

Stoplight Magnets



Using stoplight magnets is a great way for you to start a conversation with your children about how they **feel** when they are with certain people and empower them to use those feelings to make choices. It's a positive and light hearted way to give your children permission to tell you about potential danger when they may not have the words to tell you.

Use this example to explain it to your children, adjusting to be age appropriate:

We all have "instincts" - it's something inside of us that tells us when something doesn't feel safe or right and it's really important to pay attention to those feelings. Even adults don't always do a good job of paying attention so I got us a game to help us both get better at it.

The game uses a stoplight as an example. You know, green means go, right? So we use green to say when everything is okay, when we feel safe, and when we feel comfortable with the person we're talking about. These are people we would like to spend more time with.

Yellow is a warning, like at an intersection the yellow light warns us that it is about to turn red and then it would be dangerous to be in the intersection. So we use the yellow light as a warning. We should use it whenever someone makes us feel uncomfortable, uneasy, scared, or even if we just have a yucky feeling in our tummy, even if we don't know why. These feelings are a warning that there may be danger ahead so we should pay close attention and don't spend time alone with that person. It doesn't matter if it's an adult or a friend.

Now what about red? It means STOP! It means don't go into the intersection because it would be scary and dangerous right now. So we use red to tell when somebody is doing something dangerous or scary and we feel unsafe being with them. These are people we don't want to spend time with right now, even if we can't say exactly why, other than our tummy tells us so.

So let's try it. I'll do one, then you do one okay?

Then just walk through some examples taking turns. Use some real examples of people who make you feel a little uncomfortable. You don't have to go through every person your child knows in the first sitting. Just do some and then add people as you go about life. So the next time they go to softball practice or have a new babysitter, you can ask them to tell you about their feelings afterwards. You can even use this to help them talk about strangers or situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

Keep it fun and light as much as possible so children will want to participate. Remember this is just the start of the conversation. As your children raise concerns about specific people, just say, "tell me more about how you feel" or "can you tell me about why you feel that way?" Use open ended questions to keep the conversation going. Remember that modeling is very important so when you give an example of someone who makes you feel uncomfortable, take the opportunity to tell your child about your feelings and what it is about that person or their behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Reflection Questions

Best Practice #4 – Regularly and Actively Assess Behaviors

Complete the following questions as a basis for both personal reflection and as possible input to your interactive staff discussion.

- What policies or practices are currently in place that promote conscious proactive assessment of child sexual abuse concerns by your staff?

- How do you engage parents in the assessment process? How about children?

- Do you have an established process for your staff members to communicate concerns about child sexual abuse? If yes, please explain.

Reflection Questions

Best Practice #4 – Regularly and Actively Assess Behaviors

- Do you have an established process for your parents to communicate concerns about child sexual abuse? If yes, please explain.

- Do you have an established process for the children in your care to communicate concerns about inappropriate behavior? If yes, please explain. Does the process provide an opportunity for them to give feedback about concerns outside of your program (i.e., at home or in other programs)?

- How do you keep the process of assessment and communication top of mind for your staff, parents, and children?

Reflection Questions

Best Practice #4 – Regularly and Actively Assess Behaviors

- How do you ensure the identity of the person submitting feedback on concerning behavior is kept confidential? Do you provide a mechanism for anonymous feedback?

- Do you have a single person/position that is responsible for child protection? Is it their primary role?

- How does your process for monitoring feedback allow patterns of concern or trends to be spotted?

Reflection Questions

Best Practice #4 – Regularly and Actively Assess Behaviors

- How and when are concerns communicated to the board of directors or other responsible parties?

- Is there a regularly scheduled time for the board of directors or other responsible parties to discuss the protection of children from sexual abuse while in your care?
