



Silentlambs

www.silentlambs.org 877-WTABUSE

If Your Child Becomes a Victim of Crime

Believe him or her. Many children who tell adults about crimes are afraid they will not be believed. Many aren't. Be sure to take your child seriously, even if a violent crime was not committed.

Reassure the child that what happened is not his or her fault. A child who was hurt or accosted while breaking a rule (such as being somewhere you said they were not allowed to go) may be especially afraid that you will be upset with him or her.

Immediately get him or her any needed medical attention. In the case of a sexual assault, an injury might not be obvious, and a medical exam is needed to detect internal injuries and screen for possible exposure to disease or infection.

Try to temper your own reaction. Your child is likely to become very upset if she or he sees that you are upset. They may also think that they did something wrong and take responsibility for your pain. They may decide it is better not to keep talking to you if you exhibit extreme emotions.

Trying to pretend something didn't happen or telling your child to "just forget about it" will not help. Both you and your child will experience stress related to the crime, whether or not you acknowledge it. The best way to cope with the problem is to talk, listen and get support.

Do not try to take the law into your hands. Your child needs you, and needs to try to get back some normalcy in his or her life. If you try to harm someone who has hurt your child, you could be arrested and even go to jail. Your child must then cope with this added trauma.

Report the crime -- even a suspected crime -- to the police.

Get support. Contact a local crime victim agency or child advocacy center. They can offer you and your child support and important information about your rights. Don't try to handle this alone. There are many organizations that can help you.

Your local phone book, law enforcement agency, or hospital can help you find local services. Or you can call the National Center for Victims of Crime's FYI program, a toll-free crime victim referral service at 1-800-FYI-CALL .

Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

Teach Your Child

1. Talk to your child on a daily basis and listen to what they are saying.
2. Teach your child about good and bad touches.
3. Teach your child names for the different parts of their body.
4. Teach them that no one is to touch their private areas or do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.
5. Without scaring your child, tell them that some adults might try to touch them in an inappropriate manner, even adults they might know.

6. Tell them that they should not keep secrets from their parents, even if someone has threatened to harm them or their parents.

These signs are not in and of themselves, conclusive evidence that your child was sexually abused. They must be looked at in conjunction with other behaviors and factors.

Q: Is Most Childhood Sexual Abuse Committed By Strangers?

A: No. Strangers are not the most common perpetrators of sexual abuse. Most children are sexually abused by someone known or related to them, often in a position of trust or authority. Studies indicate that no more than 10% to 30% of sex offenders were strangers, meaning that up to 90% of children sexually abused had some type of relationship with their abuser .

Children are abused most often by someone that they know such as a relative, the best liked coach, the pillar of the community, pediatrician, teacher, scout leader or religious leader. T rick y people who look just like you and me but try to manipulate our children into certain actions or situations.

Q: Who Sexually Abuses Children?

A: Males are reported to be the abusers in up to 95% of cases reported. According to Dr. Gene Abel in a National Institute of Mental Health Study, offenders begins molesting by age 15. Profiles from the FBI academy and The National Center For Missing and Exploited Children report that 3/4 of sexual predators are younger than 35 and 80% are of normal intelligence. A U.S. Department of Justice report of incarcerated violent offenders found that 70% of those serving time for violent crimes against children were white. Perpetrators come from all ethnic and socioeconomic positions in our society. Most childhood sexual abuse, up to 90% occurs with someone a child has an established and trusting relationship with, whether know or not by the parent. Approximately 30% of that 90% are relatives.

Offenders who commit incest abuse more than one of their children and more than half are also involved with children outside their homes.

Q: Are All Child Molesters The Same?

A: No. According to Kenneth Lanning, an FBI Supervisory Agent, child molesters can be divided into two groups. The situational molester is not a true pedophile because he doesn't prefer having sex with children but instead turns to them for any number of reasons including stress, boredom, curiosity or because he is sexually or morally indiscriminate. The preferential child molester is considered the true pedophile because he prefers having sex with children and actually seeks them out. He is sexually attracted to children and has the potential to molest large numbers of victims.

