

FAMILY CODE WORD

Code words can be key to child safety and communication with adults to keep them safe and let others know when they need help. A family creates a "password" known only to those in the family to use in potentially dangerous situations or at times when a child feels uncomfortable and needs a parent right away. The use of the code word provides a way for a child to clearly communicate their need without drawing attention to what may be concerning them.

Here's how it works...

- Your family will decide on a **word, phrase, or letter** known only to your family. This **word, phrase or letter** needs to be something you AND your child can remember long term-maybe months from now.
- The **word, phrase, or letter** can then be used in conversation if your child feels uncomfortable or the situation is dangerous.
- The **word, phrase, or letter** can be something non-threatening or even fun so they aren't afraid to use it.
- You agree to go to them right away to remove them from the situation.

Examples of when code words can be a helpful tool for a child to use...

- If a child is at a place where someone shows them pornography, they can use a secret code phrase...to alert my mom or dad to come and get them.
- If a child home with a babysitter or at a friend's house, the child can use the word in a sentence over the phone with the parents to let them know that they to come right away because there is danger.
- Parents who need to send another adult to pick up their child for some reason, maybe an emergency situation, can tell that adult the safety code word. Children are told that they should never go with anyone, even someone they know, unless that person knows the safety code word.
- If a child is at school or activity and an adult or another child touches them privately or asks them to take inappropriate pictures. They can use a code word to let parents know there has been a boundary crossed and they don't feel safe.

It is important to emphasize that a child who is victimized is NEVER at fault. Even if they've been taught what to do, they may be too intimidated or scared to execute the plan you teach them. However, having a plan can give kids a chance to escape a dangerous situation. At the very least, conversations about body safety and tools can help kids feel safe telling you when a violation or boundary has been crossed.

PLEASE TAKE TIME TODAY TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT A FAMILY CODE WORD.

You can use the activity on the next page to help you.

FAMILY CODE WORD ACTIVITY

STEP ONE: Choose a **word, phrase, or letter** as a family.

Examples: Red Rover, Hotwheel, Ice Cream, Tick Tack Toe, My face feels hot, X, W

FAMILY CODE WORD:

STEP TWO: Practice using the word (role play) in situation that would be appropriate.

Examples:

- Your at a sleepover and an older sibling asks you to stay in their room with them and you don't want to.
- At soccer practice your coach asks you to stay after with no other adults around and it doesn't feel safe to you.
- Your babysitter wants to show you grown up pictures on his or her phone.
- At the park, an adult comes over and asks you to help him find something in his or her car.

OUR FAMILY CODE WORD:

