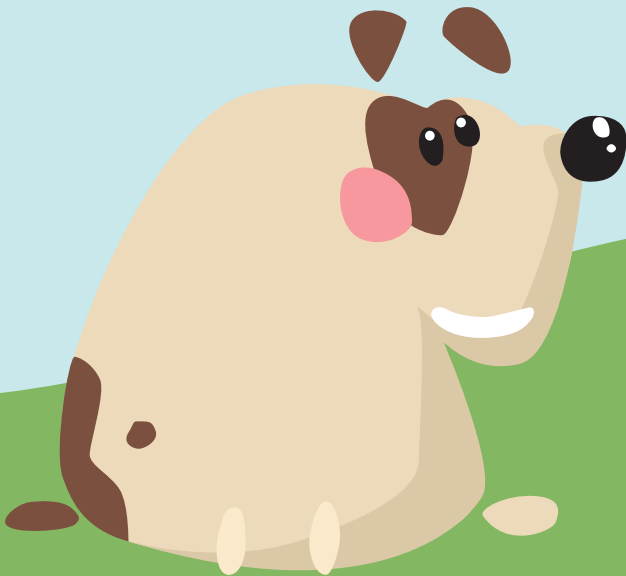


TALKS,

Simple conversations
on difficult topics



PEARLS
FOR CHILDREN



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Paramos vaikams centras
Children Support Centre



**UNIVERSITÀ
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We'll help you find the right words

Research shows that one in five children in Europe has experienced sexual abuse. It is estimated that in the vast majority of cases the child knew and trusted the perpetrator.

Not all dangerous incidents can be prevented. However, by giving your child information about basic safety rules, you can help them protect themselves from abuse.

You are invited to visit the website of the campaign "TALKS: Simple Conversations on Difficult Topics", gadki.fdds.pl, where you can find guidance on how to protect your child from sexual abuse.

Talking to children about how to behave in the street or how to stay safe at home or while playing is usually not difficult for parents, who see it as a natural part of parenting. In contrast, many parents find talking to their child about how to avoid the risks of sexual abuse to be a stressful experience! But it doesn't have to be. These may be simple conversations during which the parent will not be using the term "sexual abuse" and the child will learn the rules of safe behaviour. On the following pages we will show you how to do it!

TALKS

TALKS are conversations about five simple rules that may help to keep your child safe. Children will learn from these talks that they are in control of their own bodies, that they always have the right to say “no”, and that they should seek help when they feel worried or upset.

WHEN TO START TALKS WITH YOUR CHILD?

It is completely up to you. You are the one who knows your child best! You will know when it is the right time to talk. This guide will surely help you in that.

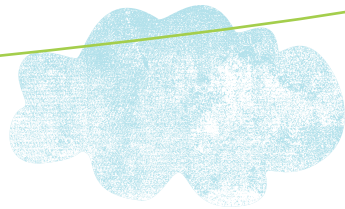
Note for parents: The inside of this brochure has been designed for children. You can use it in conversations with your child, when the moment comes.

Simple conversations that will help to protect your child from sexual abuse

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD?

Do not think of the conversation about how to stay safe as a one-time event. It is much better to have shorter but more frequent talks. This will help your child to remember key information and follow the rules.

- It may happen that you will feel ready to have this conversation, but it will not be the right moment for your child. No problem! It is crucial not to force the child to talk. This should be a natural conversation. Simply wait for the right moment.
- Using everyday situations to mention the topic and offer simple tips on how to avoid risks, is a great way to tackle the subject. Your child will not feel you are moralizing or preaching at them. It will be easier both for you and for your child!



- 1** When you say “no”, it means “no”
- 2** Raise the alarm when you need help
- 3** You’ll do the right thing when you tell someone about secrets that upset you
- 4** Be sure to remember that your body belongs only to you
- 5** Private parts are specially protected



TALKS

1 – When you say “no”, it means “no”

Your child has the right to say “no”, also to someone they know and are close to, even a family member. This message should be accepted and respected by adults. It shows that the child can set limits and has control over their body. Sometimes you may have to do something against the child’s will to keep them safe, for example when crossing a street. Explain to the child why this specific action is necessary. If your child is able to say “no” to their loved ones, they will be more likely to say “no” to a stranger in a threatening situation.

