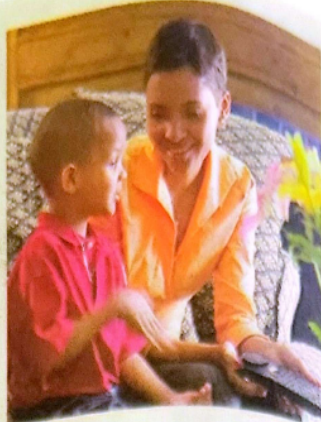




Talking to your children about sexual abuse

Most parents struggle with the dynamics of tackling the sexual abuse topic. What should you tell them, how much information or should you give the same information for both genders? Knowing how, what and when to say is very important in whether the information is effective or not. Here are simple do's and don'ts that will make the talk less unpleasant.

Do's



Talk to your children in age-appropriate terms. Dr Alex Mugalu, a surgeon at Mulago hospital, advises parents to teach children the names of their body parts so that they have the language to ask questions and express concerns about those body parts and point out those that are strictly private.

"Let them know that other people should not touch or look at their private parts unless they need to touch them to provide care. If someone needs to touch them in those private areas, a parent or trusted caregiver should be there, too," he says. Tell children that if someone tries to touch those private areas or

wants to look at them, or if someone tries to show the child their own private parts, they should tell a trusted adult as soon as possible.

All children should be told that it's okay to say "no" to touches that make them uncomfortable or if someone is touching them in ways that make them uncomfortable and that they should tell a trusted adult as soon as possible.

Let your children know that if someone is touching them or talking to them in ways that make them uncomfortable, that it shouldn't stay a secret.

Make sure that your child knows that they will not get into trouble if they tell you this kind of secret.

Don'ts

Don't try to put all this information into one big "talk" about sex.

Do not overreact or panic. When discussing the experience with the child, do not let your emotions get the best of you.

Do not pressure for details. Do not pressure the child to talk; let the child talk at his or her own pace; forcing information can be harmful.

Don't deflect your children's questions about body parts, where babies come from and anything in which they express curiosity physically or sexually.



- Carol B. Atangaza