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ABOUT THIS BOOK

WELCOME TO THE BOOK THAT CHILD MOLESTERS DO NOT WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT!!

This book is part of a sexual abuse prevention series designed to effectively prevent non-parental sexual abuse. It is the result of years of research on sexual abuse and pedophile tendencies.

These programs are unique from all other abuse prevention programs currently available. The information for this book was gathered from child molesters themselves. By posing as a pedophile over the internet, we were able to base our programs on the most accurate knowledge of how molesters work. It is based on inside knowledge of everything from the lures they use to what they are thinking when they commit an act. Rather than relying on information from people in the prison system after they have been caught, it is based on knowledge of how they think and work in a natural environment.

The result is a highly effective prevention program, created in part by pedophiles themselves, and classroom tested to ensure that these concepts work. If applied properly, this method will achieve nearly perfect results.

This book is not intended to protect children from intra-family abuse or abuse by someone inside their home. The psychology behind such cases is drastically different and much more difficult to prevent. It will however, effectively prevent and catch nearly all forms of sexual abuse that loving parents will have to worry about.
INTRODUCTION

One of the scariest thoughts facing parents today is the thought of child molestation. For most parents, it is wrapped up in mystery and misunderstanding. Molestation is perceived to be unstoppable, unpredictable, and something our society has to live with. This view of the problem is both damaging and grossly misunderstood. Other parents assume that simply by teaching their children that nobody should touch them in their private area that they are protecting them. Sexual abuse prevention goes well beyond that.

We have several goals in this book. The first is to give parents a better understanding about sexual abuse. The biggest problem is that very few parents understand the true nature of the problem. Only by first understanding the nature of the problem can parents truly take steps to help protect their children. Better understanding regarding the subject of sexual abuse not only aids in prevention but will help reduce the mass hysteria regarding the subject that results in false reporting and paranoia that can do just as much harm.

The second goal is to prevent sexual abuse from happening. Through basic steps, children can be given the psychological tools to protect themselves and actually stop a potential molester in his or her tracks. The truth is, non-parental sexual abuse is preventable in nearly every circumstance. In cases where it can’t be prevented, it can be held to an isolated incident, sparing the child the most damaging effects of abuse and holding it to something the child can quickly recover from. Parents do not need to be left in the dark. They don’t need to feel helpless. And most importantly, they can protect their children, without having to compromise their child’s innocence.

Every year thousands of children are killed in car accidents because parents don’t take the time to ensure their children are properly buckled in. Every year thousands of people, including children, die because adults don’t take the time to check their smoke alarms. And every year, millions of molestations occur, because parents don’t take the time to educate their children so that they can avoid being an easy target for a molester. Sexual abuse does not have to be as widespread nor as fearful as it is, if parents work to address the issue.
Letter from the Author

In this book, we address a very real and serious threat to your children. We have done our best to create a tool that is practical and informative to parents. It is by no means our intention to offend anyone in any way with this material. It is authored by someone who was sexually abused as a child himself, and is sensitive to the subject. It is our goal to ensure every child can be protected by it.

We believe factual knowledge is essential to protect children. Sexual abuse is a topic that has more urban myths about it than most fantasy novels. It is surrounded by inaccuracies at just about every turn, that are highly regarded as fact to society. These perceptions keep our focus in places it shouldn’t be. They hinder prevention efforts. They distract from the reality of the problem, and create roadblocks to preventing the problem.

In this book, we do not endorse ideas that may be popular in society, but have no fact or logic to support them. Nor do we shy away from telling parents about mistakes they make that can damage their children after an incident, or make it easy for a molester to work in the first place. We do not paint molesters out to be horrible, because most often they aren’t. If you think it takes a horrible individual to molest your child, as opposed to an otherwise very caring but sexually confused individual, you will be caught off guard. We include illustrations and examples at times to emphasize a point, not because we are trying to be crude or make light of the situation. Information is presented that gives a truthful and accurate picture of the problem parents face, free from political bias or popular public opinion.

If you would like political correctness, or mainstream but inaccurate information, you are welcome to turn a blind eye and join those who lie to you in order to provoke emotions to further their agenda. If you want realistic protection for your children and an accurate understanding of the problem, then we hope you enjoy this book. It is not our intention to shock or to offend, but rather to inform. We apologize for any offense this may cause. We truly thank you for the time you are taking to become an informed parent. We need a lot more parents like you who are willing to take this step to protect their kids.

Thank you, and enjoy the book.
Chapter 1

Understanding Sexual Abuse

General Perceptions
You have better odds playing Russian Roulette with your children, than you do of raising them free from sexual abuse. That is, unless you take the time to address the subject.
One of the biggest obstacles we face in sexual abuse prevention is societies lack of understanding and knowledge about the subject. When I first started working on these programs, I thought I knew everything. Afterall, I had several workshops under my belt, had read through thousands of pages in sexual abuse books, and knew quite a bit about kids. Time would eventually prove how wrong many of my perceptions were.

Parents understanding of sexual abuse is even worse. I have yet to run into a parent who truly understands the problem, and I’ve worked with thousands of parents. Their views are often derived from news and media, which is usually about as accurate in its information as ‘Lord of the Rings’ is a history of earth. Even the most well-meaning parents, generally have little true knowledge of the problem. So let’s take a little time to get familiar with the realities of the problem.

**Why should I worry about abuse prevention for my kids?**
Just in case you were wondering about the necessity of reading this book and applying our programs...

- Because 25-40 percent of children will suffer sexual abuse during their childhood.
- Because it happens to GOOD PARENTS just as often as bad parents.
- Because sexual abuse occurs across all socioeconomic lines.
- Because children are inherently susceptible to being molested *unless* they are given abuse-specific training.
- Because the only way to stop abuse is through parents not leaving their children susceptible, and that comes with more than just teaching your kids about their private parts.

**Dispelling some myths**
Think you know all of the basic facts of sexual abuse? You may be surprised. Here are some common myths about the subject, along with the truth of the matter:

**Myth:** Sexual abuse only happens to “pretty little girls”
**Truth:** Boys are just as much of a target as girls. In fact, recent studies are beginning to show that more boys than girls are molested *outside the immediate family*. (CSV, 1991). So while girls overall still have a higher percentage rate, more boys than girls are falling victim to sexual abuse outside of the home. Cases involving boys go unreported far more often, as boys in general are less likely to report the activity. In cases that involve a female molester, boys are often disregarded or thought to be making things up. In cases involving a male molester, it can be more embarrassing for the child to talk about, and thus, less likely to be reported. The child’s looks have nothing to do with it; all children are at risk equally.

**Myth:** Sexual abuse is a problem of ‘dirty old men’ molesting children.
**Truth** Molesters come in all shapes and sizes. They are men and women, old and young, and come in all sorts of packages. The old saying “You cannot judge a book by its cover” is especially true when it comes to this.

