



## **Script for Sexual Abuse Prevention Audio Clip**

Being a parent or a caregiver is a big job. It requires us to learn how to do it over and over again as our kids move through different developmental stages: what we needed to know and do to be a good at this when they were little can be pretty different from what they need our help with as they get older.

For those of us with kids with intellectual and developmental disabilities, helping them sort it all out can be an even heavier lift. We have to figure out how to explain things to them in a language or a way and at a level they can understand. As they get older and start to interact more with the wider world – something that is entirely normal and healthy for them to do – we lose some ability to control who and what they encounter, and that’s not easy, particularly as they move into adolescence.

The simple and worrisome fact is that kids with intellectual and developmental disabilities are at a higher risk for being sexually assaulted than other kids. That’s really scary for us. Our kids typically depend more on adults than youth without intellectual and developmental disabilities. They might have difficulty understanding or communicating what’s happening to them. It’s possible they don’t get the same school-based education or support around sexual health and safety that their peers do.

How do we help our kids understand the dangers of being assaulted and how to protect themselves? We aren’t powerless. There are lots of things we can do.

We can talk to our kids about these things, like we have about others: keeping it in line with the language and types of ideas they can understand. We can take steps to make sure the people providing care for them are safe and trustworthy. We can also make sure our kids know they can tell us anything, even if someone else told them to keep it secret. We can keep the lines of communication between us open, so we can be aware when they have additional questions or might be trying to tell us indirectly that something isn’t right. And we can get more information and support from reputable sources on how to talk about these matters with them.

There’s no way to keep our kids in a protective bubble and help them navigate into adulthood and some degree of independence. We balance independence with safety by teaching them about the risks, providing them with a space where they can talk and we will listen, and supporting them through all of it.

Along the way, we watch them bloom into the adult lives they’ve dreamed of.