

# Body Safety for Young Children

*Empowering Caring Adults*



**KIMBERLY KING, MS ED**

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*Empowering Caring Adults*

by Kimberly King, MS Ed

  
**Gryphon House**  
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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to my mom, Maryhelen Burk. An incredible mother, nurse, teacher, and passionate volunteer, you were a guiding light to us all. May you rest in heavenly peace and see all of your children and grandchildren continue your tradition of helping and serving others to make this world a better place.

## Preface

I am delighted to introduce *Body Safety for Young Children: Empowering Caring Adults*, a vital guidebook for all those who care for children. As the founder of the Alexandra Gucci Children's Foundation, I believe that every child deserves to grow up feeling safe and secure, and this book provides a roadmap for how we can make that a reality.

As parents, caregivers, educators, and community members, we all have a responsibility to protect our children from harm and dangerous situations. Unfortunately, the world can be a dangerous place, and it's often difficult to know how to keep our little ones safe without instilling fear or anxiety in them. That's where this book comes in.

*Body Safety for Young Children* is a comprehensive guide to preventing abuse and empowering children to speak up if they ever feel uncomfortable or threatened. It features practical tips and exercises that adults can use to help teach these important lessons. It's an essential resource, not only for parents and guardians, but also for teachers, coaches, health-care professionals, and anyone else who works with children.

By taking an active role in promoting body safety, we can create a safer world for our children and ensure that they grow up healthy, happy, and free from harm. I am proud to support this important work and encourage everyone who cares about children's well-being to read this book and put its teachings into practice. Together, we can make a difference and create a world where all children can be safe and protected.

Warmly,

Alexandra Gucci Zarini  
Alexandra Gucci Children's Foundation  
<https://www.alexandragucci.org/>





## Introduction

# My Mess Is My Message

Truth: I'm an introvert who dislikes talking about herself. I'd rather listen to you talk about your battles with your toddler or commiserate with you about how the children in your classroom lose everything. I love to dig into significant issues and provide support. And only recently have I been comfortable enough to share my story more substantially.

When I talk with an adult about sexual-abuse prevention, fear often brushes across their face, and they want to exit stage right, find the door, or run. Sometimes, I forget that talking about protecting children from sexual predators is easy for me because I have been doing this work for eighteen years. But it is not easy for many parents, guardians, and teachers. They need a slow approach to the conversation on body safety. They need to dip their toe into the ocean. Many cannot just dive in; the waves are too big, and the water is murky.

Often, people fear diving into this topic because they are scared of what they might uncover. I want you to know that I was scared too! But, together, we will move past fear and empower our home and school families with support, knowledge, skills, and strategies that help prevent abuse.



Listen: At the end of the day, we are all doing our best. We also must learn as much as possible about sexual-abuse prevention to protect our children from harm. *Body Safety for Young Children* is a resource for caring adults who want to work together to protect children at a calm—not scary—pace. I will have to push out of my comfort zone to get this message to you in an authentic way. So, here we go. Deep breath.

My name is Kimberly King, and I am a survivor of sexual assault, a mom of three amazing kids, a sexual-abuse prevention advocate and certified Darkness to Light facilitator, a body-safety educator, and a kindergarten teacher. I'm also a certified K–6 teacher and have taught in schools worldwide, from Mississippi to Sicily. Talk about culture shock! *Mamma mia!*

I firmly believe the saying “Make your mess your message!” inspirational words from newscaster Robin Roberts’s mother when Robin was trying to navigate her breast cancer diagnosis. Robin Roberts found motivation and clarity in her mother’s words and decided to share her story with the intention to help others. With a great deal of guidance and support from my mindset coach, Jen Gottlieb, I have come to a place of certainty and understanding that *not* sharing my story with the world to help others would be a disservice. I had to get in that mindset to write this book. Thank you, Robin and Jen.

For you to understand my story, where I’m coming from, and how I can help you learn how to prevent sexual abuse and protect children, I need to share some personal things. We are going to have to get vulnerable here. I will not sugarcoat this issue because I know that will not serve you. This conversation requires us both to be authentic and vulnerable with the information. But before I start talking too much, I want to make sure you know what I am not: I am neither a doctor nor a therapist.

