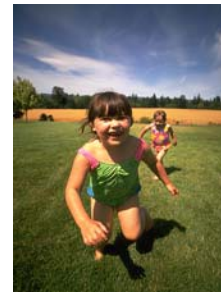




Abuse in Our World

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Child Abuse is the harm, or neglect of, a child by another person whether adult or child. Five out of every 10 children are abused. Child abuse happens in all cultural, ethnic, and income groups. Child abuse can be physical, emotional/verbal, sexual or through neglect, and may cause serious injury to the child, or even result in death.

October is the month to remember and honor the women and children in the world. Three in every 10 women are abused and the highest rate of violence affects women ages 16 to 24. A child who has been exposed to abuse in the home holds the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next. Low self-esteem and various fears prevent women from getting treatment and from getting out of the situation.

Signs of possible abuse include:

Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained or repeated injuries such as welts, bruises, or burns.
- Injuries that are in the shape of an object (belt buckle, electric cord, etc.)
- Injuries not likely to happen given the age or ability of the child. For example, broken bones in a child too young to walk or climb.
- Disagreement between the child's and the parent's explanation of the injury.
- Unreasonable explanation of the injury.
- Obvious neglect of the child (dirty, undernourished, inappropriate clothes for the weather, lack of medical or dental care).
- Fearful behavior of environment, self, and others.

Emotional - Verbal Abuse:

- Aggressive or withdrawn behavior low self-esteem.
- Little or no eye contact when speaking.
- Shying away from physical contact with parents or adults.
- Afraid to go home.
- Fearful of new environment/ surroundings.



Sexual Abuse:

- Child tells you he/she was sexually mistreated.
- Child has physical signs such as:
 - Difficulty in walking or sitting.
 - Stained or bloody underwear.
 - Genital or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge.
 - Bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area.
- Child has behavioral and emotional signs such as:
 - Difficulty eating or sleeping.
 - Soiling or wetting pants or bed after being potty trained.
 - Acting like a much younger child.
 - Excessive crying or sadness.
 - Withdrawing from activities and others.
 - Talking about or acting out sexual acts beyond normal sex play for age.



Abuse can happen in any family, regardless of any special characteristics. However, in dealing with parents, be aware of characteristics of families in which abuse may be more likely:

- Families who are isolated and have no friends, relatives, church or other support systems.
- Parents who tell you they were abused as children.
- Families who are often in crisis (have money problems, move often).
- Parents who abuse drugs or alcohol.
- Parents who are very critical of their child.
- Parents who are very rigid in disciplining their child.
- Parents who show too much or too little concern for their child.
- Parents who feel they have a difficult child.
- Parents who are under a lot of stress.

If you suspect child abuse of any kind, you should:

- Take the child to a quiet, private area.
- Gently encourage the child to give you enough information to evaluate whether abuse may have occurred.
- Remain calm so as not to upset the child.
- If the child reveals the abuse, reassure him/her that you believe him/her, that he/she is right to tell you, and that he/she is not bad.
- Tell the child you are going to talk to persons who can help him/her.
- Return the child to the group (if appropriate).
- Record all information.
- Immediately report the suspected abuse to the proper local authorities. In most states, reporting suspected abuse is required by law.



How We Can Help:

1. Donate a phone program – “Call to Protect.” The program collects cell phones and refurbishes them with 911 capabilities and with programmed numbers, such as the local shelter agency. Visit www.wirelessfoundation.org for more information to donate phones.
2. Wear purple ribbon on doors, trees, or on your car antenna to support victims and advocates of domestic violence in homes, neighborhoods, work places, and schools. The purple ribbon has been recognized by state legislatures in proclamations, commemorating October as National Domestic Violence Awareness month.
3. Financial donations to shelters, centers, etc. for the abused. Some local shelters ALA is involved with are Olive Crest and Orangewood. We make monthly donations to assist with games, toys, diapers, clothes and other needed items. We are also involved with walks and events to raise money for an abused child or family.
4. Time donations: Time in my opinion is even more valuable than money. Spend time with children and adults who have been abused such as reading a story, volunteer at a shelter, hospital, or police station in your community. Leave an impression on their hearts and give them the time they deserve.
5. National Domestic Violence hotline 1-800-799-SAFE. If you know anyone who is abused or has been abused send them to the hotline for support immediately.

If you employ or accept volunteers or workers to help you care for the children in your facility or home, you should check their background for a past history of child abuse or other criminal activity. Contact your local police department. Many states require that child care providers have background and criminal history checks.

Dealing with abuse is emotionally difficult for a provider or parent. As a child care provider and/or parent, you should get training in recognizing and reporting child abuse before you are confronted with a suspected case or situation. If you suspect a case of child abuse, you may need to seek support from your local health department, child support services department, or other sources within your area.

The bruises and bones may have healed, but the emotional pain and abuse linger for years. We need to support, assist and help these abused women, children and families to get past their fears and find courage and inspiration within themselves and the world around them.



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