**Myth:** Sexual abuse is a problem of strangers in parks.
**Truth** This is quite the opposite. Nearly all cases of sexual abuse occur by someone the child knows. Unfortunately, many times it is a parent or a close family member doing the abusing.
Myth: Sexual abuse is inevitable. We can’t prevent it, we can only treat the children afterwards.
Truth: Wrong!!!! Not only is sexual abuse preventable, but with a few basic countermeasures, prevention is highly effective. While we will not completely eradicate the crime, with more education, we can certainly cure the epidemic it has become. We can eliminate about half of all molestations. Non-parental sexual abuse is very preventable and very treatable, provided parents know the right steps to take to protect their children. The myth that it cannot

Myth: Only men are sexual abusers.
Truth: The majority of sexual abuse cases involve men, but women are by no means immune to the crime. There have been countless cases of sexual abuse involving women. Studies indicate that females comprise at least 20% of sexual assaults against children. (ATSA, 1996). I can also tell you in my Internet studies of pedophiles, there was never a shortage of women in the groups, and it would not be surprising if as many as 30-40% of molesters are female. Because society’s perception of what an abuser is favors women, and parents are quick to discredit a child who may make an accusation against a woman, actual numbers of cases involving women may be much higher than we think. Sadly, even society’s sexist ideals play a role. Which idea sounds more disturbing, a man having sex with a 13 year old girl, or a woman having sex with a 13 year old boy. In the latter instance, many people would be quick to consider the boy “getting lucky.”

Myth: Sexual abuse happens to high-risk children.
Truth: When it comes to sexual abuse, there is really no such thing as a ‘high risk child’. Sexual abuse crosses all sociological and economic lines. It can be just as much of a problem in a wealthy neighborhood as it can be in the ghetto suburbs. While there are certain traits that can put a child at a higher risk, they are human traits, and cross all walks of society. As disturbing as it sounds, most parents take little steps beyond telling their children “nobody should touch your privates”, and this alone, is no protection at all. Most children, in all area’s, with all kinds of parents, make easy targets unless they have abuse-specific training.

Myth: Molesters are monsters
Truth: While there are some monstrous ones, the majority are people just like you and me. They usually have a conscience, are usually very nice, and they are impossible to spot on the street. They are people who will otherwise care for your child as any parent would. The biggest mistake many organizations make, is to demonize child molesters. While the acts they commit are rather disgusting and despicable, most molestation are non-violent, the children go along with the acts, and they occur because an individual is sexually confused, not because they enjoy torturing or hurting children.

Myth: Children can ‘ask for abuse’ by wearing tank tops or other revealing clothes.
Truth: The chances of this are very slim. While there is an outside chance of this becoming a factor in a random case of stranger abuse, the odds are very minimal. What the child is wearing will make no difference to an abuser who knows the child. On the other side of the coin, parents who never let a four year old wear a tank top or skirt are in some ways robbing their children of innocence and reinforcing the ‘be shameful and cover up’ factor that contributes to sexual abuse.

Myth: There is no cure for molesters. If someone is caught once, they will continue to molest children no matter what.
Truth: Of all people convicted of sexual crimes against children, 18% of those released without treatment will recommit their crimes, 10% of those who are released with treatment will recommit. (Alaska recidivism Study, 1996) Other studies have shown as low as a 5% re-offense rate with treatment, meaning the overwhelming majority will not re-offend. (Lambie, 2003) Re-offense rates are actually much lower for sexual offenders than they are for that of the general prison population. (Bureau of Justice Statistics) This misperception is the most damaging our society has. Sexual abuse needs to be fought at the source of the crime, the abuser. Preventive measures taken to deal with prospective abusers can make a huge difference. It should make every parent cringe to know that we even have a statistic for those who were released without treatment.
Myth: **Children who know too much about sex are more likely to be abused**
Truth: It is just the opposite. Children who have a basic knowledge and understanding of sexuality are less likely to be abused, while children who know only what their abuser tells them, are at a much higher risk factor.

Myth: **Sexual abuse is hard to uncover. My daughter was examined by a leading psychologist, but he was unable to uncover information.**
Truth: It seems as though many people like to believe that all child molesters must be sorcerers. Once they say their spell and sprinkle on the magic pixie dust, many parents think nothing can be done to find out what really happened. The truth is, true sexual abuse is very easy to recognize by someone who is well educated in the subject. It is true that children don’t often come outright and tell about sexual abuse. However, we will show you how obvious the reasons for that are. Molester conditioning falls into simple psychology, and is very easy to defeat if you know how. Children who are sexually abused show the signs, and with a trained professional, will disclose the facts of the situation very vividly. If it is investigated by someone who knows what they are doing, and there is still doubt about it happening, chances are that no abuse actually occurred.

Myth: **There are only a few pedophiles out there. We can solve this problem through tougher penalties and by keeping offenders locked up.**
Truth: This is the biggest bait and switch ever performed, aimed at trying to convince the public they are safe. There are not only a few individuals. There are tens of millions. We can never lock them all up. 1 in 3 children do not get molested by a few pedophiles around the country that get around! It is as much of a problem to our society as is alcohol abuse. The only way to be safer is to confront the problem head on. Tackle the subject with your kids to keep them safer, while starting to treat offenders.

Myth: **Pedophiles are responsible for most child murders**
Truth: On occasion, a pedophile will murder a child. When that happens, it makes the news. However, pedophiles are on average no more murderous or violent than any other social group. There are no statistics anywhere that can validate this assumption. In fact, in 2004, more children were murdered by non-sexual felons than paroled sexual offenders. (U.S Bureau of Justice Statistics) Moreover, the number of child murders committed by non-pedophiles outnumber those that are committed by pedophiles by about 30 to 1. While it makes a captivating story when this does happen, statistically speaking, parents are much more dangerous to their children than pedophiles in this regard.

Myth: **Teaching children about sexual abuse scares them.**
Truth: Children can easily take in the information of the subject without feeling frightened. Most of abuse prevention does not involve informing you children that something might happen to them. It involves giving children a better understanding of concepts that they will use on a day to day basis, as well as if a molester ever targets them. We would not have you work with children on anything that scares them, and this material is designed to protect children of any age without taking away their innocence or scaring them in any way.

Myth: **A child who is sexually abused is destined to be damaged for life.**
Truth: Parents hear about the most extreme cases of sexual abuse through media outlets, because that is what is newsworthy. Most cases of sexual abuse are not nearly as damaging as they are made out to be. Each case varies depending on the circumstance, and many cases can be devastating, but generally speaking, it can be recovered from. We will get into specifics of how the damage is caused later.
Myth: My daughter always tells me everything. The other day she told me when a boy in her class was hugging her and kissing her. If she were to be abused, I would know about it.
Truth: While having a talkative child certainly does aid in abuse prevention, it is not a cure-all. While she may tell you about something like that with another child, will she tell you if she has been told not to? Threatened not to? Will she be able to tell you despite the psychological conditioning that a molester will impose? Will she be able to tell you when the situation involves something much more uncomfortable to her?

**At what age should abuse prevention start?**

Sexual abuse can occur at any age, and as a result, you should begin with your children as soon as possible. There are simple steps you can take to start abuse prevention as young as 14 or 15 months. One of the most important steps in abuse prevention is to raise children in a sexually healthy environment. The younger you start, the easier this will be. At about 3 years of age, or whenever they become more proficient in their language skills, you should start reinforcing the other concepts in this book with them. If you continuously reinforce the concepts throughout early childhood, by about age 8 children should have retained everything they will need to protect themselves from that point on.

**Types of sexual abuse**

**Parental sexual abuse**

Unfortunately, many incidents of sexual abuse are at the hands of parents. This type of sexual abuse is very hard to prevent, and unfortunately, it is by far the most damaging form of abuse as well.

**Incest**

Incest can be done by parents, but for the sake of this book we will refer to it separately. We will refer to incest as abuse by someone else in the family. It could be an older sibling, a grandparent, or a close family member.

**Friend or acquaintance abuse**

Most commonly a neighbor (adult or child), another family member, friend of the family, a playmate’s parent, or occasionally, a school teacher, caregiver, or coach. This is someone the child knows, and in most cases, knows well and probably likes. This makes up the majority of sexual abuse incidences outside of the home, but luckily for parents, this type is also the easiest to prevent and the most easily treatable, if discovered quickly.

