



Toolbox: Who to Talk To and What to Say

Trusted people and what they offer

Guiding questions for swimmers and families

- Who will listen calmly and take concerns seriously? (trusted confidant)
- Who will act based on facts and safety, not just emotions?
- Who helps with comfort and support, even if they are not the decision-maker?

Examples

- **Friend or teammate** – good for emotional support and reality-checking (“Did you see that too?”), but should *not* be the only person told.
- **Parent or caregiver** – key for protection, documentation, and pushing adults or systems to respond.
- **Another safe adult** (school counselor, teacher, Safe Sport contact, non-abusive coach) – helpful for guidance, problem-solving, and starting formal steps if needed.

Class task – “Support Triangle”

Each swimmer writes three names:

- someone who **listens**,
- someone who can **act**,
- someone who **comforts**.

They can be the same person or different people.

Levels of Concern: Who to Go To?

Use a simple ladder: **small concern** → **building worry** → **clear violation / danger**.

1. Small concern

(awkward, confusing, but not clearly harmful)

Examples: odd comment, unclear lane assignment, minor conflict with a teammate.



Possible pathways

- Talk with a **friend or teammate** to check perceptions.
 - Go to a **parent or trusted adult** for advice.
 - If it feels safe, have a **direct conversation** with the person:
 - “When you said/did , *I felt* . Can we change that?”
-

2. Building worry

(repeated behavior, strong discomfort, unfair treatment)

Examples: repeated uncomfortable jokes, ongoing favoritism, pressure for secret messages or meetings.

Possible pathways

- Tell a **parent or caregiver**.
 - Go to **another coach, team manager, or school staff member** who feels safer.
 - Purpose: **document** what is happening and ask for change. Adults at this stage should start writing down dates, times, and what was reported.
-

3. Clear violation / possible abuse

(safety at risk, serious misconduct)

Examples: sexual comments, sexual contact, threats, physical harm, serious emotional abuse, or suspected child abuse.

Required / recommended pathways

- If a **peer** hears it: tell a **parent or safe adult immediately**.
 - **Law enforcement or child protective services** when there is suspected child abuse or immediate danger.
 - **Sport reporting systems** (e.g., club Safe Sport coordinator, national governing body, U.S. Center for SafeSport, Title IX office, athletic director) for abuse or serious misconduct in a sport setting.
-



“Who Will Believe Me and Act?”

Key teaching points

A trusted confidant is someone who:

- Listens without blaming or shaming.
- Write down what happened as the swimmer explains it.
- Knows or is willing to learn the next steps (how to report, who to contact).

No single adult can be everything—listener, investigator, therapist, and police—so it is normal for **more than one person** to be involved at different steps.

Class activity – “Qualities of a trusted adult”

- Students list qualities (calm, respectful, follows through, keeps appropriate confidentiality, believes kids).
 - Compare roles (parent, school counselor, Safe Sport staff, team manager, teacher) and discuss who best fits which qualities in their own lives.
-

When Higher-Ups Are Involved

(selectors, recommenders, famous coaches)

Key teaching points

- If the person crossing lines controls recommendations, recruiting, or selection, the fear of losing opportunities is real—but **safety still comes first**.
- In these cases, it is especially important to go to:
 - **Parents or guardians,**
 - **A different coach or school staff member,**
 - **Formal systems** (SafeSport, Title IX, federation or club leadership, school reporting).
- External systems exist to help hold powerful people accountable so an athlete does not have to confront them alone.