

EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO SELF PROTECT AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

- GET COMFORTABLE
 - Educate oneself about sexual abuse
 - “One in 9 girls and 1 in 53 boys under the age of 18 experience sexual assault”
 - Use proper names for body parts- i.e. breasts, vagina, penis
 - Talk to spouse, another adult, friend, priest about the subject until you are comfortable
- READ TOGETHER
 - Choose a book about good touch vs. secret touch as a teaching tool
 - Examples: Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept by Jayneen Sanders
 - My Body Is Private by Linda Walvoord Girard
 - I Can't Talk About It by Doris Sanford
 - Read it several times before reading it with the child
 - Cuddle with your child so that the child feels safe and knows that you are comfortable with the topic
 - Gauge how your child is reacting (confused, excited, uncomfortable, neutral, etc.)
 - Answer any questions
 - Respond calmly and with curiosity
 - Avoid appearing shocked or embarrassed
- TALK TOGETHER
 - Have a conversation with your child about the topic
 - Use open ended questions
 - Ask what they now know that they did not know before
 - The child may or may not want to talk about it, which is okay
 - Praise their effort in talking with you, if they do
 - Ask your child if they've ever been touched, inappropriate, secret touch
 - Let your child know that they can come to you if it ever happens. Assure your child that you will believe them and keep them safe regardless of who it is
 - Have a conversation about appropriate boundaries. Who is allowed to touch you where (parents while changing diapers for infants and toddlers, pediatrician only in the presence of a parent, only designated family members and caregivers)
Have this conversation as early as one year old and teach them to say “no” if an undesigned person tries to touch them
- SYMPTOMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE
 - Nightmares
 - Bedwetting
 - Avoids/fears certain individuals/places
 - Behavior problems at home and school
 - Unusual interest or knowledge of sexual matters
 - Masturbation (though some touching and exploration is age appropriate)
 - Withdrawal or restlessness
 - blood in underwear

- Oral fixation
- Unusual or inappropriate tearfulness
- General anxiety
- Notice if the frequency, intensity, duration of symptoms has changed
- ACTION
 - Believe them. If your child tells you that he/she has been molested
 - Stay calm and in control of your anger. Talk to another adult, not in the presence of the child
 - Let them know that they do not have to keep it a secret
 - Reassure them that you will keep them safe
 - Call child protective services or the police.
 - Sexual abuse is a crime. If the perpetrator is not stopped, they will abuse AGAIN
 - Seek support of psychologist or therapist
 - Teach resilience. Trauma is a real occurrence and within each person is the capacity to survive, cope and even thrive beyond tragedy.
 - Install hope, focusing on personal strength is an important part of recovery
- SELF CARE
 - As a parent, you may experience guilt, anger, shame and a myriad of other feelings. It is important to be able to process these feelings so that you can be more present for your child
 - Educate yourself about the stages of grief. It is a very similar experience
 - Know that children are very resilient, when dealt with properly, they are likely to recover well
 - Seek your own counseling to process the abuse
- PREVENTION PLAN
 - Tell others the facts
 - The Perpetrator has an ongoing sex drive directed towards children.
 - Often begins in adolescence, but has not been acted upon
 - Act fast
 - If suspected, needs to be evaluated and treated
 - Need early diagnosis and treatment by Mental Health specialists
 - Stopping one perpetrator, can save the perpetrator and dozens of victims.
- RESOURCE
 - National Sexual Assault Hotline 800.656.Hope (4673)
www.rainn.org
www.childwelfare.gov
www.nsvrc.org
<https://childmolestationprevention.org>
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