**Stranger sexual abuse**

This is a very rare form of sexual abuse. On average, less than 3 percent of all reported cases of sexual abuse occur at the hands of a stranger. (Overall it is actually much, much lower, because every stranger assault will be reported, while only a small percentage of non-stranger cases get reported.) For tips on preventing this, please refer to our abduction prevention safety manual.

**Child to child sexual abuse**

Self-exploration with friends is a natural and normal part of growing up. Children are naturally curious, and eventually that curiosity is going to be directed at exploring each other’s bodies. Exploration is not sexual abuse! However, there are some forms of child-on-child sexual conduct that would certainly be considered abusive. These are activities that go beyond the normal “show and see.” It may involve children performing sexual acts on each other, and generally, in order to be considered abuse, it usually involves an older child with a younger child.

**Defining sexual abuse**

Defining sexual abuse is a challenge with no concrete answers. Sexual abuse could come in the form of simple touching or excessive kissing, or it could be as severe as oral sex or anal or vaginal penetration. Something as simple as a kiss could in rare instances be conceived as sexual abuse, yet at the same time, millions of parents, caregivers, and family members kiss children every day, which is certainly not abusive.
It is important to understand that children need and desire physical forms of affection. Even a kiss from mom or dad that is wiped off and labeled ‘disgusting’ by the child is still affection that children need. **Affectionate behavior is not abusive!!** The difference between abusive behavior and normal affection involves coercion and intent. Let’s take a kiss for instance. How many of us have received an unwanted kiss from a grandmother or relative? How many of us have been told to “Give your auntie a kiss?” I doubt there are very many of us that would classify this as sexual abuse. Aside from this instance, many children receive desired and sometimes undesired kisses from parents and caregivers. Have you ever given your child a kiss and had them say “yuck,” and wipe it off? None of those scenarios would be considered sexual abuse. However, for a child who is being kissed over and over again by a certain individual, despite the child expressing thoughts of being uncomfortable and asking them to stop, could be considered abuse.

**Touching**

Touching is another touchy subject. How would you feel if your child came up to you and said that a neighbor had touched his or her bottom? What would your first reaction be? Then stop and think a minute. When you pick a child up to hold them, do you support your hand beneath their bottom? Often time’s adults will give children pats on the bottom for reassurance or praise. Obviously a little deeper questioning might need to be done, because things may not always be as they seem.

**Coercion**

All incidents of sexual abuse involve coercion, on the part of the adult. Pre-pubescent children will not instigate sexual activities with an adult, and no child will voluntarily participate in an activity that makes them uncomfortable. In the early 1900’s, even as late as 1970, sexual abuse was oftentimes regarded as a problem of ‘seductive children’ who lured adults into sexual activity with them. Thankfully, this view has since been discredited. In all cases of sexual abuse, there is some form of coercion that is used by the molester. This coercion may be ever so slight or subtle, or it could be used with blunt or forceful statements. A molester may try to convince the child that he or she may “like it”, or to “just try it once to see if you like it.” Or the coercion could be as severe as threatening bodily harm if the victim does not comply, or perhaps threatening to harm a loved one. Regardless of the type of coercion used, it is there. Pre-pubescent children will not initiate this act with an adult, it is always instigated by the adult.

**Intent**

Intent is another item that needs to be considered closely when examining sexual abuse. The adult will be engaging the activities with the intent of sexual gratification for himself or herself. The truth is, normal adults may touch a child’s bottom or even genital area in normal, day-to-day contact. Sometimes an adult may wrestle with a child and touch them accidentally in their genital area. Is that abuse? Is it done for sexual gratification? What about an adult who continuously touches a child’s genital area while wrestling, claiming it an accident although purposely doing so? Children will often run up and put their hand on an adults genitals outside the clothing, is the adult to be blamed for that? There are many times an adult may touch a child on or near that area, for reasons other than abuse.

**Choices of lifestyle versus sexual abuse**

Another common tragedy is to label a family’s lifestyle with their children as sexual abuse. For instance, what about a parent who breast-feeds their child longer than what is considered normal? Is this abuse? How about families that sleep together with their children? Or perhaps parents who bathe with their children? How about families that participate with nudist colonies or otherwise participate in nudity in their home? Sometimes in America we create our own problems, and think up an epidemic where there really isn’t one. Lets not get too carried away with labeling everything as abuse. I recall the story of a family who had their children taken away for a period of two months during an investigation, all because their child told a teacher that they are allowed to be naked in their home and that sometimes their mom and dad are naked. Because of the tendency to jump up and down and be too quick to judge, this led to a false report, that tragically left
the children with just as many damaging effects from being removed from their home, as an actual incident of sexual abuse could have caused.

The worst direction our society can take in this fight, is to start to get over-anxious in our label of abusive behavior. We are getting that way now. When caregivers have to fear a hug, a kiss, etc., children lose. Getting paranoid about affection or touching is not the way to cure this problem. Better education is.

**Who is at Risk?**

Unfortunately, there are no exact numbers to give us an accurate idea of how widespread sexual abuse is, because of the lack of knowledge about how many cases go unreported. Studies have shown wide-ranging results, anywhere from 6%, to 85%, depending on the study. However, most experts estimate that as many as 1 out of every 3 girls and 1 out of every 5 or 6 boys will sustain some form of sexual abuse during their childhood or adolescence. These figures are including all forms of sexual abuse, such as parental abuse, sibling abuse, and abuse outside of the home.

As stated earlier, recent studies are beginning to indicate that boys, not girls, are more likely to be abused outside of the home. Many experts’ fear that the number of boy molestations versus girl molestations may be closer than first thought. Anyone who has studied the subject knows there is certainly no lack of cases involving boys.

Children can be sexually abused at any age. There are even known cases of sexual abuse involving children as young as a few weeks old. Generally speaking, the average median age when children are at the most risk for sexual abuse to **begin** is age 6 for girls, and age 8 for boys. This, again, does not mean that your 5-year-old daughter is necessarily safe for one more year. Sexual abuse can start at any age, and in parent/child abuse or sibling abuse, the average age for the first incident of abuse drops to between 3 and 5 years old.

Sexual abuse inside of the home makes up approximately 40 to 50 percent of all cases of sexual abuse. This is primarily parental or sibling abuse. The other remaining cases are made up of abuse by someone familiar to the child outside of the home, with less than 3 percent of all child sexual assaults occurring at the hands of a stranger. (In reality the chance of a child sexual assault at the hands of a stranger is much lower, as only a fraction of other sexual assaults are reported versus virtually all stranger assaults.)

Other risk factors for children may include children from single parent households, disabled children, or children with special needs or development disorders. Special needs children are unfortunately easy and sometimes ideal targets for sexual abuse because they often lack the verbal skills needed to tell anyone about the abuse. Children from single parent households are often at a greater risk because they have a greater need and desire for affection from adults who may act as a substitute for the missing parent. A daughter without a father may be more eager to seek out affection from adult males, and therefore is at greater risk for ending up attracting the wrong kind of affection.
The statistical dilemma
Throughout this book we will include statistics in various forms regarding different aspects of sexual abuse. In many instances we rely on generally accepted numbers, and not any one particular study. Because studies can show mixed results, and can vary greatly from study to study, basing percentages on one study group is inherently flawed. Many organizations will do this to try and twist and mold their research in order to try and have it fit their fear patterns or specific agendas.

