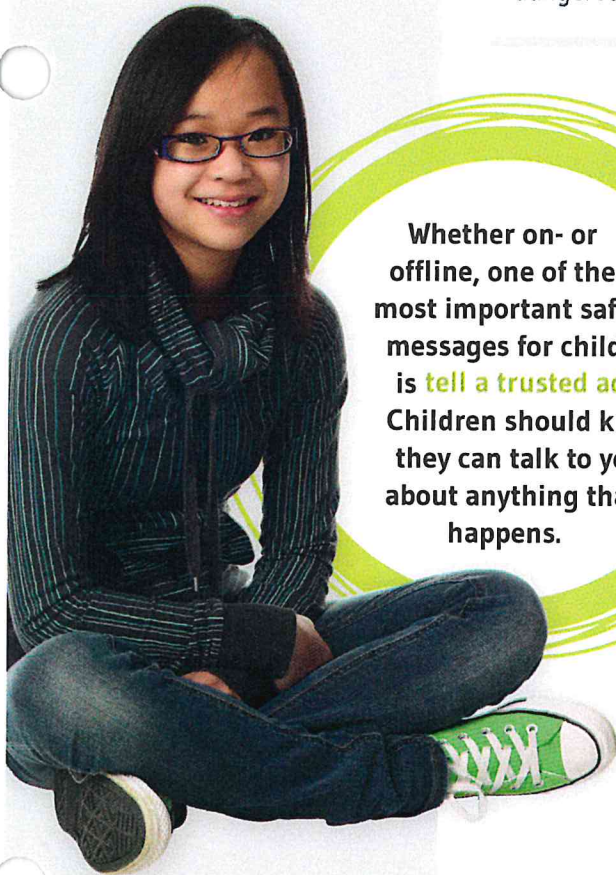# Discussion Guide

(Ages 9-12)

As children grow older, they need safety messages that will help them navigate the world with less adult supervision. This discussion guide offers age-appropriate messages about personal and online safety you can use to start a conversation.

What to Talk About

When discussing personal safety, empower children by helping them learn what to do if they find themselves in a threatening situation. Talk to children about:

- The methods would-be abductors may use like offering treats and money, asking for help, or offering to show an animal.

- Never accepting anything or going anywhere with anyone without your permission.

- Staying with a friend when going places and asking for permission before changing plans.

- Saying "no" to anyone who makes them feel scared, uncomfortable or confused — even grown-ups. No one has the right to touch them in private areas without their permission.

- How to tell if someone is trustworthy. A trustworthy friend or adult will not ask or pressure you into doing anything dangerous or inappropriate.

When discussing online safety, focus on helping children learn behaviors that minimize risks. Talk to children about:

- Respecting others online and not cyberbullying. Children should not join in if someone is being cyberbullied; they should report it instead.

- Not trusting everything they read or everyone they meet online. Teach children methods for verifying online information, like triple-checking websites' information.

- Not sharing personal or revealing information online. Information shared online can be permanent and far-reaching.

- Telling a trusted adult if anyone online makes them uncomfortable, asks for or shows them revealing photos, or asks to meet offline. Help your child make a report to **www.CyberTipline.com**.

Whether on- or offline, one of the most important safety messages for children is tell a trusted adult. Children should know they can talk to you about anything that happens.

How to Talk About It

Set boundaries. Be clear with children about your family's safety rules and the consequences of breaking them. Consider creating a family contract.

Role-play. Don't just talk about safety. Practice it! For example, pretend to be a friend asking your child to engage in a dangerous or inappropriate activity. Have your child practice saying "no."

Keep calm. Children make mistakes. If they break a safety rule, remind them why you set it and enforce the consequences. Discuss what they should do differently the next time.

Don't skip the hard stuff. It can be hard to talk about some safety issues, especially those involving sex. But keeping quiet about them may make it difficult for your child to talk to you if a problem arises.

Listen. Encourage your children to talk about their concerns and listen respectfully — even when you disagree.

Teachable Moments

The following stories demonstrate how you can incorporate the safety tips into real-life interactions with your children.

Not accepting gifts

Michelle and her 10-year-old son Kevin are at the bookstore. Kevin looks through some comic books while Michelle sits nearby. "This one's my favorite!" Kevin exclaims enthusiastically. A young man also perusing the comic books looks over. "That is a good one! I bought a copy, but I'm done with it. Would you like to have it?" Before Michelle can respond, Kevin says, "Yes! But I have to ask my mom if it's OK first." Kevin runs over to Michelle, who smiles to herself. Kevin has certainly learned his personal safety rules.

Privacy

Mike's 12-year-old daughter Leanne has joined a social networking site for children under 13. Once a week, Mike asks Leanne to show him her page. Leanne's posts are fine, but some of her friends' comments and images are inappropriate. Mike and Leanne look over her friends' posts, discussing which posts may be a bad idea. Mike tells his daughter, "You never know who may see what you post online. You should try to post comments and images that will leave a good impression on anyone who may see them."

You don't have to wait for a real-life situation to arise before discussing safety with your children. Start talking to them about it right now by creating your own teachable moments.

Get Started

While walking to school, ask your child

"What would you do if someone drove up next to you and offered you a ride?" (*Say no and run in the opposite direction.*) Point out places your child can go for safety.

While eating dinner, ask your child

"Do you feel comfortable with all of your teachers, coaches and neighbors? Which ones are you favorites?" Listen to your child's concerns about adult authority figures without dismissing them.

The next time your child uses the Internet to research a school assignment, ask

"How can you tell if a website's information is correct?" (*Check to see if the website has a reputable domain name such as .edu or .gov. Make sure the information is current and on more than one website.*)

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