenting and child development information, visit **onetoughjob.org.**

Remember:

If someone tries to hurt your child, the child is never to blame.