Because of the nature of the matter, statistics on sexual abuse rely largely on public surveys and case studies of a general population 10-30 years after the fact. Unknown is how many individuals respond truthfully, and how many cases involving boys actually get reported. During these surveys, men are much less likely to report abuse, and women are sometimes prone to over report. Because of that, there is a wider margin of error. Despite these inaccuracies, the statistics included do provide reasonably sound projections, and are accurate in determining general trends and problems of sexual abuse.

You will notice our statistics and studies are based on the work of prominent researchers such as Kilpatrick, Finkelhor, Browne, Kendall-Tacket, Friedrich, Seligman, and those who have led the field with their research. We also do our best to rely on generalized percentages that are inclusive of all the research, and not just a single study or publication. Through this, we aim to give you the overall view that we have been given by more than a decade of research into the subject, one that takes into consideration all aspects and relevant discoveries in the field.
Chapter 2

Understanding Sexual Abuse

The Damage
“These are scheduled to be torn apart and repaired. This one fell off the truck as it was pullin’ away and landed in a pile of straw. The driver saw it and went back to get it. This one fell off the truck on Highway 93. It hit that pointy rock around Nelson’s curve, tumbled down a canyon, and landed in the river. It went down stream past those class 5 rapids, and then came to a rest near the shore where some guy accidentally ran it over in his jeep.”

“This one looks fine, see, it’s not dented or scratched, and look, it still works. Are you sure we are supposed to tear this one apart?”

“Yeah, but you see, they’re the same, because, well, they both fell off a truck.”
Parents are sometimes overly paranoid about what will happen to their child if they are sexually abused. It is almost like the old folklore that if you touch a baby bird, the mother will not want it anymore. If a molester molests a child, many parents think that he or she is destined to be permanently damaged, which is simply not the case.

We have all seen stories on the news or on talk-shows depicting the extreme damage to a child through sexual abuse. There is no doubt that sexual abuse is damaging to children, and oftentimes that damage can carry over into adulthood. But in looking at this, parents are forgetting to account for the specifics that lead to the damage. What they are forgetting is, that abuse was never discovered. It was allowed to go on. The child had no one to confide in. There was nobody to talk to the child and comfort them, and no one to help them keep life in perspective. Also, the abuse often came from a family member, and usually became very severe. The abuse took on an extreme nature, and as a result, was devastating.

On the other hand, abuse outside of the home that is quickly discovered usually causes none of these problems. There are adults to love and counteract what the abuser did. It does not become severe. The child goes back to a normal life and suffers very little, if no effects, from the incident(s). Their ‘universe’ is still intact. In cases where the abuse is discovered quickly, it can sometimes be harder on the child’s parents than it is on the child.

When people imagine the damage of sexual abuse and envision the crime, they see a child being forcibly raped or assaulted, threatened and physically tortured, which thankfully, is rarely the case. Generally speaking, long term effects on children who are sexually abused have been exaggerated. Media hype and public misperceptions exaggerate the damage done by most cases of sexual abuse. There is also a tendency to blame all of a child’s later problems on sexual abuse, when in reality, there were other things that caused the damage, and the sexual abuse was only part of the problem. Sexual abuse has become a scapegoat to blame problems on. Some cases of sexual abuse can be devastating to a child. Other cases may be no more damaging than the scary memory of a fender bender or other mild trauma. It all depends on many factors.

The effects of sexual abuse today are still widely disputed. Believe it or not, there are still educated people publishing books that claim adult to child sex is beneficial. Then there are also the people who exaggerate the negatives, and label sexual abuse as more damaging than it actually is, lumping all cases of sexual abuse together, while failing to look at the specific contributing factors that lead to its damage. There are many extremists on the other side who want to hold onto the belief that every child will be devastated by such sexual contact, something that, study after study from prominent researchers, have shown is not the case. But as with everything in life, there is money involved, and way too many people only get paid when people are not well.

Sexual abuse, is child abuse. Like all other forms of child abuse, there are many contributing factors that lead to its damage. Despite the wealth of publications trying to answer the question of how damaging sexual abuse is, the answer is, there is no answer. Only a child’s individual biography and situation can tell the tale.

**Common laws of sexual abuse**

Here are a few principles of sexual abuse:

**Length of Time = Damage**

The amount of damage done to the child is in direct proportion to the length of time the abuse goes on. This is the reason why it is so important to catch the abuse early, and why single isolated incidents of abuse generally leave the child with little or no lasting effects.
Severity = Length of Time
Sexual abuse has an avalanching effect, such in that with nearly all cases it will get more severe as time goes on. What might have been simple fondling to start with will progress to more severe forms of abuse the longer it is allowed to continue. Again, another reason to catch it early.

Length of Abuse = Secrecy
The longer the abuse goes on, the harder it becomes to uncover. The time to discover sexual abuse is when it first starts to occur. As time goes on, the chances of finding out about it diminish greatly. The more severe it becomes, the more time span it covers, the more engraved in the child’s mind it becomes, the harder it will be for the child to confide in someone.

Significance of the Abuser = Significance of the abuse
Parental sexual abuse will always be more damaging than abuse outside of the home. The closer the abuser is to the child, the more damaging the abuse is to the child.

Individual child = Individual damage
The damage done by sexual abuse will vary for each child. It all depends on the child’s particular strengths, their home environment, and their parents support and reactions. Some children may be asked to perform oral sex on someone and have no qualms about it. Other children may have nightmares over the incident. Two children can go through the exact same abuse, and have different levels of difficulties with it, based simply on their individual traits and their home environment.

Where sexual abuse fits in
Despite the public outcry, which is disproportionate to reality, sexual abuse is merely another form of child maltreatment. To put it in perspective, sexual abuse compares almost identically in its damage as the following: Children from a broken home; Children with alcoholic or drug abusive parents; Physical abuse; children removed from their home (even for short periods of time, as with a temporary removal by CPS) Physical or emotional neglect; or even those from high poverty levels, and children from single parent households.

Don’t get us wrong, we’ve spent our life working to abolish the crime. We work long and hard because it can be very damaging, and parents should take steps to prevent it. But it is important that sexual abuse be dealt with sensibly using scientific data, and that the effects not be completely overblown without justification.

Kendall-Tacket, Williams, and Finkelhor (1993), found that up to 49 percent of sexually abused children suffered no psychological harm, and that in those who were harmed, the symptoms usually abated within two years with or without treatment. Conte, (1985) concluded that “a review of the literature describing the effects of sexual abuse on children leads irrefutably to the ambiguous conclusion that sexual abuse appears to affect some victims and not others.” Similar findings have been replicated in every other scientific study in which proper controls were set into place. (Rind, Tromovitch, Baurer, 1998; Rind & Tromovitch, 1997; Finkelhor, 1979; Seligman, 1994; Constantine, 1981; Browne and Finkelhor, 1986; Beichman et al, 1992; Okami, 1990; Bullough, 1990; Ceci and Bruck, 1995; Friedrich et al, 1991; Froedroch et al 1998; Lamb and Coakley, 1993; Crittendon, 1996)

Sexual abuse is wrong for numerous reasons. It is wrong under moral grounds. Ultimately, it is an adult using the child to fulfill their own selfish desires. The end conclusion remains, even though sexual abuse may have little or no lasting consequences for a large amount of children, it is impossible to know ahead of time how the interaction will affect the child, and therefore, cannot be allowed. Secondly, even though the long term
effects of most incidences are non-existent, you couldn’t justify treating a child in that way, even for a short term. Just because a child may break their arm and will not suffer any lasting effects after it is healed, it doesn’t justify breaking their arm to begin with. A child may get over the scary incident of a car accident in short time, but that doesn’t mean you should put them through the ordeal on purpose.

