

# “How do I approach a male child I suspect has been abused?”

1

Have the conversation at a time and place where your child feels comfortable.

- ▶ Pick your time and place carefully!
- ▶ Make sure that your child knows that he is not in trouble. • Never blame or interrogate him, or threaten him if he doesn't talk. • Be patient and be willing to wait. • Calm your own anxiety - and his - by allowing him time to open up. • Take care to avoid shaming your child as you ask questions
- ▶ DO NOT ask him if he has been abused in the presence of the person you think may be his abuser. • Make sure that when you have this conversation you are alone or with people with whom he can feel free to talk. • Ask if anyone has been touching him in ways that don't feel okay or that makes him feel uncomfortable.

2

Listen for what your child is not saying as well as what he says.

- ▶ Sometimes, children have had to make pacts of secrecy – either with their abuser or if other children have been involved.
- ▶ Talk with your child about secrets
- ▶ Sometimes abusers will tell children that sexual abuse is a secret just between them. They may ask the child to promise to keep it secret
- ▶ Talk with him about times that it's okay not to keep a secret, even if he made a promise with an abuser to keep something secret in ways that don't feel okay or that makes him feel uncomfortable.

3

Try not to jump to conclusions based on little or unclear information.

- ▶ If there was something your child said or did that makes you concerned, ask about that. • Asking if someone has hurt him may not get the information that you are looking for. • Understand that sexual abuse can feel good to the victim. • Try not to be upset in front of him.
- ▶ Overreacting – with negative judgment or as a “super protector” may make him withdraw
- ▶ Children can easily feel guilty and may hold back information
- ▶ If your concerns persist, find a way to follow up.



**MALESURVIVOR**  
*Overcoming Sexual Victimization of Boys and Men*

4768 Broadway #527  
New York, NY 10034  
MaleSurvivor.org