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Empowering, Inc.
"Play with a purpose"



Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is not a pleasant topic, but we CAN guard against it. This edition of Skipping Stones is devoted to aiding responsible adults in protecting our children. The threat is in the community, but we are parents, teachers, neighbors, coaches, clergy, club leaders, etc -- and we stand in the way.

Most abuse takes place in a setting the family feels is safe, by an individual the child trusts - 93% of victims know their abuser. A parent or guardian can minimize the risk by wise choices, and equip their children through openness and education. Each of us can learn the signs, and know what to do if we suspect abuse. Ultimately, the responsibility to prevent child sexual abuse falls squarely on the shoulders of every adult that cares for children.

Please review the followings steps*, and look inside for great resources!¹

Minimize the Risk

- ~ **80% of the time abuse occurs in a one child/one adult relationship.** Get the details when your child spends time alone with a trusted adult: what's the plan, can you drop in? Observe your child's mood afterwards. Ask how the time was spent.
- ~ Monitor **Internet** use, which is essentially one-on-one, and can be used to lure.
- ~ **Older children** may offend against younger children. Ensure that there is supervision by more than one adult.
- ~ Enroll your child in **clubs/activities** that utilize the following: **A clearly defined policy** prohibiting (or minimizing) one-on-one situations, **training for staff** on how to take action, and the use of **ALL three screening tools** for hiring personnel (Background check, Personal Interview, and Professional References).

Top Reasons Parents Need to be Aware...

The Sad Numbers

1. 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused before the age of 18.²
2. 1 in 5 children are solicited sexually while on the internet.³
3. An estimated 39 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse exist in America today.⁴

Who are the Offenders

1. 30-40% of victims are abused by a family member.^{5,6}
2. Another 60% are abused by someone outside of the family whom they know and trust. Approximately 40% are abused by older or larger children whom they know.^{4,5}
3. 93% of all victims know their abusers.⁷

The Plight of Victims

Victims of child sexual abuse report more symptoms of PTSD, more sadness, and more school problems than non-victims.⁸

... but together we can prevent abuse!

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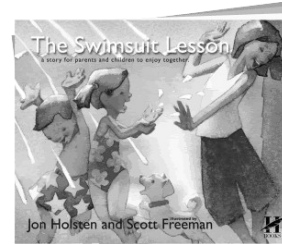
"Where I Feel" Game

1. Sit down with your child at a quiet moment.
2. Each of you should draw yourself on a piece of paper—your bodies (arms, legs, and all), dressed for a wonderful day.
3. In turn, each of you should draw a circle around part of your own figure's body, and describe something you feel.
Ex. Child draws a circle around the knee, saying that their scrape from recess hurts.
Ex. Parent draws a circle around their heart, saying how much he/she loves the child

After a few turns, explain how we can always tell each other what we feel, and where; how sometimes being scared can make our stomach hurt, or being happy can make our breathing deep. No matter what, your child is always welcome to tell you what they feel.

Check it Out!

For talking with your kids, see *The Swimsuit Lesson*, by Jon Holsten.



You may be faced with a situation where you suspect abuse but don't have any proof. Suspicions are scary, but trust your instincts. Have the courage to report the suspected abuse.

~ Step 6 "7 Steps to Protecting our Children"

*Material sourced from steps 2 and 3 of "7 Steps to Protecting our Children," a superb booklet published by Darkness to Light. This, along with other valuable resources for parents and children, is available at www.darkness2light.org, or by calling (843) 965-5444.

Child Sexual Abuse

Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime. ~ Hebert Ward

Protection Flash

Steps to take if your child reports abuse

- 1) BELIEVE YOUR CHILD - Children rarely ever lie about sexual abuse
- 2) Remain calm, patient, and gentle - Your response will guide how your child handles the situation. In the face of anger or disbelief, a child may shut down, or change their story, even if abuse is occurring.
- 3) Privately, ask your child to tell you what happened. Just get a general sense: It is best not to ask for details, which could alter the child's memory of events.
Seek the help of a professional who is trained to interview children, and counsel victims of sexual abuse. Their partnership and guidance could be essential to the child's healing, and to any criminal prosecution.¹
- 4) Do not confront the abuser with the child present
- 5) Tell your child that they did the right thing by telling you.
- 6) Help your child to know that it is not their fault.
- 7) Reassure your child that you love them, and are not angry at them. Explain that you will protect them from any further abuse. Ask him or her if they have any worries.
- 8) Report the abuse -- inside or outside the family.^{1,9}

You will be taking a stand for your child, and opening doors for his or her healing. Likely, you will also be protecting (or rescuing) other children. And in Washington State, reporting is required by law.



What is child sex abuse?

"Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other."

Signs may include -

- ◆ Fear of being alone with a particular person.
- ◆ Emotional upset; changes of behavior at school, or with friends.
- ◆ Changes in sleeping patterns or appetite for no apparent reason.
- ◆ Acting out sexually.

However, some victims of sexual abuse show no obvious signs.⁹

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Equipping Your Child

~ **Less than 30% of parents** talk with their child about sexual abuse...

Education gives a child the opportunity to react. Communication brings trust, openness, and safety. These shine a light on what offenders try to keep dark.

- ~ Teach children **about their bodies**, and what abuse is. Explain the **boundaries** that others must respect.
- ~ Explain to your child that it's **"against the rules"** for any adult to act toward them in a sexual way.
- ~ **Be proactive.** If your child is reluctant to be with a certain adult, ask why. If an adult seems to be inappropriately close, trust your instincts, and step in.

Where to turn if you suspect abuse

If you suspect that a child is being abused, OR

If you suspect that an adult is offending, here are some steps you can take.

For emergency, call 9-1-1

Child Abuse Help Lines have staff that are trained to listen and help take appropriate steps.

(509) 624-7273 - 24 hour; Sexual Assault & Family Trauma Response Center; Lutheran Social Services *(509) 363-3333* Child Protective Services

(866) FOR-LIGHT - operated by "Darkness to Light"

Children's Advocacy Centers are able to coordinate all the professional services necessary, including legal, social services, and medical.¹⁰

Spokane - Partners with Families and Children (509) 473-4810

Colville - Kids First Children's Advocacy Center (509) 684-3796

Wenatchee - North Central Washington Child & Family Advocacy Center (509) 665-0164

Kennewick - Sexual Assault Response Center Kids Haven (509) 374-5391

Cut out and keep game on back



Draw or write about what it feels like to be protected.

...BEING A CHILD'S RESCUER...

- It requires a **tremendous act of courage** and trust for a child to disclose sexual abuse.
(Children may tell "parts" of what happened, or pretend it happened to someone else to gauge adult reaction)¹
- Your response will be **the first step** towards the child's healing or isolation.
(Almost 80% initially deny abuse, or are tentative in disclosing; approximately 75% disclose accidentally)¹¹
- Each adult must be **conscientious** toward all the children in their lives, with a listening ear and attentive mind.
(Children who disclose sexual abuse often tell a trusted adult other than a parent)¹