We all have to put down our fear and uncomfortable feelings on this subject. Understand that *not* talking about body safety and sexual-abuse prevention is what abusers want. They want us to be quiet. They want us to be uninformed and ignorant. They want us to keep secrets. We have to talk so that my mess doesn’t become yours too. I believe that talking about sexual abuse is the key to preventing it. I have received thousands of emails and messages from families who have read my book and taken my online body-safety classes. I know this information saves lives.

The research is disturbing. Child sexual abuse is likely the most prevalent health problem children face with the most serious array of consequences (Townsend, 2013).

As parents and educators, we are in a unique and empowering position to prevent child sexual abuse and raise a generation of children free from childhood trauma and the physical and mental challenges that are consequences of abuse. The statistics and sheer magnitude of this problem are why I do what I do. I started off on this mission to prevent child sexual abuse with a goal of helping at least one child. I thought that my story was worth sharing if it could help one person. Let me tell you a few of the details so you can understand my motivation and why the work we will do in this space is so critical to child safety.

Some pages in this book may bring up memories or create distress. I encourage you to put the book down at any time. If you are triggered in any way, please know that you can step away, breathe, move, or phone a friend or therapist. Come back to this book tomorrow, next week, or when you are ready.

I hope you will engage with this book, with your thoughts and emotions, and with your family. So let's get to it!

## **My Back Story**

I am the oldest of five children and grew up in a well-to-do family. We lived in a “good neighborhood,” and the topic of sex and sexual-abuse prevention never came up. I had two loving and responsible parents. But back in the '70s, nobody even thought to talk about prevention. It wasn't on the radar. My parents thought we were safe and they did the best they could with what they knew at the time. They may have believed in a few common myths such as “That type of thing doesn't happen in this neighborhood or with our family.”

Sexual-abuse prevention might have been a handy conversation to have had in more detail—especially after our babysitter tried to play show-and-tell with her bra and show my sister and me her boobies! We told our mom, and she made immediate adjustments to keep us safe.

I stumbled through high school having learned zero about sexual development and sex education, making many mistakes along the way. I left for college completely uneducated and unaware of how my body worked or about all things related to sex education.

If you are one of those people who didn't know the anatomically correct terms for your body or how everything functions until you were well into adulthood, I am your people. Didn't know what a clitoris was until you were twenty? I see you! I was utterly ill-equipped for the options and possibilities that would present themselves during my young adulthood.

My lack of knowledge left me extremely vulnerable. I would argue that sending your children to college or to live on their own without extensive sexual education and knowledge about sexual-abuse prevention is dangerous. For example, I had no idea someone might slip drugs into beer to knock a person out and have sex with them. Of course, that's not what this action is called. It's called rape. It took a long time for me to change that wording. Words matter and help you own your story. I hold that language now and acknowledge that it is part of my story.

When I called my mother to tell her that I had been a victim of sexual assault during my first week at the University of Maine, she told me I shouldn't tell anyone. She told me that no one would believe me. She told me that it would "ruin my reputation." I believed her! And she told me that I should just come home from school and try again next year. The feedback and opinions from my parents were upsetting. I carried that shame and guilt for thirty years. They didn't know any better.

But I didn't want to quit school. So, what does any intelligent girl who wants to get away from boys but also wants to stay at school in a circle of safety do? I joined a sorority. If you're unfamiliar with the process of "rushing" a sorority, it's a tradition in which women who are interested in sorority life attend social gatherings and events that allow prospective and current sorority members to get to know each other. The invitation that was slipped under my door that October was my golden ticket to safety! I left my dorm and moved into a sorority house called Pi Beta Phi. Suddenly, surrounded by a group of amazing women, I felt safe.

The icing on the cake was meeting our housemother—the person who manages the daily responsibilities of caring for a house and thirty young women and makes sure everyone is doing well. It took a lot to run a sorority house, and Sandy supervised it all. We all had jobs, and most of them were not glamorous. We cleaned our own bathrooms, washed the pots and pans, and raked leaves. Not only was Dr. Sandra Caron a wonderful housemother, she is one of the country's most distinguished professors of human development.

To this day, Dr. Caron is a role model, advocate, writer, educator, change-maker, mentor, and authority on all things sex education and sex development. I learned about human



**Author (l) and Dr. Sandra Caron (r)**

sexuality in her class. And, in a perfect full-circle moment, I have the honor of speaking at the University of Maine with her students every year to talk about body safety and empowering adults.

