

MODULE 12

AGENDA

- I. Common Behavioral Concerns
- II. State the Rules
- III. Responding to Challenging Behaviors
- IV. Factors that Influence Healing
- V. Preventing Allegations



Characteristics that are Helpful in Parenting a Traumatized Child

- ◆ A willingness to be different, or experience embarrassing situations.
- ◆ An ability to wait for the child's trust of you and your family to develop.
- ◆ A sense of hope that this child will "make it" and develop healthy interactions with the "world."
- ◆ A willingness to accept training and help (i.e., respite, education by social worker).
- ◆ A willingness to accept the child and his or her history.
- ◆ A sense of humor.

We are some of America's
20,000
young adults
"Aging Out" of
Foster**Care**
this year.



WAYS TO SUPPORT A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED



- Let the child know you are there for them; be supportive without being pushy.
 - Allow the child to be honest and open about his or her feelings. Open communication is both positive and healthy.
 - If the child is creative, encourage it. This is also a way for the child to communicate his or her feelings.
 - Be open and honest with the child about what has happened and what will happen to them.
 - Recognize the child when he/she has done something good. This will provide positive reinforcement and strengthen self-esteem.
 - Have the child participate in extracurricular activities - especially sports. Such activities allow energy to be focused outward.
 - Help him or her remember that he/she is still a child and that it is OK to have fun.
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- Establish clear and consistent family rules, guidelines, and schedules. This will provide structure for the child.
 - Make privacy a priority. This will help the child feel safe.
 - Provide a safe environment to prevent further sexual abuse.

COMMON BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

- Compulsive or public masturbation
- Suicide attempts
- Self-mutilation
- Seductive behavior
- Promiscuous behavior with peers
- Poor relationships with peers
- Fear of a particular person, place or thing (For example, if the abuse occurred in the bathroom, the child may show fear in that room)
- Aggressive behavior towards younger children
- School problems



Resource Family House Rules

Define your family's "house rules." Some recommendations are:

- Knock before entering bedrooms/bathrooms.
- Nudity is only permitted in bathrooms and the privacy of your own bedroom.
- Appropriate clothing is expected (i.e., robe, underwear).
- Self bathing and dressing is expected, unless the child is developmentally unable.
- No kisses on the mouth.
- Only appropriate touches are allowed (Be specific for the child!).
- If any inappropriate touching occurs, the child must tell someone with whom they feel safe, and that someone **MUST** be an adult.
- No swimming in a pool, unless an adult is present.
- Parent must know where you are at all times.
- School attendance is expected.
- No pornography.
- You can say "No" to an adult.
- No wrestling or tickling.

Define specific rules about affection and contact (especially important for children who have experienced sexual abuse):

- Hugs/Kisses? - No kissing in bed.
- Sleeping arrangements? Who sleeps where? **(In foster care, each child should have his or her own bed).**
- It is strongly recommended that affection be carried out in public spaces, which promotes safety.

Define specific rules for areas of the house and privacy:

- Bathroom
- Bedrooms



Teach children to KNOCK when a door is closed!

Guidelines for the Sexually Abused Child

Privacy is something to which everyone has a right. Children should be taught to knock when a door is closed, and adults need to role model the same behavior.

Bedrooms and Bathrooms: These two locations are often prime stimuli for children who have been sexually abused, since abuse commonly occurs in these rooms.

Wrestling and Tickling: As common and normal as these childhood behaviors are, they are often tinged with sexual overtones. They can put the weaker child in an overpowered and uncomfortable or humiliating position. Try to keep tickling and wrestling to a minimum.

Clothing: It is a good idea for family members to be conscious of what they wear outside of their bedrooms. Seeing others in their underclothes or pajamas may be over-stimulating to a child who has been sexually abused.

Touching: No one should touch another person without permission. A person's private parts (i.e., the areas covered by a bathing suit) should not be touched, except during a medical examination, or in the case of young children, if they need help with bathing or toileting.

Saying "No": Children need to learn that it is their right to say "No!" assertively, when someone touches them in a way they do not like. Help them to practice this skill.

