

Hey Grandma and Grandpa, Can We Talk?

I know I'm too little to have this conversation and not old enough to use big words right now, but there are some things you need to know that can't wait. My safety may depend on it.

First, thanks for loving me. You guys rock! I felt your love from the day I was born. Your smiles and your warm cuddles made me feel safe. It's clear to me—you love me.

But here's the thing. I need to tell you about something that no one likes to talk about—Childhood Sexual Abuse.

My mommy heard this woman, who wears red cowboy boots, speak about it recently. She talked about some sad statistics. I'm not sure what statistics are, but I know they made mommy feel sad. You might feel sad too.



1 out of every 4 girls and 1 out of every 6 boys are sexually violated by age 18.

The next time you come to visit my preschool, do a silent count-off with the kids there. 1,2,3,4. 1,2,3,4,5,6. You'll understand why I'm choosing to talk with you. And feel free to wipe a little tear.

It's okay to cry.



90 – 95% of children who are violated, are violated by someone they know and trust.

Yeah, it's not usually the stranger in the trench coat, hanging out in the park, staring at kids. It's people we all know. People you trust. Go ahead, stomp your feet and clench your fists.

It's okay to be angry at bad things.



Sexual abuse is non-discriminatory. It is not limited to any race, socio-economic level, or faith-persuasion.

I know. Sometimes we think it only happens to others—the stories we hear about in the news, people far, far away from us. But it doesn't. It can happen anywhere. Feel free to cross your arms.

It's okay to be stubborn, but with eyes wide open.



Sexual Abuse thrives in families, churches, communities, and organizations where there is ignorance and silence.

That is why I'm talking with you about this. Go ahead, squirm.

It's okay to feel uncomfortable about yucky things.

But it's not okay to be quiet.

Because I want to be safe. And I know you want me to be safe too.

So this lady also told Mommy how she and Daddy can help protect me, and how you can help too.

First, don't faint, grimace, or choke when I use words like penis or vagina to talk about my private body parts. My parents are teaching me to use them and with good reason.

Did you know that kids who are knowledgeable about their bodies and whose families use the correct terms about their body parts, without shame and silliness, are least likely to be a target for a perpetrator?



Perpetrator's want uneducated kids who don't understand their bodies.

It's okay to practice those words. Out loud. In front of a mirror. Without blushing. I know you can do it! Because in our family, we know there is nothing about our bodies to be ashamed of.

Second, this one may be the hardest for a grandparent. Please don't force me to kiss or hug you or others. Sometimes I have bad days, and I don't feel like hugging. Perhaps you have days like that too. My parents are teaching me to shake hands and give high-fives on *those* days.

But what are adults teaching kids when we force them to kiss and hug? Remember, kids are literal. We think in concrete terms. If I have to hug and kiss on demand, it sends a silent message to me—I can't say no. It also tells me my body doesn't belong to me.

There will be days in my future when you won't be there to protect me. I need to know it's okay for me to protect myself. I need to know that I can say, No! and my no's will be respected.



Perpetrators want kids who don't show ownership of their bodies. And kids who don't know they can say, NO!

Oh, and it's okay to ask me if I have any hugs to give you. If I say, No! it doesn't mean I don't love you. I might just be having one of *those* days.

Third, my parents are teaching me to *not* keep secrets—that secrets are not healthy. My parents say, "In our family, we don't keep secrets. You can tell us anything. And if anyone tells

you to keep a secret from us and that secrets are okay, they *are* lying. Don't believe them. Come and tell us right away."

That is why Mom and Dad are changing the word "secrets" to "surprises" in our family. So if we plan a surprise party for you, we will have many surprises which we won't tell you about, until the party's over. But, guess what? After the party, Mommy says, I get to tell you all about the surprises!

And, in case you're wondering, it's okay to help me create a surprise for my parents. But please don't ever ask me to keep a secret from them. It will confuse me. I will have to tell.

Finally, don't be afraid to talk about childhood sexual abuse. I'm pretty sure no one ever talked to you about when you were a kid. But I guess there are lots of things people don't talk about that must be talked about. And I need for you to be brave enough to talk about this.



When we increase the communication about sexual abuse, we decrease the risk.

So talk about sexual abuse with me. It's okay. Support my parents. Help them reinforce the things they are teaching me.

And Grandma and Grandpa, thanks for loving my parents and for helping them build a strong relationship with me. It's the best way to protect me. It's the best way for you to love me.

For more information and **FREE** tools to help you protect kids from CSA, please visit RiseAndShineMovement.org or to contact "the lady in the red boots" email Carolyn@RiseAndShineMovement.org.