

Talk About It

By: Bright Tomorrows Staff from Stewards of Children

A recent national survey showed that fewer than 30% of parents ever discussed sexual abuse with their children. Those parents who did discuss the topic often failed to mention that the abuser might be a friend or family member and focused more on stranger danger.

Good communication with children may actually decrease a child's vulnerability to sexual abuse and increase the likelihood that the child will tell you if abuse has occurred. There are many things that can help to increase communication and safety for your child:

- Teach your children about their bodies, about what abuse is, and when age appropriate, about sex. Teach them words that help them discuss sex comfortably with you.
- Model caring for your own body and teach children how to care for theirs.
- Teach children that it is "against the rules" for adults or older children to act in a sexual way with them and use examples. Teach them what parts of their bodies others should not touch, like where their bathing suit goes.
- Be sure to mention that the abuser might be an adult friend, family member, or older youth. More than 94% of the time sexual abuse is done by someone the child knows and trusts.
- Teach children not to give out their email addresses, home addresses, or phone numbers while using the internet.
- Start early and talk often. Use everyday opportunities to talk about sexual abuse.
- Be proactive. If a child seems uncomfortable, or resistant to being with a particular adult, ask why.

These are just a few steps you can take to further protect your child and prevent abuse from happening. For more information on how to increase communication and safety for your child, visit the Bright Tomorrows website at www.brightcac.org.