

Sexual abuse - how parents can help their child

As a parent, you have an important role in helping your child recover from sexual abuse. This information takes a brief look at ways to help your child and yourself through this difficult experience.

Helping your child recover from sexual abuse

Your role in helping your child recover is crucial. They will need your ongoing support, belief and protection. It will be helpful if you try to:

- Spend time with your child
- Accept that your child may be acting differently
- Respect your child's wishes and be sensitive to their emotional needs.

Do's and don'ts when you speak with your child

The most important message to get across to your child is that you do not blame them for the abuse.

Do:

- Tell them you believe them
- Reassure and support them
- Tell them you do not blame them
- Tell them you will try to keep them safe
- Let them know you love them
- Let them know you are glad they told you
- Give them time to talk at their own pace
- Make time to spend with your child so you can talk privately
- Be open and clear
- Allow your child to talk about how they feel
- Try to be calm when talking with your child as they may be confused by anger
- Try to understand as much as you can about the effects of child sexual abuse so that you can best support yourself and your child.

Don't:

- Blame your child for what happened
- Suggest that it would have been better if they had not told anyone
- Tell your child that you blame yourself
- Tell your child to forget it ever happened
- Tell your child not to talk about it
- Get upset when your child talks about the abuse.

Look after yourself

This is a very difficult time and you need to take care of yourself so that you can cope and be there to help your child. It may help if you:

- Talk to a counsellor, close friend or to other parents of children who have been sexually abused
- Look after your health
- Organise some time out for yourself.

Where to get help

- Centres Against Sexual Assault. Tel. 1800 806 292 (24 hours)
- If your family is involved with a Child Protection worker speak to them about support services.
- Your local Department of Human Services office
- Local support groups for parents of children who have been sexually abused
- Legal Aid offices
- Your local community health centre.

Things to remember

- You have a vital role in helping your child recover from sexual abuse.
- You are not responsible for the abuse. The abuser is the only person responsible.
- This is an extremely difficult time, so seek help and look after your needs as well as your child's needs.

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