

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child Sexual Abuse is any sexual contact between a child and an adult or older child that causes sexual pleasure or stimulation for the adult. Sexual abuse includes:

- * incest
- * rape
- * sodomy
- * sexual touching the child's genital areas
- * sexual talk
- * encouraging a child to undress and pose in a sexual manner
- * forced prostitution
- * exposing a child to adult movies or photographs

Who sexually abuses children?

In most instances, a sexual abuser is someone the child knows and trusts.

Sexual abusers can be fathers, mothers, step-parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, neighbours, church leaders, school teachers and babysitters, etc.

Sexual abusers can be either heterosexual or homosexual and can be either married or single. Most offenders are not mentally ill.

Some offenders have been physically abused themselves as children, some offenders are physically attracted to children. Some abuse children so they can feel the power and control they do not feel in relationship with adults. Whatever the reason for the abuse, it is a criminal offence and the effects can last a lifetime.

Why children don't tell:

Children often find it very difficult to talk about sexual abuse. Feelings of shame and fear can be overwhelming. Some of the reasons why a child does not disclose are:

- * the child has been threatened by the abuser
- * the child is afraid no-one will believe him/her
- * the child feels confused because he/she is afraid of the abuser but enjoys the attention.
- * the child blames him/herself feeling that in some way he/she is responsible
- * the child worries about what will happen to the perpetrator...remember, this is often a family member.
- * the child may be too young to realize the abuse is wrong or cannot put it into words.

It is SO important that sexual abuse is recognized and reported early to protect the child against further abuse and ensure the child's physical and emotional health.

**The Crisis Centre
Knowles House
Princess Margaret Hospital
P.O. Box EE-17910
Nassau, The Bahamas**

**Tel: (242) 328-0922
fax: (242) 328-7824
e-mail: crisiscentre@batelnet.bs
www.bahamascrisiscentre.org**

What you should do if a child discloses:

- * Believe the child....most children do not lie about sexual abuse. It is important that you let the child know you believe him/her.
- * Reassure the child that the abuse was not his/her fault.
- * Keep calm and listen to the child.....do not force the child to tell you more than he or she feels comfortable in saying....it is likely that more details will come out as time goes on.
- * Seek medical attention.....a medical exam is necessary to ensure that all external and internal injuries are treated. A medical exam may also provide evidence of abuse.
- * Report the abuse to the police and the Crisis Centre on 328-0922

What you should NOT do:

- * Do not pressure the child to talk unless he or she is ready.
- * Do not confront the offender. Let the appropriate authorities do this.
- * Do not make promises to the child.....you may make promises you cannot keep like "I will not tell anyone else" "You will never be hurt again" or "I will make sure (the offender) goes to jail. The child trusts you and you do not want to break that trust.

***Remember:
The Crisis Centre has a 24-hour
Hotline: (242) 328-0922***

What are the signs of Child Sexual Abuse?

Because children find it difficult to reveal that they have been abused, it is the responsibility of parents, teachers, nurses and other adults to recognize the signs.

The following is a list of some of the signs of possible child sexual abuse:

- * "stomach ache"
- * complaints of not feeling well
- * extreme changes in behaviour
- * fear of certain people or places
- * nightmares and other sleep disturbances
- * regression to infantile behaviour
- * excessive masturbation
- * inappropriate interest in sexual matters
- * frequent genital infection or irritation
- * difficulty with bowel movement, urination or swallowing

In older children, other signs may be:

- * self-mutilation
- * attempted suicide
- * eating disorders
- * sexually transmitted diseases
- * problems with discipline
- * sexually harassing other children
- * running away
- * pregnancy
- * promiscuity

None of the above behaviours alone necessarily indicate child sexual abuse, but a combination of them over a period of time suggest that the child is being sexually abused and should be investigated.

How can I protect my child ?

Teach your child:

- *to feel good about him/herself
- * the difference between safe and unsafe touches
- * to say "no" to any request that makes him/her uncomfortable
- * that no-one has a right to hurt him/her, whether it is family member, friend or neighbour or a stranger.
- *to tell you if any adult or older child asks him/her to keep a secret
- * that you will always believe and protect him/her

Children are often "groomed" or prepared for sexual assault. The abuser builds the trust of the child and may give gifts and privileges to the child over a period of time. This makes it easier to draw the child into sexual activity without the use of force.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of child sexual abuse, please contact

The Crisis Centre on 328-0922

or

Child Protective Services on
322-2POD, 326-1451
326-0526 or 326-5560

Sexual abuse usually begins gradually and increases over a period of time. It is rarely a one-time incident and often continues for years.



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