Raising or Teaching a Deaf/HH Child?

A Parent Shares about Personal Safety

Learning Community
Parent Information Center of Delaware
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Hands & Voices O.U.R. Children’s Safety Project
Awareness Changes Everything
Behind Our Why

Storytelling:
Dr. Harold Johnson: a late-career legacy
• D/hh child who grew up to be an audiologist
• High School Boy in search of girlfriend
  ▪ Abuse In a Nice Family “In a Nice Family”
  ▪ Deaf/hh Plus student at school

Breaking the taboo: ACES

The Good news is...
Harness Protective Factors & Strategies:

Support these in other parents (and in ourselves)

1. Nurturing and Attachment (and Awareness)
2. Knowledge of child development (both hearing and d/hh)
3. Parental Resilience
4. Social Connections for parents
5. Concrete supports for families
6. Social/emotional competence of children

And in kids:

1. Know what healthy relationships look like
2. Know they have a right to say no (ask questions, and TELL) and are developing as much language as possible
3. Have some social connections/trusted adults, a friend... **one caring adult can make a difference**
4. Effectively communicate day-to-day... Label feelings, mental states, body parts, secret-surprises, Story retell with beginning/middle/end
5. Understand their emerging sexuality
6. Are developing their intuition: beginning to recognize “risky” situations

*What makes a child safe also makes them successful... a goal we were already focused on.*

*One cannot learn without feeling safe.*
Parents already promote safety

For littles...

For tweens and teens
Intentionally teaching “People Safety”

Looking back... what did you wish you had learned long ago about dealing with humans?
Attachment: The Secret Sauce

Serve and Return

Model, Notice and Reflect

Magic Mirror Neurons

Learn more:

https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/issue/146/Supplement_3
Step 1: Parents (and Caregivers) as Lookouts

Parents spend the most time observing, interacting, encouraging, trying to figure out and then responding to the meaning of their children’s behaviors.

Daily routines of:
- eating;
- playing;
- exploring;
- diapering; and
- sleeping

provide parents with the essential contexts needed to interact, understand and nurture their child.
Maltreatment is predominately carried out by adults, or older children, who have gained the trust of a child’s parent.

Our kids with any kind of differences, especially communication, are at the highest risk of maltreatment.

When are they most at risk?
Focus on Prevention

Younger kids are most at risk:

Choose caregivers wisely

Know their caregivers (who gets to be in the “circle of trust”?)

Ask Questions, don’t assume

As kids grow, teach simple safety rules: (more on this)

Observe, check in often, note any changes in how your child looks, responds, or reacts

The Kidpower Protection Promise

“You are VERY important to me!
If you have a safety problem, I want to know –
even if I seem too busy,
even if someone we care about will be upset,
even if it is embarrassing,
even if you promised not to tell, and
even if you made a mistake.
Please tell me, and I will do everything in my power to help you.”
Along with Prevention: Observe

Know the Red Flags: for your own child, parents you support, and all the kids you get to know

**Behavioral changes**
- Sudden reluctance
- Excessive fear or shyness
- Cruel behavior or behavior extremes
- Regressive behavior (thumbsucking, etc.)

**Physical Indicators**

**Looking and Listening for Concerns**
Step 2: Safety Communication Skills...

Daily Check-in: Reassure your child/act like a Labrador when you see them!

Label and Use Words for Emotions/Mental states

➢ Books are a great tool!

Family Rule: Surprises, not secrets

Safety alert word/sign

Making and keeping age appropriate friends

◦ What is a friend? What do they do together?
◦ Our DHH kids can be socially naïve
Words/Sign/Cues

...Get Your Attention

If your child can not name, or point to, the part of their body that hurts, their story can’t be well understood.

If you do not know why they are upset, your ability to comfort them and to avoid the upsetting action is diminished.

Use routines with your child for daily teaching
Safety with Touch

In the Kidpower text entitled *Earliest Teachable Moments: Personal Safety for Babies, Toddlers and Preschoolers* the rule for touch or play for fun or affection should...

◦ ...be safe
◦ ...the choice of each person (Consent)
◦ ...allowed by the adult in charge
◦ ...never be kept a secret.

This safety rule can grow with a child into adulthood!
Step 3: Establishing a “Circle of Trust”

Who gets to be alone with your child?

What are the safety policies at school, camp, childcare, church? Do your friends/neighbors have the same safety rules as you do? Who else will be there (sleepovers)? How do we check in with our kids on return?
Kidpower childcare safety strategies include:

- Research carefully who will be with your children.
- “Take the time to keep checking in, including making unexpected visits.”
- “Raise concerns right away about any potential problems.”
- “Notice changes in personnel, location, policies, and activities that may affect your child.”
- “Adequate supervision so that adults see what is happening with children…”
- “Specific permission [required] from parents” for any changes in the expected routines
- “Age appropriate activities” for the child
- “Permission for older children to always be able to call [parent] if they need help.”

- YouTube videos
Strategy: Role-playing for Independence

Older kids:

- Increasing their responsibility or independence with guidance
- Keep up the checking in
- What if? Teach back. 15 feet behind
- Agreements for digital devices
- Driving as a rite of passage
- Consider their development in all areas
Be an Upstander

Personal or Professional Reporting

◦ If you are ever concerned for the safety of child, yourself, or someone else, call 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1 800 422-4453), or text 1-800 – 422-4453

◦ This number will connect you with a counselor at the ChildHelp - National Abuse Hotline

◦ Free and confidential.

◦ The Hotline counselor will you to understand what you are experiencing, or seeing and provide you with the information and support you need to act.

◦ Crisis Textline for adults and kids: Increasingly deaf-friendly
How should you respond if a child tells you they have been abused?

- Accept the child’s information as true.
- Model emotional steadiness. (Afterwards, reach out!)
- Confirm your care for child; comfort them.
- Assure child it is NEVER EVER their fault.
- Ask open ended not leading questions.
- Reaffirm that you love and care for them.
Encourage families to bring up safety goals within the IFSP/IEP/504.

Support safety skill learning... often it is also language/social skills, access to DHH peers and adults, or accommodations

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) supports this action through a recent policy concerning the prevention and response to maltreatment.

See the IEP Safety Documents on the H&V website
What can groups focus on?

- What, why and how “People Safety” can be added to your child’s life.
- Know the risks reducing risk factors.
- Teach parents to establish the “Circle of Trust” for their child.
- Use strategies and resources to engage children about their safety and wellbeing.
- What if the unthinkable happens? Know how to observe, understand and report (OUR). Know who to call.
- Use your child’s IEP or 504 to reduce their risks for abuse.
WWDWBW?

• With your child?
• With caregivers?
• With your team?
• With your students?
• With your patients?
• With your program?

Resources to learn more:
OUR Project website at H&V
Parent Safety Toolkit & Child Abuse & Neglect: Helping Parents Talk to Children

Parents & Professionals:

Where could your school/organization improve?

O.U.R. Children Project: Advocating for IFSP and IEP Document

Kidpower, Teen Power, Full Power International Web resources
Earliest Teachable Moments: Personal Safety for Babies, Toddlers and Preschoolers - Kidpower

O.U.R. Monthly Call October-June: all welcome
Borrow our exhibit table!
Families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing can be overwhelmed, feel alone, worry about your child’s communication and so many things throughout your journey.

AND as parents, we also know how important it is to just celebrate your child! See all the many gifts your child brings, to take time to enjoy each other, and to share your joy with others that understand.
We’d love to hear from you!

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...a child’s emotional safety is directly linked to their physical safety and their ability to give consent.

Christine Griffin, WA H&V Chapter