

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Will this workshop frighten, rather than educate, children?**

Naturally, parents worry that children will become fearful if they are made aware of the danger they face. However, one of the things that we have found is that children are already very aware of assault. Watching television and overhearing adults discuss sensitive topics has exposed them to much more violence than they are ever likely to face in their lifetimes. The fear is already there; unfortunately the skill to handle the fear is not. Just as teaching children to cross the street safely or to get out of a burning building gives them life skills, assault prevention makes children feel safer and more confident. Children have fun and leave the workshops feeling stronger. The evaluations that have been conducted on CAP show this very clearly.

**Q: If children are taught to maintain their rights, specifically the right to say “no” to an adult, doesn’t this undermine parents’ (or teachers’) authority?**

Children are capable of differentiating between saying “no” to bedtime and saying “no” to a frightening adult. Blind obedience (“Now, you do whatever the baby-sitter says”) is at best undesirable and at worst downright dangerous! Research on CAP clearly shows that children do not refuse to obey adults following the workshop.

**Q: I want my children to trust people, especially relatives and close friends. My children are spontaneously affectionate and I’m afraid they will lose that trait if we talk to them about assault.**

Children choose whom they will be affectionate with, based on their trust of the adult. This does not change because children learn that someone they know may try to touch them in a bad way. It simply gives them the right and the skill to stop that type of touching. Children who have control over how and by whom their bodies can be touched will still be comfortable returning truly affectionate behavior.

**Q: When I think about talking to my children about sexual assault, I don’t know what language to use. How can I describe a potentially dangerous situation without being graphic?**

Talking about children’s rights is a sensitive, nonthreatening introduction to the subject of assault. For the most part, we have found that graphic, highly descriptive language is unnecessary. “A touch that is confusing or frightens you” is a calm yet accurate way to discuss assault. Think of assault as another safety issue, like crossing the street or holding a fire drill. We don’t use graphic language to describe these dangers, and we don’t need to do so when we discuss assault. The Adult Information Guide booklet can help you too.

**Q: If children fight back, even verbally, won’t this make the assaulter angry? Perhaps the children may come to greater harm.**

Children are taught basic self-protection techniques to enable them to get out of highly dangerous situations, where the chance of their being abducted and seriously hurt is great. Self-protection is not “fighting until no one is left standing.” Obviously, a child could never succeed. The techniques we use during the stranger role-play are designed to be used in the first few seconds of an assault. The element of surprise is on the child’s side. Using prevention techniques that are not based on height, weight, or strength gives children the ability, with a couple of specific maneuvers, to get free, yell, and run away to safety.

**Q: Do the workshops change for older children?**

The general content of the workshop is the same for each grade. However, fifth graders would be bored in a kindergarten or first grade workshop. This is because we explain ideas more and repeat ourselves for younger children. Younger children need the same type of information, but it needs to be delivered at a slower pace and with vocabulary that they will understand. Older children’s questions to us are also

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different because of their life experiences. They ask, for example, “Should I answer the door if I’m home alone or babysitting?”

### **Q: Do women sexually assault children?**

Yes, women do assault children, and when this happens we need to treat it as seriously as we treat other kinds of assault. Recent research in the field suggests that men commit 95 percent of assaults against female children and 80 percent against male children. One reason for this is that historically boys and men often learn that aggression is an acceptable way to feel powerful.

### **Q: Aren’t men who assault male children homosexual?**

No, the vast majority of same-sex offenders identify themselves as heterosexual, not as homosexual. This includes both incest offenders who assault their sons and molesters who assault unrelated boys. Many offenders are married or have an active heterosexual sex life. Often, people who are afraid of or disprove of a gay lifestyle or who dislike gay people will blame gay men for child molestation. This attitude encourages people to believe that child abuse is a “homosexual problem.” As Linda T. Sanford, author of “Strong at the Broken Places”, says, “A child molester is neither heterosexual nor homosexual, he is a child molester.”

### **Q: What can men do about assault? I feel really bad hearing all this information and I want to do my part to stop assault of women and children.**

We believe men can help by challenging accepted male behavior. Confronting a man at a party who tells a rape joke or supporting a woman who stands up to street harassment are difficult and brave responses for conscientious men, but they need to happen. From a program perspective, we also need more men to help us provide workshops. Having male presenters and role players in the classroom sends a needed and powerful message to students.

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