I'll never forget the first day of class! Dr. Caron walked in and said hello. Then, she began: "Let's talk about some slang words we use for our genitals. Boy parts first."

Two hundred college students stared at her or studied their shoes. Not. A. Sound.

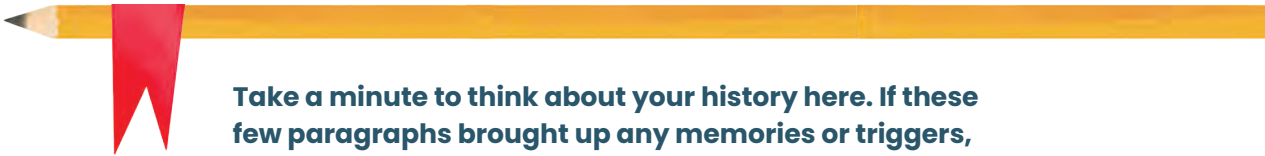
She persisted: "Come on! I know we have at least a few to laugh at." Then, the slang words started flowing: *Johnson, Willy, Big Jim, noodle, weiner*—you get the gist! We continued with the terms for girl parts: *woo, cookie, China, 'gina, honey pie*. The entire class was cracking up as she wrote about fifty terms on the chalkboard.

The point of the lesson was that we all needed to learn the correct terms because they are parts of the body. Dr. Caron explained that using slang or the wrong words can confuse other people. In the case of reporting a sexual assault, a person—especially

a child—may report abuse to an adult, but that adult might not know their word for the body part that hurts or was touched or shown.

She assigned a term paper on the topic “What I Know about Sex and How I Learned It.” I served as her teaching assistant that semester, and I learned a lot about sex by reading those term papers! Some stories were hysterically funny. Most of the students did not learn about sex from their parents. Many said they learned things from friends, older siblings or relatives, and magazines. (This was before the internet.)

The fun, learning, and curiosity I found as a teaching assistant pushed my trauma aside. But, that trauma crept up in waves. I had to do a deep dive to hide my mess. I did not want to think about what had happened that first week of school. I couldn’t function with those thoughts. I blamed myself for drinking. I blamed myself for what happened. (Sound familiar?) I pushed all that trauma into a box, put it on a shelf, and tried to forget. About a quarter of the papers mentioned sexual abuse. Even though I learned through these college papers that I was not alone in my thoughts and feelings, it didn’t help. I immersed myself in research, education, and volunteer work, and I started to heal by helping others. We each process trauma differently.



**Take a minute to think about your history here. If these few paragraphs brought up any memories or triggers, write them down.**

Gradually, the memories faded, and my engagement in helping women became my focus. For many years, I didn’t even think about my assault until I had children. Specifically, my third child’s birth was highly traumatic.

At the time, I was a Navy wife, and my husband was deployed. Soon after the birth, I needed to return to the hospital because my baby suffered complications from jaundice. I had to leave my two older children, ages six and four, with a neighbor friend and their family. At the hospital, I kept having a feeling that something was wrong. Have you ever experienced that knowing feeling? Do you just know in your gut, your heart, or wherever you feel anxious that something is wrong in your universe? Did you talk yourself out of it? Yes, I did that too! I was exhausted. I was running on fumes. I was

happy to sleep in a recliner and have nurses bring me saltines and ginger ale. I talked myself right out of a whole bunch of feelings and decided that I was being paranoid. I convinced myself that my other two kids were okay and that I needed to sleep.

But it wasn't easy to sleep in the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit). My brand-new baby was sleeping soundly under a blue bilirubin light—the type used to treat newborn jaundice—but the hospital was too noisy for mom sleep. I got a cup of coffee and headed home to pick up my older kids. Exhausted, I drove to my friend's house, parked the car, and got out. As I started walking up the driveway, my son flew out of the front door like a rocket and ran toward me. He was upset. He jumped up into my arms, and I dropped my coffee. He hugged me and said, "Mom! I had a red flag."

