

# Talking with your children about the Attorney General's Report

**It is important to approach the conversation with a calm head and voice.**

**Listen. Do not assume you know how your child feels.**

**Acknowledge their feelings. They are valid!**  
*It is okay to share that it is difficult for you to process too.*

**Thank them for coming to you and sharing their questions and concerns.**  
*That takes trust and strength!*

**Do not deny what happened.**  
*Acknowledge the truth: priests and others who served the Church have abused children. It is important to acknowledge that child abuse is evil and church leaders always knew that.*

**Talk about what is happening now.**  
*There are new laws, rules, and policies in place now to help protect children and make sure all adults understand how.*

**Discuss hope for the future, that the laws and screening and training will help equip the church to better protect child.**  
*It is important that we protect children now and in the future.*

**Understand children need to process this, just as adults do.**

*Be patient, give them time and space.*

*Allow for them to process on their own timeline, not yours.*

*Give them grace. They may have big feelings and thoughts and are still learning how to process through them. Support this; do not make them feel bad for it.*

**Be open to further conversations  
and make that known to your child.**

*It may take multiple conversations over a length of time to fully process, and their feelings may change about the topic. Let them know you are always there for them to discuss further.*

**Avoid shutting the child down, getting angry,  
talking over them, telling them how to feel,  
denying the harm, or victim blaming.**

**Be prepared to respond if your child discloses abuse  
(to them or someone they know).**

*See [“Talking with your Children about Abuse”](#) handout.*

**Remember, it is okay not to know the answer  
to your child’s question or be unsure of how to respond.**

*Let your child know you want to help find the appropriate answer or response. For some questions, you can even offer to figure it out together.*

**Always consider what is age-appropriate  
before sharing details.**

**Before speaking with your child,  
make sure you have processed your own feelings.**  
*It is difficult to speak calmly when we have not addressed our own  
emotions and needs. Thoughtful responses are key.*

**Always remember there are survivors among us and we  
need to be sensitive to how we and our  
children speak about the report.**

**Talk with your children regularly about  
ways to keep them safe.**

*The Archdiocese of Baltimore has created Messages that Protect for  
parents to discuss these important topics.*

Visit <https://www.archbalt.org/messages-that-protect/>

*Password: protect*

**Frequently Asked Question:  
Should I preemptively bring up the  
Attorney General report with my children?**

*There is not a one-size-fits-all answer for how families should  
process. Think about what your child is engaging with daily and be  
observant for clues they are encountering it in their lives, thinking  
about it, and/or struggling to process. If you feel it is appropriate and  
necessary to bring up the conversation, be aware that your child may  
not be ready to talk about it yet.*



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