

***It Happened to Me* Cub Scout Meeting Guide**

Introduction

Sexual molestation affects our entire society. News stories have documented that many children are sexually molested each year. The reported sexual abuse cases are merely the tip of the iceberg. The unfortunate reality is that most cases of child sexual abuse are never reported. One reason behind this underreporting is that many children are afraid of telling about their abuse, not knowing what the reaction of a parent or other trusted adult would be.

Another disheartening fact is that so much preventable sexual molestation happens. Prevention requires the active participation of adults in protecting children from sexual molestation. It also requires that children learn and use some simple rules for personal safety.

To help combat sexual abuse, the Boy Scouts of America has developed information for parents and children. The video presentation *It Happened to Me* is a component of the educational strategies employed by the Boy Scouts to inform parents and children about child sexual abuse. Our goal is twofold:

- ❑ First, we want to offer information that will help parents and children establish personal safety rules that can minimize the possibility that child sexual abuse could happen.
- ❑ Second, we want to encourage communication between parents and children that lets children know their parents will help them if anyone tries to molest them.

To accomplish these goals, viewing this video should be limited to times when both a parent and child are present to discuss the scenarios. Research indicates that children are more apt to seek help from their parents for serious problems when the topic has been discussed before and children have been reassured that their parents will react constructively.

Information for Facilitators

1. Before showing this video to a group, review it in its entirety. By being familiar with the content and the pauses for discussion, you will be better prepared to guide the discussions and control the pacing of the meeting.
2. Send the parental notification letter to the parents two to three weeks before the date scheduled for viewing the video. This letter is designed to ensure that parents are fully informed about the content of the video and are able to choose whether or not to participate in the meeting with their child.
3. Recognize that the topics presented in this video are sensitive. There may be parents who are uncomfortable discussing sexual abuse with their child. We hope those parents will see the value of discussing prevention measures with their children.

Personal Safety Rules

It Happened to Me introduces four rules for personal safety. The rules place the primary responsibility for the safety of children on adults. The rules are:

Rule 1: ***Check first*** with a parent or other trusted adult before you change plans, go anywhere, or accept anything from ***anyone***.

- ❑ You should not get into a car or go anywhere with anybody unless you have your parent's permission.
- ❑ Always ask your parent's permission before going into someone else's home.
- ❑ Adults and older youth who are not in your family and who need help (such as finding an address or locating a lost pet) should not ask children for help; they should ask other adults.

Rule 2: ***Go with a friend*** in order to be safer and to have more fun. For a child of Cub Scout age, the person should be older, such as a parent or other adult relative.

Rule 3: ***It is your body and you have the right to say no to anyone who tries to touch you in places covered by your swimming suit or to do things that you think are wrong.***

- ❑ No one should touch you on the parts of your body that a bathing suit covers (unless it is your doctor while treating you or during a physical examination), nor should you touch anyone else in those areas. Your body is special and private.
- ❑ If someone wants to take your picture, tell your parent or teacher.
- ❑ You have the right to say "No!" to anyone who tries to take you somewhere, touches you, or who makes you feel uncomfortable in any way.

Rule 4: ***Tell a trusted adult*** anytime you are hurt, scared, or made to feel uncomfortable.

- ❑ If you are in a public place and get separated from your parent (or authorized guardian), do not wander around looking for him or her. Go to a police officer, a checkout counter, the security office, or the lost-and-found area and quickly tell them you have been separated from your parent and need help.
- ❑ No one should ask you to keep a special secret. If this happens, tell your parent or teacher.

FACILITATOR: In this first situation, we are going to see how Brad may have been safer if he had followed rule No. 1— ***Check first*** with a parent or other trusted adult before you

change plans, go anywhere, or accept anything from *anyone*. After we watch the video, I am going to ask you and your parents to talk about Brad's experience.

Start the video.

FACILITATOR: In this situation, Mr. Johnson was a neighbor. Why should Brad have checked with his parents before going into Mr. Johnson's house?

Ask parents and Cub Scouts to discuss this question.

FACILITATOR: Many of us have heard that we have to be careful around strangers, this situation shows that most people who hurt children are not strangers, but may live right next door. It's very important that parents always know where their children are.

FACILITATOR: Suppose Mr. Johnson had said to Brad, "It's OK, I've already asked your mom. She knows where you are." I'd like to ask you and your parents to talk about ways your family might use to be sure that it really is OK.

Ask parents and Cub Scouts to discuss this question.

FACILITATOR: Now let's watch what happened to Ty.

Restart the video.

FACILITATOR: In thinking about how rule No. 2 applies to Ty's situation, we need to ask first if Mark, Ty's coach, should have been considered a friend. For the purposes of this rule, a friend is someone who is OK'd by your parents for you to go with. Ty's parents did not OK Ty to be alone with Mark, so he should not be considered a friend. I'd like you and your parents to talk with each other about friends that you could go with and be safer.

Allow parents and Cub Scouts to discuss.

FACILITATOR: We need to note that sometimes there is safety in numbers, and being with two or three others can be safer than being with one other friend. We should also remember the first rule. If Ty had checked first with his parents when he knew he was going to be late, the coach may have behaved differently.

Restart the video.

FACILITATOR: Rule No. 3—"It is your body and you have the right to say no to anyone who tries to touch you in places covered by your swimming suit or to do things that you think are wrong"—is a very important rule. Ray was right to resist the bullying of his cousin Eddie. It is also important to understand that some child molesters are older youths, not just adults.

FACILITATOR: I want you and your parents to talk about when it's not OK for someone to ask you to take off your clothing or to touch you in areas covered by your swimming suit. I also want you to talk about when it might be OK, like when you go to a doctor for an examination.

Restart the video.

FACILITATOR: Rule No. 4—“**Tell a trusted adult** anytime you are hurt, scared, or made to feel uncomfortable”—really applies to every situation we have looked at. We saw what happened to Phillip. I'd like you and your parents to talk about people you can go to for help if anything happens to you such as happened to Phillip, Ty, Ray, or Brad.

Give a few minutes for discussion.

FACILITATOR: You know, your parents may be upset if you tell them someone hurt you, but that doesn't mean they are upset with you. They are more likely to be upset with the person who hurt you.

Restart the video.