

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE



PRINCIPLES

If a child discloses maltreatment to you, it may be difficult to hear this information. It is important to remain calm, listen, and be there for support. There is no one “right” way to respond as it will differ based on their age, the situation, and your own reporting responsibilities, but there are important steps you can take to help this child feel heard and believed. A child may disclose on their own behalf or may share information about another child.

KEEP THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES IN MIND:

Listen with empathy:

Let them tell you at their own pace and give you the details they want to share. Make sure your facial expressions and body language are open and nonjudgmental.

Be supportive:

Thank them for telling you. Let them know that it was probably hard to talk about, but you are proud of them for sharing.

Know your role:

You may be their parent/guardian, coach, or close family friend, but you are not a counselor or investigator. Try not to ask questions, instead let them use their own words at their own pace.

You are here to help:

Remind them you are here to help and that there are others who can help as well. Be sure not to make promises about what will happen or what others will do.

Tell them what you will do next:

Let them know you will make an official report, and who else you will need to tell. Remember, you must follow legal reporting requirements even if the child does not want the incident reported.

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HELPFUL PHRASES TO USE:



Thank you for telling me this —you are very brave.

What happened to you/them is not okay, and it is not your/their fault.

You did the right thing, and I am here to help you.

You don't have to tell me anything that you don't want to.

Take your time —tell me when you are ready.

Is there anything else you want to share?

I care about you and am proud of you.

Let me tell you what I am going to do next.



*Remember to remain calm and not show your own emotions. Listen, and let the child speak freely, reassuring them as they share. Also remember that young children are often inconsistent and confused about specific details like numbers, days, and times. This doesn't mean they're not telling the truth about what happened. They came to you because they trust you, allow them to share in their own way.

WHAT TO DO NEXT:

- Protect the child from any further harm.
- Document what the child has shared with you in as much detail as possible, using their words.
- Immediately act by reporting to your local Child Protection Services.

Click [here](#) for more information on responding, or email safesport@tenniscanada.com if you have any questions or concerns.