



## Why Is It Important to Teach Body Safety to Children?

It is natural for us to want to protect the children in our care and to keep them 'safe' at all times. While we can control their environment to some extent, we can't be with them every minute of every day. At some stage in their young lives, they will have to go out into the world without us. The world is not always a pleasant place, and sadly, in the interests of our children, we must face up to the following facts:

1. The sexual abuse of children has no social boundaries. Offenders come from all racial, ethnic, religious, economic, and educational backgrounds. Similarly, children from any of these groups can be and are targeted.
2. 90% of children who are sexually abused will know their offender. The abuser will most often be someone the child knows, loves, and/or trusts. (Darkness 2 Light, 2015)
3. Perpetrators manipulate both the child and the family, and they prey upon both in order to achieve their goal of sexually abusing the child.
4. Juveniles are the offenders in 43% of assaults on children under the age of 6. (Darkness 2 Light, 2015)
5. We are seeing more and more cases of child-on-child sexual abuse and older children/siblings sexually abusing younger children.
6. The most vulnerable age for children to be exposed to sexual abuse is between 3 & 8 years, with the majority of onset happening between those same ages. (Browne & Lynch, 1994)

The consequences of childhood sexual abuse are devastating both to survivor and their families. A survivor, more often than not, has ongoing health issues such as anxiety, security, confidence, and relationship issues.

It has also been documented that survivors of childhood sexual abuse are more than twice as likely to repeat a suicide attempt (Darkness 2 Light, 2015). The effects of childhood sexual abuse can be intergenerational. Children of survivors may live with a parent who has ongoing mental and physical health issues that, in turn, can affect their own well-being and that of their children.

We cannot let our adult fear of this topic put our children at risk. We have a duty of care to teach children their rights in regards to their body. So many survivors of childhood sexual abuse say - if only they had known 'it' was wrong. And this is where body safety education comes in. An educated child will know, from that first inappropriate touch, that it is wrong, and they will know to tell and keep on telling until they are believed. (Sanders, Janeen, Body Safety Education, 2015)





## Why Teach Body Safety?

Child sexual abuse statistics are alarming. Approximately 1 in 10 children will experience sexual abuse before their 18th birthday. What is equally alarming is that in approximately 90% of child sexual abuse cases, the child will know their offender. The abuser will most likely be a close family member, a family friend, or someone the child comes into contact with regularly. The offender is rarely a stranger. (Darkness 2 Light, 2015)

**\*In a class of 30, approximately 3 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.\***

Child sexual abusers are in our communities, and they are in our homes. They can be anyone. We need to empower the children in our care through body safety education. The effects and the incidences of childhood sexual abuse can be greatly reduced through preventative education and community awareness.

## What is Body Safety Education?

Body safety education aims to empower children with skills and knowledge that will lessen the likelihood of them becoming victims of childhood sexual abuse. Body safety education teaches children:

Proper Body  
Terminology

Safe v. Unsafe  
Touch

Secrets v.  
Surprises

How to Tell a  
Safe Adult

General  
Assertiveness

(Sanders, Janeen, Body Safety Education, 2015)

