



“Defend Young Minds” Brain & Body Safety Tips

Teach kids how to minimize their risks of pornography exposure and sexual abuse in tricky situations like sleepovers and time spent with babysitters, coaches, teachers and friends’ parents. Equip them with solutions to protect themselves.

Over [90% of child sex abuse cases](#) are perpetrated by people that kids and parents already know. In these **tricky situations**, predators groom and manipulate kids, using tactics that are difficult for young minds to discern as dangerous. Additionally, electronic devices are an open portal to porn that can be easily accessed and shared when kids are in the care of others.

Sleepovers

Sleepovers can be exciting, but they can also pose many risks. To minimize the dangers:

1. **Consider *late-overs*** instead of sleepovers, whereby your child stays over late at a friend's house but comes home when it's time to sleep. This minimizes the opportunity for abuse and bad decision-making, like sneaking out for middle-of-the-night shenanigans. Let's face it, it also means your child will be more rested and less cranky the next day!
2. **Teach body safety.** Talk to your child about [body safety rules](#), emphasizing their ability to say "no" and the importance of telling a trusted adult if something feels uncomfortable.
3. **Know the host and their family.** Prioritize sleepovers with families you trust and have built a relationship with over time. Make sure that both families have the same shared values. It's important to have a discussion with the other family about rules for phones, TVs, and other tech, sleeping arrangements, and a [no closed-door policy](#).

One mom shared a story of attending a slumber party at a new friend's house when she was in middle school. The girls stayed in the basement with the door closed. A horror movie was shown and one of the girls stripped down to her panties and performed a provocative dance on the pool table. The host parents never checked in on the girls. She did not know the family well enough to feel comfortable asking to use the phone to call home. She felt trapped. She is now a mom and still vividly remembers shocking scenes from the movie that she didn't want to watch and the sexualized nudity of the girl who stripped. In this case, since the host family was not known very well and they did not share the same rules and values, it would have been best to skip that sleepover.

Parties

Large gatherings can be fun...but also provide opportunities for kids to be exploited in crowded or chaotic environments. Here's how you can safeguard your child during parties:

Stay vigilant. Keep an eye on your child and their interactions with others, especially if they seem uncomfortable or withdrawn.

Teach assertiveness. Encourage your child to assert their personal boundaries and say "no" if someone violates their body safety rules or shows them pornography. [Role-play beforehand](#). **Establish a code word.** Develop a secret code word with your child that they can use to indicate they need help or feel unsafe. Your child can then use this word in front of other guests to discreetly alert you of their needs.

Overnight camps and school trips

Overnight camps involving can be enriching experiences for kids to explore their interests and gain some independence. Here's how to minimize risk to your kids while they're at camps:

Ask about the organization's rules for contact between adults and kids. A good rule that many organizations employ is no one-on-one contact between adults and kids, also known as two-deep leadership. This rule eliminates situations where a child is alone with an adult. If the camp does not have these types of rules in place, consider choosing another camp.

Find out policies for youth contact with other youth. More than a third of sexual abuse committed against children is child-on-child. Ask about shower, swimming, and bathroom policies as well as how many youths will share a room/tent.

Go as a chaperone. This way you can keep an eye on things and be available if your child needs you.

Inquire about policies for personal electronic devices. Will campers be required to turn in devices at night? Will they be allowed to have them at all? Turning devices in at night minimizes the risk of accessing porn. Be sure that you have a way to check in on your camper if devices disallowed.

Tricky people

Vet key people beforehand. Before entrusting your child to someone, check out their background and references thoroughly. Ask other parents what experiences they've had with these individuals. Even a quick Google search or a scan of their social media pages can yield surprising information.

One parent discovered through a quick Google search that the athletic director at her child's school had been indicted for felony crimes in another state. This coach was in a position of trust with kids and the results of this Google search were quickly shared with the school administration who took action. This example demonstrates that sometimes small actions can uncover big secrets.

Maintain open lines of communication. Regularly check in with your child about their interactions with these trusted people, encouraging them to share any concerns or uncomfortable experiences. Your child may not come to you right away if someone has violated their body safety rules, so it is helpful to do a *body safety check-in* during a quiet time when your kid will feel comfortable talking to you.

Encourage personal boundaries: Teach your child about appropriate touch and the importance of others respecting their personal space. In addition to the body safety rules of not touching private parts, teach kids that they don't have to be touched **anywhere** that they don't feel comfortable. A child may feel uncomfortable when someone lovingly places a hand on their shoulder or gives them a hug. Role-play how they can vocalize this when it happens. For example, a child could say, "I know a lot of people like friendly touches, but it makes me feel uncomfortable. A fist bump is ok though!"

Body Safety Toolkit

One way to create an effective body safety plan is to teach your kids to recognize the **3 Red Flags** of dangerous people and their tricky tactics. Download our popular guide [How to Protect Kids from Sexual Abuse: Body Safety Toolkit](#) and for only \$4.97 you get a step-by-step lesson that empowers kids to assert their boundaries.

Kids can increase their safety when they're empowered with wisdom and knowledge. You can do this!