My heart sank. Before the sleepover, I had taught my kids essential sexual-abuse prevention basics. I had told them that if anybody tried to look at, touch, tickle, or play with their private parts that it was a "red flag." (A red flag is a visual representation of the child's feelings of discomfort or fear. We talk more about this in chapter 2.) A red flag meant that this was an unsafe touch, and they should tell me immediately so that I could help them and keep them safe. We had talked about body parts, we had talked about body rules, and we had talked about telling.

As a young mom, I had no idea that an older child could do this to a younger child. I had pushed memories of our childhood babysitter and my distant thirteen-year-old cousin down deep. They had both been children abusing younger children. Instead, I had focused all my prevention strategies with my children on the strangers and the creepy guy in the white van. But this event shifted my thinking. My son's event caused this mom to go on a mission to prevent sexual abuse for all children. I started researching and looking for answers to help my child cope with the unsafe body boundary touch he had experienced during his sleepover.

I took my son to the doctor. He was no help.

I took my son to a therapist. He was no help. (My son's worries must have been boring because this guy fell asleep during our session. We slipped out the door and never went back.)

There were no books at the time that helped children and parents learn where the real risks were. I started to dig into the research and learned the facts and the resources. As it turns out, the chances that a stranger in a white van will sexually abuse a child are extremely low. I learned that most children are abused by people they already know,

including friends and relatives. My son and I started journal writing and talking about body safety and sexual-abuse prevention. Our thoughts and conversations in our journal entries became the basis of the book *I Said NO! A Kid-to-Kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private*. I became a Darkness to Light facilitator and prevention specialist.

That's the pretty, prepackaged, press-release story I told the world.

But the truth is that I was still scared to talk about it. My son's experience triggered an emotional avalanche for me. It triggered memories from my childhood, of the sexual assault in college, and of how my issues at school were handled. I spent a lot of time crying in the shower (which is an excellent place for a kid-free mini breakdown).

**“A powerful way to shift the shame from the past is to speak your truth in the present.”**

— Gabrielle Bernstein,  
*Happy Days*

I was a mess. A big, giant, hot dumpster fire of a mess.

I had to seek therapy at this point because I couldn't handle it any longer by myself. I was alone, a military wife with three kids (one of whom was a new baby), a deployed husband, and a family eight hours away. My trauma could not stay up on that shelf a moment longer. So I sought care and help from my doctor and a therapist. I joined a support group. I started going to hot yoga. I told my sisters my story. And I started talking about my mess, which has now become my message.

My intention for sharing all of this information in this book is to try to prevent you from having your own mess. If you already have your own mess and there is some sexual abuse in your past, I hope this book will inspire and assist you in helping your children learn how to avoid situations and seek help when needed.

## What This Book Is

This book is a primer or guide to help adults empower and protect the children they love and care for. The intention here is to bring awareness, research, statistics, and authentic communication around the topic of body safety and prevention, with a collaborative twist. I want this book to make the topic of body safety as easy to talk about as discussing bike helmets or buckling up.

This book can help adults learn how to identify a “red flag” in a risky situation or a behavior. The material is organized in a logical way that helps present the information in a commonsense flow. We start by reviewing some basic statistics and facts. Then, we move into identifying grooming behaviors and developing body-safety strategies and skills that minimize the risks and empower families. This book helps adults drop the fear over this tough topic and protect children. Every child deserves a safe, healthy childhood free from trauma.

This book is not:

- full of fluff or fake in any way.
- for survivors who are looking to heal from past trauma.
- intended to give any medical, therapeutic, or legal advice.

I am an expert of my own story. I am a survivor. And I am sharing my knowledge and experience.

I know that parents, guardians, and teachers are essential partners in this prevention mission. I want caring adults to be on the same page so they can be effective and can reinforce skills and strategies together. Children spend 90 percent of their time with their moms, dads, other adult family members, and teachers. We are the most important people in children’s lives. We have to learn how to protect children. This book is an easy-to-use reference and guide for both home and school.

We all have something in common and something to share. I have been where you are in some way.

I’m the oldest of my siblings.

I’m a parent.

I’m a teacher.

I’m a daughter.

I love my three children with all of my heart.

I’m divorced.



I'm a fierce advocate for all children, especially those who have passed through my kindergarten classroom doors.

I'm a survivor!

Many of my friends are survivors!

I've been a champion for children all around the world.

I'm an introvert, a mama bear, and a fan of coffee and wine.

I'm a giver and a helper.