Sex Education: All children, including the child who has been sexually abused, need basic information about how they develop sexually. They also will benefit from an atmosphere in which it is OK to talk about sex. Appropriate words for body parts (i.e., penis, vagina, breasts, and buttocks) will give the child the words to describe what happened to him or her. Suggestive or obscene

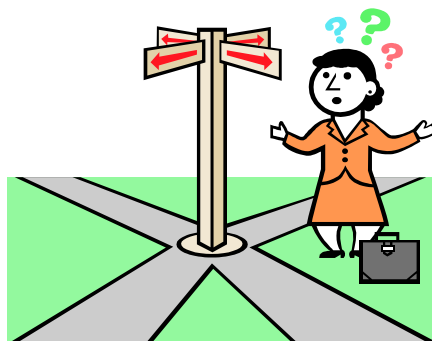
Guidelines for the Sexually Abused Child (Cont'd)

language is sometimes a trigger for old feelings for a child who was sexually abused, and should not be allowed.

No “Secrets”: Make it clear that no “secret games”, particularly with adults, are allowed. Tell children that if an adult suggests such a game, they should tell you immediately.

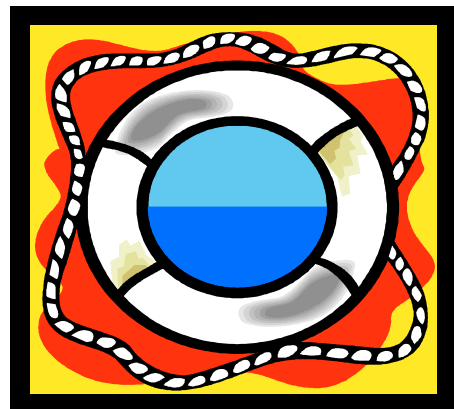
Being Alone With One Other Person: If your child is behaving seductively, aggressively, or in a sexually acting out manner, these are high-risk situations. During those times, it is advisable not to put yourself in the vulnerable position of being accused of abuse. In addition, other children may be in jeopardy of being abused. Therefore, whenever possible during these high-risk situations, try not to be alone with your child or allow him/her to be alone with only one other child.

Behaviors and Feelings: Help children differentiate between feelings and behaviors. It is normal to have all kinds of feelings, including sexual feelings. However, one does not always act on all the feelings he or she has. Everyone has choices about which feelings he or she acts on, and everyone (except very young children) must take responsibility for his or her own behavior.



General Guidelines for Providing A Safe Environment

- ✓ Know your child's schedule, and who they are with at all times.
- ✓ Have a specific list of who is permitted to pick up your child from school.
- ✓ Beware of any person (older child or adult), who constantly plays with little children.
- ✓ Check references on all babysitters.
- ✓ Be aware of changes in your child's behavior.



How To Respond To Challenging Behavior

What a Child Does:

Sexually Acting Out with other children or the resource parent.

How to Respond:

Be straightforward with the child as to what behavior is acceptable (i.e., hugs, kisses on cheeks) and what behaviors are not acceptable (i.e., kissing on the lips, touching in inappropriate ways). Establish the rules in a definitive but caring manner.

What a Child Does:

Compulsive Masturbation, privately and publicly, sometimes using objects.

How to Respond:

Be aware of the frequency of masturbation. Communicate this with the caseworker.

Avoid sexual stimuli in the home and the child's environment (i.e., videos, magazines).

Make privacy a priority with family rules and explain that while masturbation is natural, it is done in private.

What a Child Does:

The child may cause injury to him or her self or show signs of **Self-Mutilation**.

How to Respond:

Ensure that the child receives counseling (i.e., individual and/or group sessions).

Lock up items that can be used to cause bodily injury, including knives, scissors, and razors.

What a Child Does:

Exhibits **Aggressive Behavior** toward other children.

How To Respond To Challenging Behavior

How to Respond:

Demonstrate how to be angry, without being aggressive. For example, use even tones and calm behavior when disagreeing with others. Let the child see you behaving in a non-threatening way.

Teach the child how to express anger verbally, rather than physically.

Provide options for expressing anger with physical activity, instead of aggressive behavior (i.e., punching a bag, scream into a pillow, running a mile, shooting baskets), until the anger has dissipated.

What a Child Does:

Shows signs of using **alcohol or other drugs**.

How to Respond:

Provide substance abuse assessment, and individual and family counseling.

Encourage the child to join Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous.

Have open discussions with others who have abuse issues about the impact the addiction has had on them.

Provide information about addiction and recovery.

What a Child Does:

Runs away for hours or days.

