

HANDOUT 4.1. COMMUNICATION DO'S AND DON'TS

DO this with child survivors	DO NOT do this with child survivors
Explain your role, why you are talking to the child, and their rights in a way they understand.	Fail to introduce yourself to the child and jump into asking them questions.
Start with general topics – build rapport	Start with questions about the sexual abuse.
Be patient – allow the child to tell their story at their own pace.	Push the child to tell you what happened to them.
Let the child express themselves how they choose – e.g., talking, crying, drawing, being angry, etc.	Dictate how the child should express themselves (e.g., stop them from crying, indicate their behavior/ reaction is wrong).
Validate the child's feelings and expression of their feelings.	Tell them how to feel or that their thoughts, feelings, and reactions are not normal.
Focus on "What happened to you?"	Focus on "What is wrong with you?"
Ask non-leading questions such as: "Can you show me on this doll how you were touched?"	Ask leading questions such as: "Did he put his hands on your private parts?"
Show the child you are listening by nodding your head and saying: "And then what happened?", "Go on", and "Can you give me an example..."	Remain silent and make the child wonder if you are listening.
Gently explore issues and try to understand the child's perspective by saying "Can you tell me more about that?" and "Can you help me understand..."	Make assumptions about the child and what happened to them or ask "why?" questions as these may sound accusatory.
Try to understand the child's perspective by asking "What do you think the reason is..." or "Can you help me understand..."	Ask "Why?" or "How come?" as this may sound accusatory.

Believe the child and try to understand what they are telling you.	Doubt and question the child if the details are confusing or not correct.
Reassure the child that the abuse is not their fault, their feelings are normal, and they are not alone.	Blame or question the child's actions by asking questions such as, "Why did you do that?" and "Why didn't you..."
Thank the child and tell them they did the right thing – empower them.	Be dismissive or discouraging.