It is wrong in intra-familiar (within the family structure) cases because the effects of incest are much less forgiving, and nearly always result in adverse consequences. It is wrong in extra-familiar cases (outside the family structure) because every parent should have the right to raise their child as they see best, and nobody has a right to impose these activities on someone else’s child.

Nobody in the fight to eradicate sexual abuse, should feel a need to lie or ignore the scientific conclusions that are given by researchers in the field. There are unfortunately those that do this because they feel that conceding any assumption other than “Sexual abuse forever scars a child” will somehow justify sexual abuse in the eyes of child molesters. In working with pedophiles every day to help give them restraint from acting, I know that the public’s desire to ignore such data, actually just reinforces their ideas that they are simply the subject of a witch hunt. By the same token, we are able to achieve results by using the justification above to convince molesters that it is wrong. As I tell others who attempt to work with pedophiles, make sure your foundation is always based in truth. We’re on the right side, the truth is on our side, there is never a reason to lie or ignore the leaders in the field of research to accomplish our goals.

The reason we are including this subheading is this: While the damage caused by sexual abuse is very real indeed, and can, in some cases, be devastating, the damage caused by the fallacy that sexual abuse is somehow the most horrendous act a child could live through and something that is destined to scar them into adulthood, is just as serious. There is no basis whatsoever for any type of assumption like this, and it is fueled by those who profit off of what has become a multi-billion dollar a year business.

**The ‘who’ matters**

Sexual abuse generally occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and trusts. Who the abuser is makes a huge difference in the psychology of abuse.

**Parental Abuse**

Parents will always inflict the most pain to the child of anyone who could abuse them. Children rely on their parents. They depend on them to keep them safe. When a parent violates this sacred trust and begins using their children for their own sexual needs, it usually destroys the relationship with the parent, or parents in general. It also changes the child’s perspective on his or her place in life. He or she cannot get away from the abuser. What was once a family becomes destroyed, and the child grows up without a family, more or less, so detached from the one he or she is in. It is more than sexual abuse, it is the loss of a parent and a family. It is also unfortunate that in a vast number of cases, the other parent knows, and sometimes even participates in the abuse, either as a willing accomplice, or as an adult victim, too cowardly to combat what is happening.

**Significant other abuse**

Abuse by someone the child is close to makes up the majority of all non-parental abuse. The damage inflicted by such an incident depends on how severe and lengthy the abuse was, with how close the individual was to the child’s daily family life. The good news is, if the abuse is discovered, the person can be disposed of. It is not someone inside the immediate family. It is not at the hands of someone the child cannot be rid of. The family environment is still intact, and that is great news for the child.
Sibling Abuse
It is hard for us to quantify how damaging it can be, because it can vary so much from incident to incident. Again, it is someone close to the child, within the immediate household, which can always cause problems. Oftentimes it will last over years and years, and curiously, sometimes it will only surface in an isolated few incidents before the abuser voluntarily stops.

One of the most damaging factors behind sibling abuse is that it is incest. Siblings are forever, and the abuse can be much harder to escape or forget. The child will have to live with the abuse and relive it in many areas of his or her life.

Stranger Abuse
Stranger abuse is the easiest to overcome, talking strictly in addressing the who of the matter. (It also has a tendency to be violent or extreme, and brings about its own unique problems.) But the abuser is unknown to the child, and the incident therefore can be easily dismissed in the same manner a car accident would. It was a bad experience, but it is over.

Significance of the abuser
How big of a role did the abuser play in the child’s life and environment. Let’s say you have a child who has two working parents, who spend little time with their kid. The child develops a relationship with a friend that becomes abusive, where she relied on her friend for the things she lacked from her parents. Her friend became a ‘substitute parent’ more or less. That abuse can be devastating. Another child is also abused by her friend. But this child has a loving home environment where she does get the attention she needs from her parents. That abuse will not be nearly as detrimental in her development.

Same Sex Abuse
The sex of the abuser also plays a significant role. Same sex abuse is always more traumatizing than abuse from a person of the opposite sex. Children are sexual beings, even at an early age. (See chapter on raising sexually healthy children) Abuse at the hands of someone of the same sex can leave them with gender identity issues or sexuality issues in addition to the other effects sexual abuse can have.

The “what” matters
What the abuse consisted of, as well as some of the intangibles surrounding the abuse, play a role in how damaging it is:

Exposure
The least damaging of all forms labeled sexual abuse is usually exposure. This can be either an adult exposing him or himself to a child, or the adult asking the child to disrobe or get naked for them. Nudity in itself is not damaging to children. It is the atmosphere surrounding the nudity that will bring apart any damage that is sustained by such an incident. For instance, a roadside flasher will not cause any damage because of the nudity, but may make the child scared to walk home. An adult making a child watch him or her get naked, because of the circumstance of being out of the realm of normality, will make the child uncomfortable and may have slight effects. On the high end of the scale, an adult asking a child to get naked for them in unusual circumstances will most likely make the child uncomfortable. This is because it is not nudity brought on by the child, and most often the adult will have the child pose in lewd poses that will make him or her uncomfortable. It also may include the adult masturbating to the child, which can be more uncomfortable still.

Fondling
Next up on the scale is fondling. This can be an adult fondling a child or an adult asking the child to fondle his or her genitals. It can be outside the clothes, or on the bare organ. Fondling is generally where sexual
abuse will start out. In nearly all cases of sexual abuse by someone outside the family, it will start with fondling. Fondling will leave the child with an uncomfortable experience, but will generally not in itself have any lasting effects. An adult asking a child to fondle the adult can be even more uncomfortable and more damaging than the adult fondling the child.

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**Oral Sex**

Getting up into the ranks now, oral sex will in all cases leave the child with some damaging effects. Again, this does not necessarily mean they will be lasting. If discovered quickly, it will leave them with an uncomfortable experience and some questions about sexuality that need to be answered. An adult performing oral sex on a child will in most cases be less damaging than the other way around

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**Vaginal penetration or sodomy**

The most severe of all forms of sexual abuse, this can be highly traumatizing for the child. Also, while it is possible to treat and minimize the effects from such an incident, it will generally leave a permanent mark on the child that he or she is not likely to forget. The good news is, very few cases of sexual abuse actually start this severe.

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**Violent abuse**

With the exception of inter-family abuse, violent cases of sexual abuse are generally restricted to stories of rape at the hands of a stranger, a very small percentage of sexual abuse cases. Only in very rare cases does violent abuse come at the hands of someone the child knows. This is less true in inter-family abuse, where sibling abuse and abuse by some fathers can be very forceful and violent. Violent abuse damages the child physically, in some cases so much that it requires medical attention.

Damage can also be amplified or cushioned by other factors:

**Words can hurt**

There are also some intangible things related to the abuse that can have an effect. For instance, I recall the case study of a father, who, after sodomizing his son, once told the child that he was “better than any girl he ever had.” That statement was extremely damaging to the child, and doubled the amount of pain and scars that the child was forced to endure. The boy, who was 10 at the time, went through the rest of his adolescence and adulthood with gender security problems, feeling he was like a female because of what his father had said.

**Conditioning**

The type of conditioning used can also play a role. A child may be more scared, uncomfortable, and intimidated by the type of conditioning that is used than the actual abuse in some cases. If harsh, threatening conditioning is used, it can make the child fearful and cause more withdrawal and isolation problems.

