

Safe and Sound Schools' Guide To Talking About School Safety With Your Young Child



Discussing school safety with your child may seem intimidating, especially if you don't feel like you have all the answers. However, here are a few tips that can help you navigate these conversations in a way that feels natural and effective.



DO YOUR HOMEWORK. Before you talk to your child about school safety, do a little homework to educate yourself on what safety measures are in place at their school. This will prepare you to respond appropriately to any concerns or questions your child might have. For example, ask your school administration or school safety coordinator what types of drills students are participating in. Learn what instructions are being given and the language used to explain these measures to students. Remember that the more prepared you are, the more comfortable you will feel talking about school safety, ensuring a more positive experience with your child.



START BY ASKING YOUR CHILD QUESTIONS. Probing questions helps you gauge the level of understanding your child already has about school safety and what information they are lacking. Some good opening questions are: What does your school do to help keep you safe? or What are some of the things your school is teaching you about safety? If your child comes to you about a concern they have based on things they have heard on the news or from peers at school, seek to better understand what they heard and what is bothering them specifically. Don't assume. For example, ask: Tell me exactly what you heard? How does that make you feel?



VALIDATE THEIR CONCERNS. If your child expresses concerns or feelings of being unsafe, reassure them that those feelings are perfectly normal. Empathize with them and maybe share your own personal experience of a time you felt similar feelings.



FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD. It is important when talking to your child about school safety to keep your responses simple, without elaboration. Keep on topic by addressing their specific concerns or misunderstanding with regard to school safety.



STAY FACTUAL. Keep your responses to your child's concerns as factual as possible, sighting specific safety measures and resources their school has in place to protect and help them. If you don't know the answer, that's okay. There is nothing wrong with saying that you aren't sure and need time to answer the question. Tell your student the steps you plan to take to get answers to the questions.



EMPOWER THEM. It is important to end these important conversations on a positive note. Invite your child to come up with ideas of their own to help improve safety issues at their school and challenge them to get involved. Let them know how important their role is in school safety and that their voice matters.



Visit www.safeandsoundschools.org/resources/parents for more parent resources.

