SPEAK UP
I've Got You

The CASEN Family Speak-Up Plan

You are not alone.

Real words.
Trusted adults.
A safer tomorrow.



Speak Up, I've Got You: The CASEN Family Speak-Up Plan

A CASEN Compass™ Advocacy resource: Use Your Voice to Help Yourself and Others

For Parents: Before You Begin

Most children who are hurt, pressured, or scared online never tell an adult. It's usually not because they don't know something is wrong. It's because speaking up feels harder than staying quiet.

For neurodivergent children, the barriers can be even higher:

- **Finding the words takes time.** In a stressful moment, the right words may not come, or may come hours later.
- **They're afraid of losing their device.** Many children stay silent because they believe telling will mean losing their games, apps, or phone.
- **They're not sure it "counts."** They may wonder whether something is serious enough to bring to an adult.
- **They don't know who to go to.** "Tell a trusted adult" means little until a child can name exactly who that is.

This plan removes those barriers before they're needed. Your child gets names, words, a signal, and a promise, all decided ahead of time while everyone is calm.

How to use this plan:

1. Sit down together for about 20–30 minutes. You don't need to finish in one sitting.
2. Let your child do as much of the writing and choosing as possible. A plan they help build is a plan they'll use.
3. Keep a copy somewhere your child sees often, and a photo of it on their phone or tablet.
4. Use the Practice Cards in Part 5 a few times a month. Practice is what turns the plan into a habit.
5. Revisit the plan every three months, at the start of each school year, and whenever your child joins a new app, game, team, or group.

Part 1: My Trusted Adults

For your child: A trusted adult is someone who listens to you, believes you, stays calm, and helps you figure out what to do. You need more than one, because sometimes the first person isn't there.

Choose at least three, each from a different place: one at home, one at school, and one somewhere else (family, a coach, a faith leader, a therapist, a neighbor).

Where	My trusted adult	How I can reach them	When I'd find them
At home			
At school			
Somewhere else			
One more (optional)			

Check together:

- [ ] Each adult on the list knows they're on it and has agreed to help.
- [ ] My child knows how to reach each one: in person, by phone, or by text.
- [ ] At least one adult is someone my child could talk to if the problem involved a parent or family member.

Parent tip: Let your child choose. If they leave you off the list, don't take it personally. What matters is that they have someone. Ask gently, "What would make it easier to come to me?" and listen to the answer.

Part 2: My Speak-Up Words

For your child: When something feels wrong, words can be hard to find. These are ready for you. Circle the ones that sound like you, or write your own in the blank lines.

Where I need to...	I can say...	My own words
Say no	"No, I don't want to." · "I'm not comfortable with that." · "I've got to go."	
Say no online	"I don't share that." · "My parents check my account." · Or just: don't answer, block, and tell.	
Ask for help	"Can you help me with something that's bothering me?" · "I need to talk to you about something."	
Tell about something online	"Someone online said something that made me uncomfortable. Can I show you?"	
Talk when the words won't come	"I need to tell you something, but I can't say it yet." · Write it, text it, or draw it instead.	
Help a friend	"That's not okay. Leave them alone." · "Want to come sit with me?" · "I'm going to tell an adult so you're not alone."	

Rules to remember:

- **You never have to answer right away.** Online, you can close the app and come back after you've talked to someone.
- **Telling is not tattling.** Tattling is trying to get someone in trouble. Telling is trying to keep someone safe.
- **It counts if it bothers you.** You don't need to be sure something is "serious enough." If it bothers you, it's worth telling.
- **Saving proof helps.** If something happens online, take a screenshot before you block or delete, then show a trusted adult.

Parent tip: Many neurodivergent children find it easier to talk side by side than face to face. Try the car, a walk, or cooking together. A text from the next room counts too.

Part 3: Our Family Code Word

For your child: A code word is a secret signal that means "I need help, or I need to get out of here." You can say it or text it anywhere, even in front of other people, and no one else will know what it means.

Our code word is: _____

Choose something easy to remember that wouldn't come up by accident, like a food or an animal: "Did you feed the iguana?" or "Can we have waffles tonight?"

How it works:

1. You say or text the code word to a parent or trusted adult.
2. They come get you, call you, or help you leave right away.
3. **No questions in the moment.** You'll talk about it later, when you're ready.
4. **No getting in trouble for using it.** Even if you were somewhere you weren't supposed to be, using the code word was the right choice.