**When the Abuse Occurred**

The age at which abuse occurred can sometimes play a role. Believe it or not, often times, the younger a child is when the abuse occurs, the less damaging it will be. (This is speaking of isolated incidents only, not of abuse that continues but just starts at an early age.) As children get older and more aware of sexuality, an isolated incident or incidents of sexual abuse can be more damaging.

**Discovery**

How it was discovered, and of course, if it was discovered, also plays a significant role. The manner in which the child’s parents and loved ones react when the abuse is discovered can play a role in how damaging the abuse will be. It is another reason for parents to be prepared and educated in the subject.
Environment
How the child was raised to view sex can sometimes have a profound impact on the damage caused. A child who is raised thinking sex is a huge deal, or in another extreme, a mortal sin, may be severely traumatized by what happened to him or her.

After Discovery
How it was handled after discovery is also a big contributing factor into how much damage the abuse will have. If parents and psychologists dwell on the issue, and provide a victim environment rather than a healing environment, guess what that child will become. A victim. If they provide an environment that heals, guess what that child will become. Healed.

The child as an individual
The particular strengths and mental characteristics of each child can also play a role in how damaging sexual abuse is. Some children can recover even from traumatic or long term abuse very quickly and completely. Other children may struggle with the issue for some time. As stated earlier in this chapter, each child’s situation is as unique as they are.

The child’s family
The child’s family plays the most important role in discovering and healing sexual abuse. A child’s family is the center of his or her universe. Having a loving family free of abuse is vital to the child’s healing process. When this is in place, and the abuse is discovered, the child can overcome anything.

How the adults react to the abuse once it was discovered can either inflict more damage or start the healing process. Many parents may unknowingly pin the blame on the child, for “letting this happen to him” or “letting the molester do this to her.” They can sometimes panic and become irate and emotional, thinking that their child is damaged goods and will never be the same. The child then picks up on this message, and may perceive themselves as damaged goods as well. If the adults focus more on how the child was damaged, making a big deal out of the situation and emphasizing the negatives, rather than helping the child deal with the effects and put things into perspective, the results will be more negative.

Short Term Effects
Generally speaking, there are little short term damaging effects of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is not that damaging to children in the short term, which is one reason why it has been so hard to prevent. Because the abuse is most often not physically painful, children will often not recognize the situation as abusive. They may not even be extremely bothered by it. It will be an uncomfortable experience which they don’t enjoy, but that will be the extent of it.

The short term damage is usually not so much damage as it is symptoms or side effects of the abuse going on. Withdrawal, fear, and confusion, may all cause the child altered behavioral patterns which could be considered as unhealthy. However, this is usually tied to ongoing episodes of abuse, and will generally revert once the abuse is removed.

Long Term Effects
Sexual abuse that goes on for an extended period of time, or sexual abuse that goes undiscovered, can leave several lasting effects on the child. These, once again, will vary depending on the incident, and the child’s individual circumstances.
The damage done by sexual abuse occurs over time, when the abuse goes undiscovered, and therefore, un-countered. It will begin to warp the child’s perception of his or her place in life. It will change their perception of adults. It can lead to feelings of anger and betrayal, as the child enters adulthood, and finds out what was really going on back then.

The most common effect of a child who is sexually abused is malformed sexuality. A child who is sexually abused for some time is going to sustain significant alterations to their sexual development. Sometimes, an individual’s first sexual encounters can mold their sexuality and sexual preference. This is especially true when the child was abused in late adolescence or early teenage years. In cases involving a same sex offender, the child is much more likely to develop homosexual pathologies. Boys and girls both have sexual side effects from sexual abuse, although they are almost exactly opposite from each other. In girls, sexually abused children are more likely to be attracted to abusive men as adults. They are more likely to put themselves in promiscuous situations or seek out affections that resemble abuse. They may also desire acts of sex that resemble the nature of the abuse, such as being physically overpowered or seeking sexual encounters that act out or resemble torture or rape. They often have trouble being aroused at what most adults consider normal sexual behavior. Adults of both sexes can develop unhealthy attitudes towards sexual relations. In boys, just the opposite happens. They are more likely to become abusers. They are likely to be abusive in their relationships towards women. They are much more likely to become molesters themselves, and may be attracted to children of the ages around which they were abused. Girls will tend to seek out abusive roles, while boys will have a tendency to play the part.

They will be more likely to develop addictions. They often engage in self destructive behaviors. The abuse that they suffer as a child mysteriously becomes a motivating factor in what they seek out as adults. This phenomenon is widely documented but not entirely understood. Individuals will sabotage healthy relationships subconsciously to be involved in abusive ones. Things that would make the individual happy are tossed away and replaced with items that bring pain but an eerie comfort to the individual.

Some adults develop an inability to enjoy sex. They may lose feeling in that region of their body and not know exactly why. This is usually only seen in extreme causes of sexual abuse that caused nerve damage to their sexual organs. It can also occur on milder levels, because their first view of sex was an undesirable experience. They may develop an inability to engage in sexual relations with an adult. They may associate sexuality with adults as uncomfortable, because that is what their first sexual encounter was. Children who are sexually abused as children may have detachment issues in their adult life. This is usually a result of the abuse coming at the hands of someone very close to them who they trusted, such as a parent or someone of comparable importance. They may have problems making friends, or even being loving by their own children.

In some extreme cases, severe psychological conditions can be formed, such as schizophrenia or multiple personality disorders. I’ve only seen this in rare cases of children who were abused in a way that resembled extreme torture. They can split a personality, one to deal with the abuse, another personality who has not been abused.

**Completion of the cycle of abuse**

In worst case scenarios, the child will go on to become a sexual abuser himself, completing the cycle of abuse and inflicting damage on a new set of victims. It is a sad fact that the people we are quick to label as monsters and outcasts, are often times the children we failed to protect during their time of need. It is also why sexual abuse should be seen as a two-sided problem; helping the child and helping the abuser. The child we are feeling sorry for today is often tomorrow’s ‘monster'.

What this all means for parents
As loving, non-abusive parents, you are already shielding your child from most of the harm. You are providing a stable home environment, which will enable your child to overcome the lasting effects of the abuse. The only key left is ensuring that any abuse that occurs is discovered immediately. If it can be caught, it can be countered.

In most cases, no matter what your child goes through, if it is discovered promptly and if it is treated competently, your child will not have any long term damage from the incident, other than a not so pleasant memory. There is, however, one exception to this rule.

Sexual deviancies, or in other terms, the possibility of your child becoming an abuser, if a boy, is anywhere from 30-50 percent. This goes up or down depending on the length of time that a child is abused, and whether it was same sex abuse or heterosexual abuse. Girls generally do not run as much of a risk for this, because of an apparent difference in genetic make up. Boys become abusers, girls for some reason, have a similar sexual side effect, but put themselves in abusive roles rather than play the part.

Unfortunately, because nobody wants to take steps to treat offenders, and address the problem rather than running away from it, we know virtually nothing about why this happens or how to treat it and prevent it from happening.

