

# STEPS TO SAFETY

## A.C.T. - Ask, Care, Tell

Your teen must understand that there is not one description of a victim or abuser. Anyone can be a victim. And, anyone can be an abuser. Therefore, it is essential for your teen to learn to notice clues and use their voice to protect others. Adolescents are more likely to confide in peers rather than adults when in an unsafe situation. Your teen can become sensitive to the circumstances of others by paying attention to clues such as body language and any changes in the appearance and behavior of their friends. Taking the step to express concern to a peer who is showing signs of distress and then being supportive of him or her is an important skill for your teen to develop.

### Help your teen to:

- ✈ Become sensitized to the feelings of others
- ✈ Make observations about the behaviors of others
- ✈ Step outside of themselves
- ✈ Develop empathy
- ✈ Tap into their personal power to be the change

### How to Use Ask, Care, Tell with Your Teen

#### ✈ Step 1

##### A.C.T. - ASK, CARE, TELL

Help your teen to be empowered to:

- **ASK** when they observe something troubling in a friend's life.
- **CARE** about their friend by responding without judgment and with support when that friend discloses an unsafe secret or unsafe situation.
- And, most importantly, **TELL**. Your teen needs to understand that they must involve a trusted adult and either accompany that friend when they tell an adult or tell an adult themselves if the friend feels as though they cannot tell.

*The most important lesson for your teen is that they must tell.*

#### ✈ Step 2

Practice the steps of A.C.T. with your teen. Practicing the verbal responses with your teen will give them the helpful language they need to support their friend.

##### **ASK when you observe something troubling in a friend's life**

- "Is everything OK?"
  - "Is something bothering you?"
  - "Do you need some help?"
  - "What can I do to help?"
  - "Is there anything you want to tell me?"
- "Is there anything going on that is worrying you?"

## How to Use Ask, Care, Tell with Your Teen

### Step 3

**CARE** about your friend by responding without judgment and with support when that friend discloses an unsafe secret or unsafe situation.

- “I understand why you are...”
- “That must be difficult for you.”
- “That must be tough on you.”
- “I am your friend and I want to help you.”
- “I care about you.”
- “What is happening to you is not your fault.”

### Step 4

And, most importantly, **TELL**. Your teen must involve a trusted adult and either accompany that friend when they tell an adult or tell an adult themselves if the friend feels as though they cannot tell.

- “You need to tell someone. I will go with you.”
- “We can go and tell ... (teacher, school counselor, principal, my mother and father, our scout leader, our coach, our pastor, our school resource officer).”
- “Even if you don’t tell anyone, I have to tell because you are not safe.”
- “It’s OK to tell.”

### Step 5

Your teen is old enough to be aware of changes in their friends’ behaviors and to help them recognize questionable or unsafe situations. Encourage your child to share their observations and concerns. Discuss what to do if abuse is disclosed to them by a peer. It is important for them to stay calm and reassure their peer that they are glad that they confided in them and that they will help by going with them to a trusted adult.

**Look for opportunities to discuss “what if” situations with your child and review the steps to help using A.C.T.**

For example:

- What if a friend tells you that she is uncomfortable when her cousin comes over? He is 30 and always comments on how good she looks. He tries to be alone with her and has bought her makeup that her mom doesn’t know about.
- What if a friend tells you that his music teacher has given him beer to relax and begs you not to tell anyone?
- What if your cousin seems sad and quiet? You have noticed that you miss texting and chatting together. She says that her dad won’t let her use the phone.