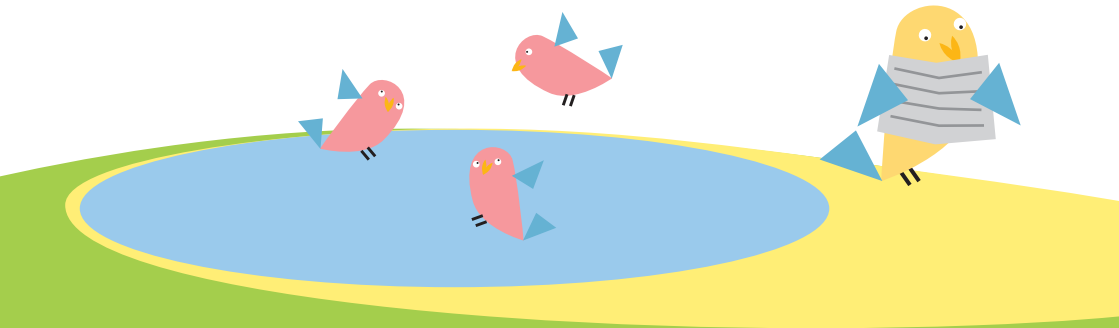
2 – Raise the alarm when you need help

This rule refers to a direct threat, when a quick response is of crucial importance, so the child should call for help immediately. It also applies to things that upset the child and make them feel sad or frightened. Explain to the child that they should always turn to a trusted adult. Remind the child that no matter what the problem is, it is never their fault and they will not get in trouble because they asked for help. A trusted adult may be a parent, but also a teacher, an elder brother or sister, or a best friend’s mom or dad. It can be also a counsellor at the 116 111 Helpline for Children and Young People (116111.pl).

Note for parents: Sometimes a child may ask an adult for help, but the adult will not believe them or may respond inappropriately. It is worth telling your child that if something wrong or upsetting happens to them, they should persist in seeking help until someone listens to them and provides support.

3 – You’ll do the right thing when you tell someone about secrets that upset you

Help your child understand that talking about disturbing things will not get them into trouble. Explain the difference between “good” and “bad” secrets. Some secrets, such a surprise gift for a brother or sister, can be good. But no one should



ever force children to keep secrets that make them feel worried, sad, or frightened! Secrets are a weapon used by those who want to harm children. By saying: “This is our little secret!”, they try to silence the child. Your child does not need to be afraid or keep secrets that make them feel worried or ashamed.

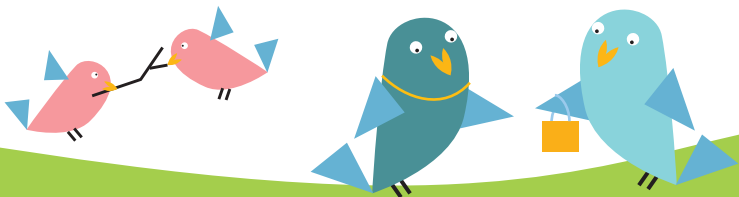
Secrets should never make your child feel uncomfortable.

4 – Be sure to remember that your body belongs only to you

Explain to your child no one has the right to force them to do things which make them feel uncomfortable, for example to touch their private parts and hug or kiss them in ways that feel unpleasant or embarrassing. If anybody tries to do that, the child should tell a trusted adult. The parent should be supportive and, at the same time, strengthen the child’s boundaries. For instance, if someone wants to kiss or hug the child against their will, the parent may reinforce the child’s response, for example by saying: “Jenny doesn’t want to kiss hello now”.

5 – Private parts are specially protected

All body parts covered with panties, napkins or a bathing suit are particularly protected. No one can ask the child to show or let them touch those parts. If anyone tries do to that, the child should say “no” and tell a trusted adult. In some situations, for example in a bath or during a medical examination, touching private parts may turn out necessary. In such cases, it is important to explain to the child why this needs to be done and to ask them for permission.



