

# RESPONDING TO Disclosures of Child Abuse

Listen, Respond, and Act When a Child Discloses Abuse

## LISTEN

- Check how they are feeling about their safety
- Respect the fact they may only tell you some details
- Be calm, patient and listen carefully to what they are saying
- Acknowledge their feelings & that it can be hard to talk about
- Let them tell you in their words what happened and how they felt about it
- Give them time to talk about what has happened from their point of view

## RESPOND

- Respond empathically, objectively and use supportive language
- Acknowledge their feelings and that it can be hard to talk about
- Let them know you want to protect them and what you plan to do next
- Ask open-ended questions

What happened?  
How does it make you feel?

## ACT

- Write some notes about what they have told you
- Contact an appropriate authority or child protection service listed below
- Tell them if you don't know an answer and say that you'll find it out for them
- Explain that you'll need to talk to someone whose job it is to keep them safe

## WHAT A CHILD NEEDS TO HEAR

"I believe you"

"You're brave for telling me about it"

"I want to help you be safe"

"What's happened is NOT ok"

"What's happened is NOT your fault"

"You're not alone"

"I'm here for you and will support you"

"You've done the right thing telling me"

## AVOID

- ✗ Filling in the story
- ✗ Asking too many questions - leave the investigating and fact finding to trained professionals
- ✗ Expressing anger about the alleged abuse
- ✗ Confronting the alleged abuser
- ✗ Making promises you can't keep
- ✗ Pressuring the child for information
- ✗ Questions that infer blame



Data is from [KidsHelpline](#).

## SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

[Child Protection Training](#)

[Educational Resources](#)

[Self-Paced Courses](#)