

Opening the Communication  
so you and your kids can talk about *ANYTHING!*

Exit Strategies

An exit strategy is a way of getting yourself out of a situation that *freaks you out*. It's a pre-planned response to a bad situation.

The first step is to recognize that you're in a bad situation. Our kids can't do that unless they know what a *good* version of this situation is like. Tell them how it *should* be. Then, when their situation doesn't match that ideal, those internal warning bells will go off, giving them that Uh-oh feeling, prompting them to do something about it.

It's hard to think creatively when your inner alarm is blaring, so having a plan in place is essential. Kids often know they're in a bad situation, and then they stay there, hoping it will get better, because they don't know what else to do. Have these "what would you do if..." conversations and prepare those exit strategies.

Here are some exit strategies for common ways kids get overwhelmed and shut down:

Example: The party gets out of hand

- Discuss what a fun & safe party looks like, and what you mean by "get's out of hand"
- The buddy system: two friends go together, pledge to leave early if one or the other needs to, watch each other's drinks, check in with each other, tell the other if they're getting to wild, whatever is needed.
- The [X Plan](#): Your child texts you an "X". You call back and say they're needed right away. You ask for their current location, and you pick them up. It appears to your child's peers that you're a wacky parent, not that your child is a wuss.
- Of course, if your child is comfortable being more transparent, just have them call you or use a ride-sharing app. Make sure your number is in their phone and the ride-sharing app is downloaded and ready to use.

Example: An adult (coach/teacher/relative) is getting too personal or sexual.

- Discuss how people in power should act, and how having power over another person nullifies consent.
- Tell a trusted adult. Identify 3-5 trusted adults your child would tell.

Example: Someone sends you or solicits you for a nude photo

- Discuss appropriate texting. Explore the gray areas between flirting via text and sexting.
- Tell a trusted adult. Absolutely do not try to handle it on your own! The potential dangers - cyberbullying, deep humiliation (which can lead to suicide), even formal charges of child pornography - are not to be trifled with. Identify 3-5 trusted adults your child would tell.
- Know your options on that device or social media platform. Often a user can be blocked.
- Be familiar with the protocols already in place at your school or youth group. Consider reporting and using that system.

Example: A peer is showing an inappropriate video

- Discuss what an ok video might be, and what's not ok. Some music videos are highly offensive, and porn videos are never ok.
- Minimize. Give an almost bored reaction to the inappropriate video. "Yeah, yeah..."
- Distract. "But have you seen this one?" Share an appropriate (and Awesome!) video.
- Have a mini stock pile of *Awesome Videos* bookmarked and ready to deploy. Here are some of my favorites: [Duo Iroshnikov](#), [Acroyoga](#), OK Go videos (especially the [zero gravity](#) video, the [umbrellas](#) video, the [Rube Goldberg Machine](#), the [treadmill video](#), or the [marching band](#) video), [Thrift shop](#), and [I want to see you be brave](#).

Example: He's not hearing your No.

- Discuss consent and ways to communicate that you don't want to do something. Paint the picture of how enthusiastically consensual sex actually is, and that anything else is much less enjoyable.
- Get Angry. Tell him off in the strongest language. "What the fuck do you think you're doing?!" "Get your hands off me, asshole!" Girls and women may need to practice this. Role play. Give them permission to be angry. Demand that they show their anger fully.