



Parents, Instead of Participating in #SurvivingRKelly Conversations Online, Have Body Safety Talks with Your Children

Posted on January 13, 2019 by Shawnta S. Barnes

The Lifetime six-part docuseries *Surviving R. Kelly* has generated a lot of conversation, but are we having the right conversations? Some people have expressed anger that the popular R&B

singer has not been convicted of a crime and is not in jail. Some people are supporting the singer and have suggested the females in the docuseries are trying to get attention. On some music platforms, his music is trending. There has been condemnation of the parents and people expressing how they would have protected their children better than some of the parents of the females in the docuseries. We can debate what we have viewed in the docuseries, but how can we prevent more tragic situations happening to other young girls or boys? Sitting down with our children and having body safety conversations is a place to start.

Recently, my children participated in a body safety program at school. On Friday, along with their report card, a booklet was sent home. This booklet was the Child Lures Prevention Think First & Stay Safe Parent Guide. This 20-page guide detailed the 17 ways predators lure children. In the first episode of the R. Kelly docuseries, Retired Oak Park Police Department Sargent Jacques Conway, who frequently saw R. Kelly hanging around Kenwood High School stated, "His nickname is not Pied Piper for nothing. Pied Piper's whole purpose is to bring the young people to him, to follow him, to admire him, to listen to him, and so, he's good at it." Our children could be lured away by a Pied Piper predator if we are not proactive and if we are not having body safety conversations with them.

As several inches of snow fell on Saturday, I sat down and read the guide. On the first page of the guide, it states, "We need to teach children: All secrets can be told. Our children need to know: Abuse is never a child's fault. Nothing a child says, does or wears causes mistreatment to happen. The abuser is the sole person at fault." We have to explicitly tell our children this. No matter how strong our relationship is with our children, they might not tell us if they were violated if we are not having these conversations. As I read through the guide, I realized I needed to do more. For example, it mentioned discussing with your children your family's plan for an emergency to help prevent them from being lured away by a predator's fake emergency.

It is easy to talk about other people's children and what happened to them. We should not get so caught up in what has happened to other people that we are not doing what is necessary to protect our own children. I hope this docuseries brings more awareness to parents about talking to their children about their bodies and what they should do if someone violates their bodies. Children are innocent and vulnerable. We must do all we can to protect them.