
COUNSELLING

Consider the need for counseling or therapy for the child as well as for yourself, if necessary. To ignore the incident, to sweep it under the carpet, or to pretend that it did not happen is not going to help the child or yourself deal with the abuse. On the contrary, pretending it did not happen will exacerbate the problem for many, many years.

In deciding what counselor to use, look for someone who is experienced in cases of sexual abuse. Find a counselor you are comfortable with and don't be afraid of changing counselors. Social Services, Victim Services, community groups, women's organizations, are all possible sources that will direct you to the best counseling available. Do not rely on clergy or other helpers unless they are able to properly direct you to people with experience in abuse counseling.

Child and Family Services

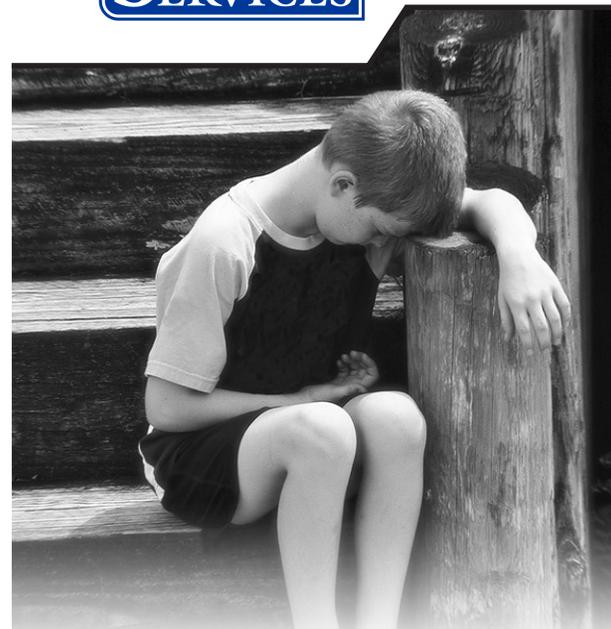
Child Abuse 361-4555
Hotline (after hrs) 1-800-387-5437

IT SHOULDN'T HURT TO BE A CHILD

I was so small, just six years old
When my father's crown turned to tarnished gold
His hand became my enemy
No one else was there to see
"Come here" he said, "we'll play a game"
It had no rules, it had no name
It fed on fear and feasted on shame
I was a child, I wasn't to blame
What could I do? I loved him so
To make him happy, I would go
Into the bathroom with heavy heart
The child I was fell apart
We played "the game" for several years
With silent lips so no one hears
It's "our little secret" he said to me
I longed to tell, to be set free
One day he decided he "needed it all"
He took my body, my heart, my soul
I told my mother what he did



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REPORTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND REPORTING, CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

This brochure is to prepare and assist parents in the event they are confronted with child sexual abuse or exploitation in their family. It is important for the parent to understand that these contents are intended to prepare you to properly respond to a “disclosure” should it occur. It is equally important to encourage you and your children to be aware and always careful, but not to be afraid.

HOW YOU REACT

Should your child disclose sexual abuse you must be prepared to help your child. The way you react to a child’s disclosure of sexual exploitation is a very important part of how your child handles it. As an adult and a parent you must control your personal feelings and focus all of your energy on how you can assist your child in recovering from it. The guidelines below will assist you to deal with such a situation in an appropriate manner.

THINGS NOT TO DO

Do not over react to anything that your child may disclose. Remember that the child opens up to you for your support. With your help and support, both of you will make it through these painful times. Do not criticize the child. Also, the worst thing you can do is to express anger at the child for having violated previous instructions. Avoid saying “I told you not to...”. Such remarks only serve to further hurt the child and interfere with your ability to help. It is definitely not the time to blame the child for what happened.

THINGS TO DO

Ensure the child’s privacy. Accompany the child to a private place where he or she can relate the incident. Be careful not to discuss the incident in front of people who do not need to know what happened.

YOU MUST

Help the child and convince them to tell you what happened. It is quite normal for children to fear telling others - especially parents. Assure the child that telling what happened is the right thing to do and that you will protect the child from future harm. It is most likely that a child molester have told the child that bad things will happen if the child ever told anyone what has happened. Therefore the child will be especially fearful of punishment or the loss of the parent’s love.

SHOW SIGNS

Of affection and express your love and confidence with words and gestures. Avoid sentences starting with “Why,” such as “Why didn’t you tell me this before?” Give the child positive messages such as “I’m proud of you for being so brave and telling me this” or “I know how you feel, I know you couldn’t help it.”

DO EXPLAIN

To the child that he or she has done no wrong. Most children have feelings of guilt and responsibility and assume that they are to blame for what happened. Most children are enticed or tricked into acts of abuse and think they should have been smarter or stronger.

BELIEVE THEM

You must remind yourself that children seldom lie about acts of abuse. It cannot be stressed enough that it is extremely important that the child feel that you believe what he or she has told you.

Your belief and trust in your child as well as the manner in which you react to a disclosure can keep open lines of communication with the child. In the future it will be vitally important that the child believe that you are sympathetic, understanding, in control, supportive, trustworthy and optimistic so that the child will be comfortable in making further disclosures and most important, comfortable in discussing their feelings in the future.

STEPS TO TAKE

- Notify the police
- Notify a social worker at the nearest government Social Services offices.

You must take these two steps immediately. Do not contact anyone else until you have taken steps one and two.

TRUST

Both the police and personnel from Social Services have experts to deal with matters of child abuse. Trust them. Quite often the offender will be a member of your family, or someone known and trusted by your family. Do not under any circumstances attempt to confront the person or to investigate the child’s allegations. You must be strong. Again, you must take steps one and two.