Our code word can also be used online: If you text it while you're in a game, chat, or video call, it means "I saw something, or someone is pushing me, and I need you now."

Parent tip: The code word only works if it's safe to use. If you get upset or ask a lot of questions the first time, your child may not use it again. Keep the promise in step 3 and step 4, even when it's hard.

Part 4: Our Promises

My Promise to You (Parent or Caregiver)

If you come to me with something that bothered, scared, or confused you:

1. I will stay calm, even if I feel worried or upset inside.
2. I will listen to the whole story before I say anything.
3. I will believe you.
4. I will thank you for telling me, every time.
5. **I will not take away your phone, tablet, or games as a punishment for telling me.**
6. If we need to change a setting, block someone, or step away from an app to keep you safe, we will decide that together, and I'll explain why.
7. I will not share what you told me with others unless it's needed to keep you or someone else safe. If it is, I'll tell you first.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

My Promise to You (Child)

1. I will tell a trusted adult when something online or in person bothers me, scares me, or doesn't feel right.
2. I will tell even if I'm not sure it's "serious enough."
3. I will tell even if I made a mistake too.
4. I will tell an adult if I see someone else being hurt or pressured.
5. I will use our code word when I need help fast.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Parent tip: Promise 5 is the one children test. The first time your child tells you something hard, how you respond decides whether they'll come to you again. If you're upset, say so honestly, and make it clear you're upset at the situation, not at them: "I'm upset this happened to you. I'm really glad you told me."

Part 5: Practice Cards

Cut these out or read them aloud. Take turns: the parent reads the situation, and the child answers using their Speak-Up Words. Then switch roles, so your child gets to hear you model it too. Keep it light. One or two cards at a time is plenty.

Card	The situation	Listen for
1.	A player you met in a game says you're really good and asks for your phone number so you can play together more.	Saying no, not sharing private information, and telling a parent
2.	Someone in a group chat posts an embarrassing photo of a classmate. Everyone is sending laughing emojis.	Not joining in, helping the classmate, and telling an adult.
3.	An online friend asks you to keep your chats a secret and to move to a different app	*Recognizing a warning sign and telling right away.*
4.	A classmate keeps taking your things at lunch and says it's just a joke.	*Saying no clearly and naming a trusted adult at school.*
5.	You saw a video online that scared you, and now you can't stop thinking about it.	*Telling, even though no one did anything "wrong."*
6.	You're at a friend's house and they want to do something that makes you uncomfortable.	*Using the code word or an exit line.*
7.	You made a mistake online, like sharing something you shouldn't have, and now someone is using it to pressure you.	*Telling anyway, and remembering the parent promise.*
8.	Your friend tells you someone online is being mean to them every day, but asks you not to tell anyone.	*Supporting the friend and telling an adult to keep them safe.*

After each card, ask: "Which trusted adult would you go to for this one?" Point to their name in Part 1.

Part 6: Keeping the Plan Alive

A plan on the fridge isn't enough. Children speak up when telling has become normal in your home.

Signs your child may be holding something in:

- Sudden changes in mood, sleep, or appetite after being online
- Hiding the screen, closing apps quickly, or using devices late at night
- Avoiding a game, app, or group they used to love
- Increased meltdowns, shutdowns, or anxiety with no clear cause

If you notice these, don't demand answers. Try: "I've noticed you seem stressed lately. I'm here when you're ready, and you won't be in trouble."

Our plan check-ins:

Check-in	Date	Change we made
First plan		
3-month check-in		
New school year		
New app, game, or group		

Want Your Child to Practice These Skills With Peers?

Speaking up is one of the four directions of the CASEN Compass™. In the **CASEN Social Media Readiness Course**, children ages 9–13 learn and practice Connection, Safety, Advocacy, and Navigation in a small live class and in CASEN Connect™, a moderated space where a facilitator approves every post.

Not sure where your child stands? Take the free CASEN Social Media Readiness Assessment at www.mothersofexceptionalkids.com.

Questions? www.casenllc.com · support@casenllc.com · 1-877-BECASEN (877-232-2736)
Because every child deserves to be celebrated, not just tolerated.