Q: What Can I DO To Help Prevent My Child From Being Sexually Abused Or Abducted?

A: Establish and explain healthy boundaries with your child and explain that people have certain roles. For example their music teacher teaches them music, sports coach teaches sports. It is important to be aware and understand the limits or boundaries of those relationships.

Educate yourself and your children as to the "tricks" that perpetrators use to lure and/or groom children. The National Center For Missing and Exploited Children stress the importance of educating children using clear, calm, reasonable messages about situations and actions to look out for instead of confusing profiles or images of strangers.

Incarcerated pedophiles tell us to be suspicious if someone seems more interested in your children than you. One convicted offender said that parents are so naive-they're worried about strangers and should be worried about their brother-in-law. They just don't realize how devious we can be. Another offender told parents that they should "know that we will use any way we can to get to children."

Always monitor your children while they are on the internet and stress the importance of never giving out their name and address.

Q: Are There Any Red Flags That I Can Watch Out For?

A: Yes. Following is a listing of characteristics which on their own may not indicate a problem but accompanied with other red flags may indicate a problem:

- Someone Who Wants To Spend More Time With Your Child Than You
- Someone Who Manages To Get Time Alone With Or Attempts To Be Alone With Your Child Or Other Children

- Someone Who Insists On Hugging, Touching, Kissing, Tickling, Wrestling With or Holding A Child Even When A Child doesn't Want This Affection
- Is Overly Interested In The Sexuality Of A Child or Teen
- Spends Most Of His/Her Spare Time With Children And Has Little Interest In Spending Time With Individuals Their Own Age
- Someone Who Has Few or No Boundaries
- Regularly Offers To Babysit, Help Out Or Takes Children On Overnight Outings Alone
- Buys Expensive Gifts or Gives Children Money For No Reason
- Takes Children Out For Day Trips or Evening Events Alone
- Frequently Walks In On Children/Teens In The Bathroom Or While Changing

Legal Action

Suspicious of child sexual abuse should be reported to a child protective services agency or law enforcement agency. Local child protection agencies investigate intrafamilial abuse and the police investigate extrafamilial abuse. The law requires professionals who work with children to report suspected neglect or abuse.

In addition to reporting child sexual abuse to the authorities, victims can sue their abusers in civil court to recover monetary damages or win other remedies (Crnich & Crnich, 1992). Many states have extended their criminal and civil statutes of limitation for child sexual abuse cases (National Center for Victims of Crime, 1995). In addition, the delayed discovery rule suspends the statutes of limitation if the victim had repressed all memory of the abuse or was unaware that the abuse caused current problems (Crnich & Crnich, 1992).

Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

Survivors of child sexual abuse use coping mechanisms to deal with the horror of the abuse. One such mechanism, protective denial, entails repressing some or all of the abuse. This may cause significant memory gaps that can last months or even years. Victims also use dissociative coping mechanisms, such as becoming numb, to distance themselves from the psychological and physiological responses to the abuse. They may also turn to substance abuse, self-mutilation and eating disorders. In order to recover, adult survivors must adopt positive coping behaviors, forgive themselves, and relinquish their identities as survivors (Sgroi, 1989). The healing process can begin when the survivor acknowledges the abuse. When working with adult survivors of child sexual abuse, therapists should consider the survivor's feeling of security and the personal and professional ramifications of disclosure.

Societal influences play a big role in the recovery process. Although males are raised to shoulder responsibility for what happens to them, male victims need to understand that the victimization was not their fault. Only then can they begin to accept that they were not responsible for the abuse (Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, 1990).

Beware of over-zealous identification. If several signs are present do not question your child or ask leading questions .Contact a professional (i.e., therapists or **MASA @ 704-895-0489).**