

Guidelines to Follow If You Find Your Child Engaged in Sexual Behavior

- Try to remain calm. Count to ten, take deep breaths, or give yourself a timeout, if needed. When you remain calm, it helps you to have better responses than when you react with strong emotions. It also helps your child to understand that it's the behavior you don't approve of, not the child.
- If needed, have the children get dressed and go to separate areas.
- After you have all the children dressed and in a safe place, check your level of emotions again. If you are in control and at least somewhat calm, proceed with the steps listed below. If you continue to be very upset, find some outside source of support, such as a professional, a partner, or a friend.
- Once calm, evaluate the situation. Separately, ask the children what happened. Keep the questions open ended so that they can tell you in their own words (*rather than just by answering yes or no*). Ask things like: Tell me what happened? Who thought of doing this? How did you learn about this?
- If your children know the sexual behavior rules, remind your child of the specific sexual behavior rule that they are breaking (*for example, "Remember, it's not ok to touch other people's private parts"*).
- Determine if consequences are necessary. If not, redirect your child to another activity. If the behavior is okay when done in private (*such as when a child touches themselves*), redirect them to their bedroom or to another private place.
- If a consequence is necessary, provide it immediately in a firm, but calm manner, such as, "Because you broke a sexual behavior rule your friend has to go home, and you are grounded for the rest of the week."
- Help your child to think of things that they could have done instead of the sexual behavior, such as talking to an adult, playing a game, or listening to music.
- Let your child know that you believe in their ability for self-control.
- Talk with the caregivers of the other children involved, if appropriate.
- Praise your child during times when they display positive behaviors.
- Provide additional education as needed:
 - Information about privacy/modesty
 - Information about friendships and relationships with others
 - Information about respecting their own bodies
 - Accurate education about names and functions of all body parts
 - Developmentally appropriate sex education
- Remember that children with problematic sexual behaviors always need close visual supervision when with other children.



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