

# SAFE TO COMPETE:

## Protecting Child Athletes From Sexual Abuse

### DISCUSSION GUIDE: AGES 5-10

It's never too early to start the conversation about personal safety with your child.

#### What to Talk About

##### TRUSTED ADULTS:

Trusted adults are people a child can count on to make them feel safe, listen, and help.

**Tell Them**

"If anything ever makes you feel sad, scared, confused, or uncomfortable, you can tell a trusted adult and they'll help make things right! But not everyone is a trusted adult. If an adult says or does something to make you sad, scared, confused, or uncomfortable, you should tell another trusted adult about what happened."

##### CHECKING FIRST:

Kids are often trusting of offers from adults, but it's important that they check first with parents or guardians before accepting anything from or going anywhere with someone— even coaches or teammates' parents.

**Tell Them**

"It's important that I know where you are and who you are with. Check first with me before going anywhere, helping anyone, or accepting anything."

##### IT'S OK TO SAY "NO!":

Children may not feel comfortable objecting to an adult who makes them feel sad, scared, confused, or uncomfortable, especially if they are made to feel that way by someone they know and may have trusted, like a coach or teammate.

**Tell Them**

"It's OK to say 'No!' to anyone, even an adult, who makes you feel sad, scared, confused, or uncomfortable. If someone touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable you can say 'no' and 'stop'. If that ever happens tell me or another trusted adult about what happened."

#### How to Talk About it

##### TACKLE THE TOUGH STUFF:

The idea of discussing personal safety with younger children can be hard, especially safety issues involving sexuality. Children in various sports often find themselves being positioned, caught, assisted, "spotted", or otherwise in appropriate physical contact with coaches. By having open conversations with children about their bodies and the types of appropriate touch, you empower children with the knowledge they need in order to recognize any inappropriate physicality from adults.

**Tell Them**

"There are parts of your body that your bathing suit covers that are private. If anyone touches you there or anywhere else that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell them to stop and tell me or another trusted adult."

##### IT'S ALL IN THE APPROACH:

Kids are more likely to be open and honest with adults when they know they can count on them to listen attentively and react calmly. When discussing personal safety, it's important not to overwhelm or scare younger children. Try to keep the tone of discussion calm and conversational. If a child ever discloses an incident of abuse, do your best to respond in a measured and calm manner.

**Tell Them**

"Telling me was the right thing to do. We'll make sure this doesn't happen again."

**Take Action**

Contact local law enforcement immediately. Call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® at 1-800-THE-LOST for additional assistance.