I want you to learn how to effectively protect children from sexual abuse for a lifetime. I am writing this book for you. This book is the most important one I can write and you can read to further this goal. I am honored to serve you as a parent coach, a mom friend, a body-safety expert, a teacher, a facilitator, or whatever you want to call me. I look forward to sharing lessons learned and personal stories, and I encourage you to share yours with others. Because when we talk about sexual abuse, we help to prevent it. Parents, guardians, and teachers are our children's best advocates. So, let's move forward and work to prevent sexual abuse.



## Chapter 1

# It's Not the "Man in the White Van"

I was so paranoid as a new mom, which was probably residual trauma from my childhood showing up as hypervigilance. (Thank you, Gabby B.) I was worried about everything. I had seen one too many *CSI* episodes, and I was sure that my daughter would be kidnapped out of her bedroom window by a man in a white van. You know, that middle-aged creepy white guy with the puppy and candy. I had the whole house safety proofed before my daughter was born.

We bring our memories and trauma surrounding the topic of safety with us as women, as young parents or guardians, and as teachers. Because of my history, I became extra safety cautious. I became known as a "safety freak" by my husband and eventually by my children. I took this as a term of endearment, but it was actually a way for some to poke fun at me through the years.

One of the biggest misconceptions many adults have, myself included, is the idea of the man in the van. We fear strangers and tend to teach children not to talk to them. But the man in the white van, the stranger, is not typically the person who poses the most significant risk to a child. There are exceptions, of course, such as the case of Elizabeth Smart. Elizabeth actually was kidnapped by a "man with a van," who climbed up a

ladder, opened her window, forced her out, kidnapped her, and sexually abused her for months. But the family did know of him. He was not a total stranger. He had done work on the house weeks before.

Most child sexual abuse comes from the people we know and trust (Finkelhor and Shattuck, 2012). These are the people in our circles: close family, more distant relatives, babysitters, coaches, teachers, and religious leaders. Wherever there are children, abusers go. Abusers are also online, and the COVID-19 pandemic created a situation where predators are very aware of where our children are—and how much information they share. We'll talk about grooming more in chapter 2.

To be super clear, let's add an excellent definition of child sexual abuse. Clarity prevents confusion. As I mentioned in the introduction, I am a Darkness to Light–certified Stewards of Children facilitator (<https://www.d2l.org>). We use the following definition to explain child sexual abuse in our workshops and trainings:

Child sexual abuse includes any sexual act between an adult and a minor, or between two minors, when one exerts power over the other, such as forcing, coercing, or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act including non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet (Townsend, 2013).

The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN, 2023) gets a little more specific by including more examples of behaviors:

- Exposing oneself to a child
- Masturbation in the presence of a minor
- Forcing the minor to masturbate
- Obscene conversations, phone calls, text messages, or digital interaction
- Producing, owning, or sharing pornographic images or movies of children
- Sex of any kind with a minor, including vaginal, oral, or anal
- Sex trafficking
- Any other contact of a sexual nature that involves a minor

Before we continue, I want to dispel common myths so we can all be on the same page.

## **Fourteen Fabulously False** **Misconceptions about Child Sexual Abuse**

- 1. It's the man in the white van.** Ninety percent of child sexual abuse happens within the inner circle of trust, including family members and the people we already know (Finkelhor and Shattuck, 2012). While it is essential to teach children that the safest practice is to only talk to strangers when they are with a trusted adult, stranger danger is often overemphasized.
- 2. Only girls are at risk for sexual abuse.** One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before age eighteen (Townsend, Rheingold, and Haviland, 2016).
- 3. Children will tell when they are abused.** Only 26 percent of survivors of child sexual abuse disclose their abuse to adults, and 12 percent disclose to the authorities (Bottoms, Rudnick, and Epstein, 2007; Lahtinen et al., 2018). A shocking fact is that the majority of children never tell anybody. There is overwhelming evidence that most child victims delay disclosing or never disclose sexual abuse to friends, family, or the authorities (Bottoms, Rudnick, and Epstein, 2007).
- 4. All teachers are safe adults.** In the past, I have taught my students and families that teachers are safe adults. But that is only true in some cases. Predators are attracted to teaching because it is a position, time, and opportunity with children.
- 5. Children can't sexually abuse other children.** That's a super-false myth. Sadly, 40 percent of sexual abuse comes from child-to-child abuse. Older, more powerful children can prey on younger or smaller children (Finkelhor and Shattuck, 2012). This type of abuse goes under the radar all the time. A more recent study puts the percentages much higher at about 70 percent (Gewirtz-Meydan and Finkelhor, 2020).
- 6. Siblings don't abuse each other sexually.** That is a myth. Child-to-child sexual abuse in the family between siblings is a taboo topic that nobody talks about, and it is thought to be the most common form of intrafamily abuse, perhaps up to three times as common as sexual abuse of a child by a parent (Krienert and Walsh,