WHY ARE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE FIVE RULES SO IMPORTANT?

Child sexual abuse is a common problem, which has been experienced by one in five children across Europe. The vast majority of sexually abused children were victimized by someone they knew. Children who have experienced sexual abuse usually do not tell anyone about the experience.

Conversations about the risk of sexual abuse can be difficult both for parents and for children. Parents do not want to scare or upset their children. Sometimes they feel it is too early to discuss the subject with the child. Children, in turn, do not always understand their parents' explanations or are afraid to talk about such things.

That is why we suggest TALKS, or simple conversations on difficult topics, designed for children ages 4-11.

This is so important! By encouraging your child to engage in these conversations, showing them they can talk to you about everything, and teaching them to express their feelings and emotions or to say "no", you teach your child how to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

WON'T TALKING ABOUT ABUSE SCARE MY CHILD?

Children have the right to a happy and safe childhood. Our tips are designed to be child-friendly. We do not want to upset or scare anyone. We do not want to make your child feel afraid when an adult hugs or kisses them. Use clear, simple language, and the child will understand your message and follow the rules.

DOES IT MEAN I HAVE TO TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT SEXUALITY?

You do not have to talk to your child about sexuality or safety rules, if you think the child is not ready. If however your child starts asking questions, use this opportunity to have such a conversation. Show your child you are taking them seriously and tell the truth – adjusting your communication to the child's age – to make them feel confident they can turn to you whenever they feel worried or upset.

WHAT TO DO IF MY CHILD SAYS SOMETHING THAT UPSETS ME?

If your child says something that you find concerning in any way, consult a professional, talk to a teacher or a school counsellor. You can also contact the Empowering Children Foundation's Helpline for Parents and Teachers on Keeping Children Safe: 800 100 100 (800100100.pl). There is nothing to be afraid of! We are here to support parents and help them deal with difficult situations.

If it turns out there is no reason for concern, you will feel relieved that you have made sure nothing wrong is happening.

REMEMBER: It is a major source of support for your child when they know they can talk to you about everything. Regardless of that, always show your child love and affection. Be honest and talk to them openly.

Do you already know TALKS?



- 1** When you say “no”, it means “no”
- 2** Raise the alarm when you need help
- 3** You’ll do the right thing when you tell someone about secrets that upset you
- 4** Be sure to remember that your body belongs only to you
- 5** Private parts are specially protected



1 – When you say “no”, it means “no”

You have the right to say “no” – also to a family member or to someone you love. If you do not like something, do not want it, or feel bad about it, you can say “no”, “I don’t want it”, “I’m not going there”, etc. Your thoughts and feelings are important and should be respected.

2 – Raise the alarm when you need help

Call for help when you feel scared or anxious. Tell a trusted adult about everything that worries or upsets you. They will listen to you and seek help. It may be someone from your family, but also a teacher, your best friend’s parent, or even a counsellor at the 116 111 Helpline for Children and Young People (116111.pl).

3 – You’ll do the right thing when you tell someone about secrets that upset you

Secrets should not make you feel sad or anxious. If they do, tell a trusted adult. You have the right to seek help and no one can make you keep secrets that upset you.

4 – Be sure to remember that your body belongs only to you

Your body belongs to you! No one can force you to do things that make you feel embarrassed. If someone tries to do that, tell a trusted adult.

5 – Private parts deserve special protection

Body parts covered with underwear are particularly protected. No one should force you to show them or let them touch those parts. Sometimes it is necessary – e.g., during medical treatment – and then doctors, nurses or family members have to do it. But they should always explain why they need to do it and ask you for permission.

gadki.fdds.pl

Talk to us

The gadki.fdds.pl website provides more information about sexual abuse and offers child-friendly resources that will make the conversation easier for you.

We are also available to you. You can contact us by calling the 800 100 100 Helpline for Parents and Teachers on Keeping Children Safe or via www.800100100.pl.

Tell your child about the free 116 111 Helpline for Children and Young People that provides free of charge, anonymous help for children and youth.

The content of this brochure is based on the messages of the “Underwear Rule” campaign developed by NSPCC, a UK NGO working to protect children.

nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC

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