



# WHY KIDS DON'T TELL PARENTS (AND HOW TO FIX IT)

Kids aren't trying to hide things to upset you. They're trying to protect themselves. Here's what parents need to know.



2 IN 3

teens say they don't tell their parents about things online

Common Sense (2022)



57%

of teens say they're afraid their parents will overreact

Pew Research (2023)



1 IN 2

teens say they feel it's easier to deal with problems online by themselves

Nielsen (2023)



But...

teens who feel close to their parents are 2x more likely to ask for help

Pew Research (2023)

## WHY KIDS DON'T TELL PARENTS

1 FEAR OF REACTION



They worry you'll overreact, get angry, lecture or take away their devices.

2 DON'T WANT TO DISAPPOINT



They don't want to let you down or feel like they've broken your trust.

3 EMBARRASSMENT



It feels awkward or humiliating to talk about what happened.

4 DON'T THINK IT'S A BIG DEAL



They think it's normal, not dangerous or something they can handle.

5 WORRY ABOUT LOSING PRIVILEGES



They think you'll take away their phone, apps or online access.

6 DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY IT



They don't always have the words or know how to start the conversation.

## WHAT KIDS WISH PARENTS KNEW

- ♥ We want your help, but we're scared of how you'll react.
- ♥ We need you to listen before you advise or fix.
- ♥ We make mistakes. We need guidance, not shame.
- ♥ We want to feel safe talking to you about anything.
- ♥ We need you to trust that we'll come to you.

## SIGNS A CHILD MIGHT BE STRUGGLING ONLINE

- ⚠ Secretive about devices or mood changes
- ⚠ Suddenly avoids certain apps or friends
- ⚠ Anxiety, sadness, anger or withdrawal
- ⚠ Trouble sleeping or changes in appetite
- ⚠ Less interest in activities they used to enjoy

## HOW TO FIX IT: BUILD A RELATIONSHIP THEY CAN COUNT ON

1 CREATE A SAFE SPACE



- Stay calm. Your reaction matters most.
- Let them know they won't get in trouble for coming to you.
- Say: "I'm always here to help, no matter what."

2 LISTEN FIRST



- Let them talk without interrupting.
- Show you understand before offering advice.
- Say: "Thanks for telling me. That takes courage."

3 KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING



- Talk regularly, not just when there's a problem.
- Ask open questions.
- Show interest in their world online.
- Say: "Tell me about..."

RESPECT THEIR PRIVACY (AGE-APPROPRIATE)



- Trust helps them come to you.
- Give them space, but stay involved.
- Set boundaries together.

5 FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS, NOT PUNISHMENTS



- Work together to solve the problem.
- Guide, don't control.
- Praise honesty, not perfection.

8 BE THEIR TEAMMATE



- Side with them, not against them.
- Work as a team to keep them safe.
- Say: "We'll figure this out together."

## WHAT TO SAY (AND WHAT TO AVOID)

### SAY THIS

- ✓ "Thank you for telling me."
- ✓ "I'm proud of you for coming to me."
- ✓ "Let's figure this out together."
- ✓ "I believe you."
- ✓ "You're not in trouble."



### AVOID THIS

- ✗ "Why were you so stupid?"
- ✗ "I told you so."
- ✗ "Give me your phone."
- ✗ "You're grounded!"
- ✗ "You can't be trusted."

## OPENING CONVERSATIONS (TRY THESE)



"What's been the best (or worst) thing online this week?"



"Is there anything online that makes you feel uncomfortable?"



"How do you handle issues online with friends?"

• "If one of your friends had this problem, what would you tell them to do?"

• "What apps or games are you into right now?"

• "Is there anything I can do to support you better?"

## WHAT TO DO IF SOMETHING BAD HAPPENS

1 Stay calm



Your calm helps them open up.

2 Listen & reassure



Let them share. Reassure them they did the right thing.

3 Don't blame



Blame shuts down conversation. Support opens it up.

4 Take action



Report, block, document and get help if needed.

5 Review & learn



Talk about what happened and how to stay safer.

6 Follow up



Check in later. Keep the conversation going.



Trust is built in the small moments.

The more your child feels heard, the more likely they are to come to you.

## DAILY HABITS THAT BUILD TRUST



Spend quality time together



Show interest in their life



Celebrate small wins



Apologise when needed



Laugh & have fun together



Be consistent. Be present. Be the safe place they can always come back to.

## IF YOU'RE NOT SURE, GET HELP



You don't have to handle it alone.

- Talk to your child's school
- Contact a trusted adult
- Use helplines and support services
- For serious concerns, contact police

Asking for help is one of the best things you can do.



NEED TO TALK? CHILDLINE



0800 1111 childline.org.uk



YOU ARE NOT ALONE We're here for you.