2011). According to Jane Epstein, a survivor of sibling sexual abuse, activist, and cofounder of 5 Waves (<https://www.5waves.org>), “Sibling sexual abuse is still the most taboo topic to talk about and is rarely reported.”

- 7. It's too late to teach sexual-abuse prevention.** It is never too late to teach children about body safety. You can start when they're two, or you can start when they're seventeen. Ideally, it is better to start early, but what is important is that you start.
  
- 8. Teaching children about body safety with books is all I need to do.** I'm going to read a few books to them, and I'm done. They'll be able to fight off a predator and take care of themselves. That is entirely false. A small part of sexual-abuse prevention is reading books. But, that is not enough. A comprehensive strategy and family safety plan, which we will discuss later in the book, involves learning the facts and statistics and implementing body-safe choices. Teaching about body safety should happen calmly, constantly, and continuously because the content changes as children grow. There is no way a child will be able to ward off a skilled predator just by reading a couple of books on body safety. As parents, guardians, and teachers, we must make safe choices regarding what our children do and whom they spend time with, both online and off.
  
- 9. The internet is safe for children as long as they are supervised.** Absolutely false. The internet is not safe for children, even if you're supervising. Children can bump into an incredible amount of inappropriate content that can damage and traumatize them. Also, children can repeat what they see innocently. This applies to all things children can access online, including video games and cartoons. Provocative and inappropriate videos can give children ideas that they don't understand. Young children may reenact these activities or actions with other children in person at school, on playdates, or at sleepovers.
  
- 10. Having a cellphone makes my child safer.** Drop the mic, drop the phone! That smartphone puts your child in front of every online predator. If you can do one thing today, don't let your child have one. (We'll look at alternatives in chapter 7.)
  
- 11. Posting pictures of my child or my students online and elsewhere is okay and safe.** Posting a child's face, your pictures, your location, your school, or identifying language, whether online, on a child's T-shirt, or on a school bumper sticker, is entirely unsafe. Predators are looking for children and for their location. Even

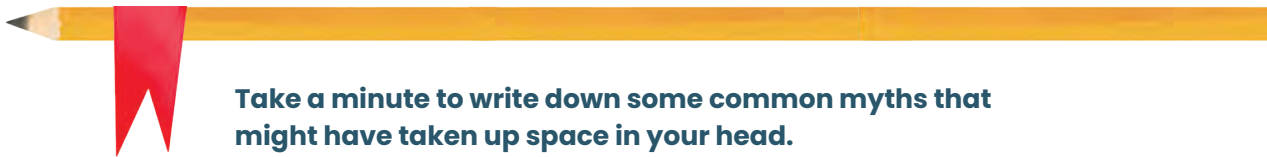
if a school has a policy and permission slips to allow teachers or administrators to share marketing and social posts online, I would opt out of participating in that activity. That one picture of a bunch of cute preschoolers with their school logo and tagged location gives a predator an exact location of a perfect possible target. Photos can become usable and shareable. A picture can be screenshot, manipulated, and used for personal gratification and extortion.

- 12. Playdates are safe.** Playdates are not safe just because you know the family. You never know the level of observation and supervision a friend will provide for your child. There is no way of knowing how advanced or completely ill-equipped your friend, their children, and anybody else in their house is regarding body safety. Are there older children in the home? Are the doors to the bedrooms closed? Are the children always observable? If something goes wrong, will your friend call you? Do your friends and everybody in that household know about body safety, and do they enforce body-safety rules for a safe playdate?
- 13. Sexual abuse doesn't happen in our neighborhood.** Sexual abusers do not discriminate. It can and does happen daily in any neighborhood, house, culture, religion, and socioeconomic status. It happened in my neighborhood, it happened to me, and it can happen in your neighborhood. That might be hard to hear, but it is true.
- 14. Sex education is body safety.** Not exactly. Sex education is not body safety, but body safety is a tiny part of the beginnings of sexual education. Body safety involves simple strategies for children, parents, guardians, teachers, and all who care for children. It starts by using the correct body terms and teaching body autonomy. In body-safety education, we learn that private parts have unique rules, and we encourage communication with our safe adults and families. We focus on feelings, communication, and consent. Nowhere in body-safety education do we talk about actual sex, reproduction, sexual relationships, or sexuality. However, there is nothing wrong with talking about sex with your own children at whatever age you are comfortable with. You know your child best! I wish my mother had at least told me something about sex before I was sixteen. Sex-education curriculum starts for children around third or fourth grade in most schools. Some parents talk about sex and sex education with their children at home to a certain extent, but there are gaps in the education on this topic. This is why talking about body safety early and often during childhood is critical.

These are myths that apply to children in the early childhood setting. But they change as children grow and move toward discussions on sexual education. As young people grow up, conversations change from body safety, body autonomy, body boundaries, rules, and safe adults to conversations about consent, body-part function, sex, and sexuality.

Parents or guardians must be their child's first source of communication on all things related to body safety. You don't want your child googling sex! You don't want your child learning about things from their friends or on YouTube. Getting comfortable from the start on body safety will make the more uncomfortable topics easier to talk about by the time your child is seven. You don't want your child accidentally falling into a conversation with a predator on social media platforms.

You *do* want your child to be confident to talk with you about this topic. Let's change these misconceptions and work together to educate children.



**Take a minute to write down some common myths that might have taken up space in your head.**

## **The Other 10 Percent: Strangers**

Now that you know that children who are sexually abused are—by an overwhelming margin—abused by somebody they already know or trust, what about the other 10 percent? There are still dangerous strangers and people who snatch and grab both children and adults. There are folks who may have slipped through the system and still pose a serious threat to our safety.

In a 2022 Las Vegas carjacking, a heroic nine-year-old girl saved her baby brother and escaped a kidnapping by using her words, manners, and negotiation skills. She managed to convince the carjacker to let her go. She grabbed her baby brother and ran barefoot back to find her mom and get help. Imagine how terrified this little girl and family must have been.

x x x

In certain situations, even when we do everything right, we may still find ourselves in danger.

Many of us have taken self-defense courses because of this, and we use our cellphones to help track our movements. Often women go out in groups, avoid walking alone in parking lots, and are aware of our surroundings. I carry pepper spray in my purse. How about you? In chapter 11, we will explore how to prepare children—without scaring them—to make an emergency exit.

In the next chapters, we will dig in and dig deep. We will unpack the essential sexual-abuse prevention strategies and skills that you need to protect the children you love. So, get ready, take a deep breath, and get comfortable with being a little bit uncomfortable. How do predators gain access to children? What tricks do they use? Let's rip the bandage off and learn how to spot the red flags of grooming behavior.



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# Empower children *and prevent sexual abuse*

In today's world, it's crucial that we equip our children with the tools they need to stay safe. Yet, many caring adults simply don't know where to begin.

Written for educators and parents by a prevention education expert, ***Body Safety for Young Children*** is the comprehensive guide you need to navigate this complex and sensitive issue. Author Kimberly King takes the fear out of sexual-abuse prevention and makes it child-friendly and approachable, so you can confidently communicate with children and protect them from harm.

Packed with extraordinary stories, prevention skills, talking points, and what-if scenarios, this compassionate resource book is the ultimate toolkit for educators and families looking to prevent child sexual abuse. From body-safety lessons to social-media safety, the practical guide covers everything you need to know to keep children safe and informed. The tips, themes, shareable resources, and book suggestions will help you build a strong foundation of body-safety skills and provide simple safety strategies that work.

- ✕ Learn who typical child sexual abusers are. (Hint: It's almost never the "man in the van.")
- ✕ Discover how to create safety circles of trusted adults.
- ✕ Learn how to teach child-friendly body-safety techniques and code words.
- ✕ Find out why using correct "doctor words" for body parts is so important.
- ✕ Discover how to arrange a classroom for safety.



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