How to Respond:

Immediately report this to the police! Then notify the agency!

Establish consequences for running away; have the child participate in establishing the rules.

Allow the child to have play dates with or visit previous friends

How To Respond To Challenging Behavior

(i.e., from former school or neighborhood).

What a Child Does:

Brings home bad reports, grades, or skips school.

How to Respond:

Encourage the child to do better in school.

Have open communication with the school and assist in establishing support and expectations.

If the child is afraid at school, attend school with him or her, until he or she feels safe.

What a Child Does:

The child may threaten to commit suicide or take steps toward committing suicide.

How to Respond:

Be empathic. Express an understanding for why the child feels as she or he does.

Look for signs and symptoms of depression.

Ensure that the child receives counseling.

Recognize good behavior.

What a Child Does:

Has nightmares and fears of persons from a specific gender or race, or has a fear of a particular place or type of place.

How to Respond:

Establish a bedtime routine and encourage a feeling of safety by reading to the child, leaving a night light on, or providing a stuffed animal.

Acknowledge the child's fears. This will help to build trust.

Reassure the child by discussing the safety of the home and the privacy or his or her room.

Teach children how to protect themselves when feeling threatened or unsafe. Explain that you and others (specifically name individuals) will help him or her to be safe.

Supporting the Sexually Abused Child

There are several ways resource parents can meet the emotional needs of a child who has been sexually abused.

- Support and nurture the child.
- Tell and show the child that he or she is worthy, and deserves to feel safe and protected – emotionally and physically.
- Enroll the child in sex education.
- Encourage the child to communicate openly, and to share feelings.
- Be clear about family rules -- what is and is not acceptable, as well as the consequences for misbehavior.
- Be honest and straightforward about what has, and what will happen.
- Be aware of behaviors and reasons for behaviors, but do not make light of the behaviors.

The challenging behavior a child exhibits is a sign of an inner desire. By behaving a certain way, the child who has been sexually abused may really want or need to:

- Feel safe and secure.
- Feel that the sexual abuse will not happen again.
- Feel close to someone; to get affection and attention.
- Experience physical pleasure in a safe environment.
- Feel valued as a person, and worthy of love.
- Feel in control of his or her life.

To achieve these things, the child may need to learn:

- How to work through anger and self-hatred.
- The appropriate way to express anger (non-threateningly and non-aggressively).
- How to feel emotions honestly and directly.
- How to express low self-esteem.
- How to work through fear and loss of control related to the sexual abuse.
- How to work through feelings of vulnerability.
- How to feel capable and successful.

Tools to Prevent Allegations

Many of these tools apply to all children in care.



- ✓ Be specific on house rules of dress, privacy, touch, etc.
- ✓ Become comfortable talking about sexual abuse, sexuality, and personal boundaries and space.
- ✓ **Never use physical punishment.** Resource parents are prohibited from using any form of physical means to discipline a child in care.
- ✓ Avoid tickling a sexually abused child.
- ✓ Avoid using sarcasm or suggestive language.
- ✓ Maintain a log of sexually acted out behaviors, and report any such incidents to the social worker immediately by phone and in writing. Log any time a child seriously confuses you with another person, especially a previous abuser. Inform social worker immediately.
- ✓ Document actions taken to deal with inappropriate behavior.
- ✓ Do not allow a child who is sexually reactive (i.e., currently displaying sexual behaviors) to be alone with another child or adult.
- ✓ Provide the child with his/her own bedroom, if possible. (This is very important for a sexually reactive child.)
- ✓ Create a support system for family members.
- ✓ Take care of yourself, and create some personal time for yourself.
- ✓ Continue to attend training, and seek out information from reliable sources.
- ✓ Speak to the child's therapist on current issues and treatment.
- ✓ Do not force a child to speak about his/her abusive history.
- ✓ Always report suspected abuse to the agency and your case manager, especially after parent visits.
- ✓ Keep a log or notebook on each child to document visitation, medical appointments, behavioral patterns or changes, and efforts to teach acceptable behavior.
- ✓ Document serious conflicts with parents, children, case managers, teachers, etc.
- ✓ Seek outside resources and assistance immediately, if behaviors or issues are beyond your abilities to deal with them.
- ✓ Invest in a Polaroid camera with date stamping. If the child has unsupervised visits, take pictures before and after the visit.

(Adapted from American Foster Care Resources, Inc.)