Summary
Here is a quick review of what leads to the damage of sexual abuse. The damage done can range anywhere from no damage at all, to life forming trauma. It all depends on this:

- Was the abuse discovered, so that its effects could be countered, or did it remain undiscovered, so that the questions and experiences the child was exposed to were left to warp his or her world.
- How severe was the abuse? Was it something mild such as fondling, something moderate such as oral sex, or something severe such as intercourse.
- How did the child respond to the abuse? What were their personal attributes?
- Did the child’s parents and people around them provide a healing environment afterwards, or did they provide a victim environment? Did they heal the damage done, or inflict more damage themselves?
- How big of a part did the abuse play in the child’s life. For example, was it at the hands of someone extremely close to the child? Where the assaults a daily ritual, or where they few and far between? Did the sexual relationship take over between the child and abuser, or was it simply another aspect of the relationship that did not always occur?
- Did the child suffer a loss of someone who was a key figure in their life before because of the abuse? For example, did the abuse occur at the hands of a mother and father, and the child, in effect, lost their mother or father from the abuse? Was it someone who had been a lifelong friend to the child, and the child lost that person from the abuse?
- What conditioning was used? Was it excessive, blunt threats that kept the child scared and altered his or her safety blanket? Or was it milder, “Don’t tell because you love me” type of conditioning.
- Are there other intangibles related to the abuse that caused further emotional damage or distress for the child?
"It's OK. We're safe now. I've got him"
Chapter 3

Understanding Sexual Abuse

The Abuser

It’s been said the best way to defeat your enemy is to become them. In order to learn how to stop them, you must first learn what makes them tick. 8 years of work with online pedophiles has given us a unique insight into the problem we face. Let’s meet the real molesters, and learn how they think and act, so there aren’t any surprises for you.
I am continually amazed when I turn on radio talk shows that are discussing sex offenders. The callers show what a complete misunderstanding of sex offenders the public has. There are those that would have you believe they are responsible for all the earth’s problems. While this is easy to do, basing decisions out of fear and contempt has never resulted in good decisions. This atmosphere surrounding the subject, tells a lot of things about our culture, none of them very flattering.

It shows the general public still thinks this is an isolated problem. (1 in 3 children do not get molested from an isolated problem. We are likely dealing with 1 in 20 adults with pre-pubescent pedophile tendencies, quite possibly more) It shows they know nothing of the mind set of a molester, or who these people are. (They are not monsters, but usually very caring people who will catch you off guard.) It shows we’re living in modern day Salem. (Female pedophiles still get no attention, and believe me, they are out there. Not only are they out there, they are often among the most extreme, because they act without anyone questioning them.) It shows they don’t know how molesters operate. It will most likely be a close and trusted friend, and occur out of what appears to be a normal relationship, because 95 percent of the time it is. People who assume they will ‘know’ if someone is a pedophile by how they act with their child, is deceiving themselves. It also unfortunately shows a frightening trend in humans, to throw around irrational thought based solely on fear and panic. (We could save 10 times the number of children if we diverted efforts with pedophiles from prison to a realistic attempt at treatment and understanding, along with better monitoring efforts afterwards. It is much, much cheaper, we have technology to still keep the public safe, and 50 years down the road, rather than possessing fuller prisons, we might possess the knowledge on how to cure offenders with remarkable success.) While this has become the new thing to focus our hate on, (And it is a problem that needs our attention, make no mistakes about it) it is only one of the many ways that children are damaged.

Unless parents understand the nature of the perpetrator, they cannot very well protect their kids from them. Pedophiles are not weird subhuman creatures. They are your brother, your sister, your cousin, an uncle, your next door neighbor. They are church pastors, mechanics, scientists, teachers, doctors, police officers, judges, nuns, fireman. They are rich or poor. They come in male and female. They can be brilliant or a little IQ lacking. They come married or unmarried. They number easily in the millions, quite likely in the tens of millions in this country alone. They can be very nice, loving, caring people, who sadly have developed a problem. They are otherwise normal adults. They are often capable of normal relationships as well. While every molester has varied degree’s of urges, many show incredible restraint in their ability to not act on their impulses, often times in the midst of prime opportunities. In my online interactions with them, I’ve ran into mostly very caring, very remorseful people, who care deeply about children, but have developed a perversion they don’t know how to shake. I’ve ran into people who were not confused, but very level headed and intelligent individuals, who were very frustrated that they did not know how to shake these impulses.

There are also monsters out there, make no mistake about it. There are people that care nothing for the kids they molest. There are those whose charm and kindness is nothing more than act to accomplish their deeds. There are some who are very cunning, and single minded in what they do without consideration for their actions. The best analogy I can give people is this: In your day, I’m sure you run into very kind people. You run into tolerable people. And you run into complete jerks as well. The pedophile community is just like any other random sampling of the general population. You run into all sorts of individuals. While there are those out there who are jerks, the vast majority probably have the same caring attitude towards kids any other person would. Unfortunately, they sometimes forget this in the midst of their urges.

The ‘can’t be cured’ media myth
Changing public perception is the most important step we can take in abuse prevention. It has been extremely frustrating in my research to encounter countless individuals who are screaming out for help and being ignored. We will never fix this problem through prison. For every one we lock up, two more will surface. Aside from that, it’s unique dimensions makes this approach not always the best course of action for the child,
which is what should give weight to above all else. Furthermore, even under best case scenarios, even if everything worked beyond our wildest dreams, because of the fact that this problem is woven within our own families and our own community, we simply will not have many incidences reported.

By the same reasoning, not only can sex offenders be cured, but where it is attempted, (current efforts are a joke, and even those efforts show significant positive results) it shows the possibility of extremely high success rates. Contrary to what the media feeds you, re-offense rates for sexual offenders are much lower than that of other prison population. (Bureau of justice statistics; Hanson and Bussiere, 1998; Quinsey, Rice, and Harris, 1995; Lambie, 2003) I heard a prominent news anchor say the other day that re-conviction rates are as high as 50%. She failed to mention that the study she pulled this from, was quoting all crimes, and included misdemeanors and traffic citations among the ‘re-conviction rates”. While the popular media does everything in their power to distort facts so they can push their personal agendas, you will hear just the opposite from those in the field. Society benefits from treating offenders as opposed to the way we are trying to handle the situation now. It should not be looked at as such a bad option to consider.

How widespread is the problem?

One thing that is for certain, sexual abuse is not isolated to a few select incidents. While a single molester may end up with dozens of victims, this does not mean it is only a few select individuals out there who are perpetrating the crime. Such multiple victim molesters seem to be the extreme exception, not the norm. You will sometimes hear organizations spew forth such fallacies as average pedophiles molest 150 or 200 kids. Such is a complete fallacy, bred by those who grossly underestimate the amount of pedophiles out there, and so need to assign so many more children to each one to make sense of the numbers. But this is far from the truth, and the reason it sounds so outrageous, is because it is. Even studies from those we catch, indicate that only 54% have had even two victims. (English, et al, 1997) From my knowledge and experience, it seems as though the average molester will accumulate 3 or less victims in their lifetime. Many will go through a lifetime of these urges, but only have the right opportunity to lose control once. Also realize that for every molester, there are probably 5-10 other individuals who have either fantasized about such thoughts or actively seek out or look at child pornography, who have not yet acted on their impulses.

Child sexual abuse is a widespread human problem. It is probably safe to say that there are at least as many pedophiles in our society as there are homosexuals/Lesbians, if not much more. Sexual attraction to children is not all that uncommon. Recent studies show that the overwhelming majority of adult males, between 70 and 90 percent, depending on the particular study, admit being sexually attracted to pubescent or adolescent girls. While different in its nature because of the fact that the children referred to are sexually maturing, it still illustrates an example of sexual urges crossing many different age lines in normal human beings. At this point, you’re only a hop, skip, and a jump away from pre-pubescent perversions. While the same study with women yields much lower results, consider this: A show called ‘Desperate Housewives’ aired an episode where one of the wives had sex with a young teenager who came to mow her lawn. This episode was widely accepted. Could the women in the study simply be lying?

