

CHAPTER 10: SEX CRIMES

get older, and when they leave home. The best over-all preventive against many sexual crimes is awareness of how the world works, common sense, general self-protection behaviours (see Chapter 14), and a feeling of self-worth which includes good general sexual knowledge and a sense of body privacy. Associating sexual activity with respect, caring and responsibility in the minds of children and youth may also assist a young person to realise if someone is trying to use them sexually.

Points to remember when talking about sex crimes

- It's harder to discuss a sex crime calmly when your anxiety or anger level is high. Give quick, simple explanations as occasions arise, in the terms that there are some people who misuse sex by forcing it on another person.
- Explaining sex crimes is not a matter of explaining them away, or pretending they don't happen. The world is sometimes not nice.
- Use the most calm tone of voice you can muster.
- It is good to express anger and disgust at the offender—regardless of the nature of the sex crime. Forcing sexual activity on another person is never right.
- Avoid blaming the victim.
- Do point out, and discuss in the family, what a person might do to avoid the situation.
- Call a sex crime by its name. That makes it something that can be discussed and dealt with.
- Don't try to stop the children asking questions. If they're asking questions, they're trying to understand, or trying to get reassurance.
- Some crimes are truly horrible and frightening. You can say that this is horrible and frightening. But also point out the ways your children are safe; say that this does not happen very often—it's rare. Most people are kind and do not want to hurt other people. Only a very few are so sick and crazy as to do (whatever has been reported or committed).
- After explaining, and when the child has indicated they have some comprehension, end the discussion on a positive note. This kind of thing doesn't happen to most people. Most of us are safe and happy most of the time. You have a family who love and care for you. Put the bad thing in perspective with the rest of life. (The reason for this is to reduce the child's anxiety about whether they are at risk.)
- If you are too upset to have a rational conversation right now, then postpone it, or get another adult to do the initial explaining
- If you have been the victim of a sex crime at any time in your life, it may be particularly difficult for you to talk with your children. You do not have to