

# How to Be a Safe Zone

Even excellent parents could have a child, of any age, tricked into becoming a victim of trafficking. But remember that the safer your children feel with you, the less vulnerable they will be to predators. Cultivate these six characteristics in your family so that your child will feel that you are always their “safe zone.”

- 1 Build a loving and nurturing home environment, making sure your child feels loved above all else. Respect your child, believe their words, and ensure you give them no cause to fear you. Because if they live in fear, they're going to be afraid to come to you.
- 2 Engage in good, healthy, open communication with your child and reinforce the fact that they can safely tell you anything.
- 3 Encourage your child not to keep secrets, and explain that secrets are not safe. You must prove to your child through example that if they tell you the truth you will not shame or punish them. Teach them the saying, “You are as sick as your secrets,” and that secrets lead to fear and shame.
- 4 Regularly educate your child about the reality and danger of predators and the importance of never going anywhere with or confiding in a stranger. Reinforce these ideas each year as children grow older and understand more. (Use the lists below.) As you teach them about potential dangers, help them clearly understand these terms: boundaries, respect, and consent.

**Boundaries** are limits. To set healthy boundaries means to set wise limits on behavior toward you that you will accept or tolerate.

**Respect** means having regard for the feelings and wishes and abilities of a person. Self-respect means having care and concern and regard for your own feelings and wishes and abilities.

**Consent** means voluntary participation or agreement or approval of an act or a willingness to take part.

- 5 Cultivate in yourself and your child an awareness of the people in your neighborhood and the larger environment surrounding you at all times.
- 6 Notice if your child seems nervous or upset or acting in any unusual ways and gently probe to find out why. Keep in mind that some things may be too difficult for them to articulate in words and so they might begin to act out. Stay calm as they communicate, even if your child is upset, so that they feel safe enough to express themselves.

Taken from *A Survivor's Secret: Once Trafficked, Now Free from Feelings of Worthlessness, Fear, and Shame*. by Gina Cavallo with Cindy Lambert. Copyright © 2023. Used by permission of Focus On the Family. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

