How to Respond to Inappropriate Sexual Behaviors (Ages 3-12)

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(*Note: Use this handout for sexualized behaviors such as: masturbation in public, touching other's private parts, etc.)

1. Respond to inappropriate sexual behaviors like any other type of misbehavior.
   a. Give age-appropriate consequences
   b. Come up with alternatives (e.g. confine behavior to times when they are alone in their bedroom)
2. Think to yourself: "How would I respond if my child were picking his nose in public or picking other people's noses?"
   a. It's not appropriate to do private behaviors in public places.

   b. It's not appropriate for children to touch other people's private parts.
      Analogy: It's not ok to pick other people's noses.
   c. "If you want to touch your private parts, that's ok, but do it by yourself in a private place."
      Analogy: "If you want to pick your nose, that's ok, but do it in a private place."

3. SUPERVISE!!! SUPERVISE!!! SUPERVISE!!!
      (This is absolutely essential in order to protect your child and other children.)

4. Allow no exposure to sexually explicit material (this includes network TV shows)

5. Set up house rules for privacy; write them down and ask that all members of the family follow the new rules.

6. Be direct and firm – do not overreact!
   Overreacting can actually increase the behavior and might reinforce feelings of shame your child may have connected to his/her sexuality, as a result of the sexual abuse.

7. Make it clear that this behavior is not allowed, just like lying, disobeying, talking back, etc., Praise the positive opposite,
   AND
   Demonstrate and describe proper behavior (hugging, kissing, snuggling, touching non-private parts of another person's body if you have their permission)

8. Continue to express affection toward your child; he/she must NOT get the impression that you think they are "weird" or that you don't want to touch them anymore. They need extra hugs and your unconditional love and acceptance.

9. Talk about the behavior *only* if and when it happens.