The amount of Internet and child pornography sites available, and commercial sexual exploitation of children, which amounts to a multi-Billion, that’s billion with a B, dollar business, according to statistics from UNICEF. (Profiting from Abuse, 2001) also illustrates the fact that this is a widespread problem. So does the amount of ‘lurkers’ who frequent pre-teen chat rooms. (A lurker is someone who frequents chat rooms to check out the images, but does not post or otherwise participate in the group) I recall a comment following a poster by a lurker in one such room:
RE: A QUESTION FOR THE GROUP

“I love pre-teen girls. There is just something about them at that age which is so beautiful. However, I would never consider doing anything rude to any of them. I hope that everyone else in the group feels the same way.”

Another lurker responded:

“A’ men to that brother. And you are probably about 99 percent right.”

This comment still sticks in my mind because it got me wondering exactly how many people may find children sexually attractive, if so, then many actually are refraining. (I do realize this comment was probably made with good intentions, and is not accurate in its assumption. However, it illustrates the mind set of molesters. That same person posting the comment might say he would never do anything, but could mess up if given the opportunity.) Still, if there are even a portion who would never act, (which I have seen evidence of), yet we still have as many as 1 in 3 girls, 1 in 5 or 6 boys molested, how widespread is this problem? I also recall an incident where I was working at McDonald’s. I was the manager for a group of entirely foreign employees. Speaking some of their language, I understood one of the employees wanting me to go out into the lobby to check out this girl. It being a slow night and eager to add some excitement, we all went out to take a look. My jaw dropped when the girl he pointed out, literally was a girl, probably about 9 or 10 years old. Not only did he not seem uncomfortable about disclosing his attraction, several of the other male workers, although not sharing his views, really did not find the statement that alarming. It seemed to be nothing out of the norm.

Ozzy Osbourne sings about what seems to be molesting a child in one of his songs on the ‘No more tears’ album. To this day the song is widely accepted and has no problem getting radio play. Another disturbing indicator of how widespread the problem could be, is that kiddy porn companies regularly spam (post unwanted pictures) to adult pornography groups. They would not risk the exposure if this were not highly lucrative for them. Apparently, they are quite successful in drawing out people who might not have known they were susceptible.

I’ve dealt with enough parents over the years to hear statements made or see things done, (mostly by women) that could be considered awfully borderline. In those cases I knew no actual abuse was going on, because I investigated. Having dealt with real abuse, I look carefully to ensure that is what we are dealing with before jumping to conclusions. Things that seem strange are not necessarily abusive. But it showed some awfully borderline behaviors that would make me believe that the line between pedophile attractions and normal parental affection is thinner than I had thought.

For instance, I once had a parent intentionally tickle her child on her vagina, (over the child’s underwear). She did this right in front of me and did not seem the least bit worried about it. I’ve seen mothers grab at their child’s bottom and penis in a playful manner. I’ve heard a mother talk about how sexy her little girl looked in her swimsuit. Third person, I heard from a friend about another mom who said “Little girls are so cute, aren’t they? They’re almost sexy.”

No matter which way you look at it, sexual abuse is a widespread problem. Every indicator available points to this fact. Anna C. Salter, PhD., a researcher of sexual deviancies, stated something that sums it up quite well: “The people that have such patterns are not a small number, more like an invisible army that cannot be recognized on the street.” This is why the ‘lock them up and throw away the key’ approach will never work to stop child molestation. It will only hinder our efforts by convincing the general public that there are only a few individuals doing this to children. It is the equivalent of slaughtering one snake in the midst of thousands in a snake pit and proclaiming that now everyone is safe. It simply will never work. If we want to protect our kids, we better learn how to be snake charmers instead, and make strides to understand what makes this crime work.
The key is for parents to understand. It is not a matter of if your child is in the care of a pedophile, but rather when. They may have already been several times and come out unharmed, because the individual was able to control their urges. Just about every child at some point in their life will be in the care of a pedophile, but may not be molested. No matter how many people you lock up, it will still be a danger. It is like the magician who keeps pulling handkerchiefs out of his sleeve. There will always be more pedophiles. Our only chance at defeating the problem lies in better understanding and treatment, and protecting our children before something happens.

The Molester Equation

We recently came up with an equation to get us an accurate idea of the number of offenders out there. Even approximate numbers have eluded researchers for years, because it is impossible to know how many children each molester molest. However, by calculating parental offenses, we have enough variables to use as a standard, and can put a fairly accurate number on the percentage of the population who are molesters. Using parental offenses as a standard, we put together this equation:

\[
\frac{CM \times \%PV}{CPF \div 2} = \text{Population of offenders}
\]

This equation, simply states that children molested, divided by the number of total children, times the percentage which fall victim to Parental Violators (PV), divided by Children molested Per Family (CPF), divided by two parents per household, equals the percentage of offenders among adult parents.

When using widely accepted numbers, you come up with an answer of at least 1 in 45. (Numbers used are: 1 in 6 boys, 1 in 3 girls molested, 40% parental victims, 2 children per household molested (offenders usually stick to children of 1 sex, so this is usually accurate for a 4 child household), and assuming 2 parents per household and only one parent offending. Again, these numbers may vary depending on which study you use, but we used the most widely accepted figures in this equation).

Keep in mind, this equation is put together conservatively. It is not exact, but it does give us a realistic method to provide reasonable estimates. Some things that it does not account for, which will bring the population of pedophiles much higher, are:

Non-parental offenders

It does not take into account non-parental offenders. We really do not have an accurate way of determining non-parental offenders, without guessing approximate number of victims per molester. That is something that is widely disputed. We estimate the number of victims for your average molester to be 3 or less. I’ve seen other organizations feeding the public such crazy numbers as your average pedophile affects 136 victims. I can refute that with experience dealing with them that would indicate that number to be way too high.

Non-offending pedophiles

This equation includes only parents who are actual offenders. It does not calculate people with pedophile urges who do not act on them. Note: We have encountered such things. We know there are pedophiles who have urges, but may not have them strong enough to take the opportunity to act. Or, more likely, are without the opportunity to act. However, anyone with these urges is only the right situation away from messing up. So I think it is fair to count them in the overall pedophile category.
**Children per family**
This equation estimates around 4 children per family, 2 being of the right sex for the molester. In today’s population, this probably slightly over-estimates the number of children per household. The less children per family in this equation, the more molesters are out there.

**Only one offender per family**
This equation accounts for only one offender per family. That would be a conservative estimate when both parents are offending.

**Two parent household**
This also takes into account two parent households, or two active parents. It does not take into account situations where the other parent is either dead or not involved in the children’s upbringing.

All of these things will bring that number of 1 in 45 down lower, which is why we estimate that around 1 in 20-25 adults is stricken with active pedophile tendencies. Yes, it is still an estimation. However, unlike other estimates, we were able to get an accurate base to start from. We are not just guessing off the top of our heads. Any number between 1 in 10 and 1 in 50 are open for discussion and debatable. But nobody can continue to claim that sexual abuse is a problem of a few select individuals, who manage to molest hundreds of kids at a time. Reality is in the numbers. If we are to fight this, we need to fight it accurately, as a widespread human problem.

**How can I spot a pedophile?**
Everybody wants to be able to identify molesters, but they can’t. This is why our current efforts at addressing sexual abuse will be costly and end up in total futility. If you look at what is being done, it is all aimed at the idea of identifying molesters. We come up with sex offender registries, which trample human rights and do not distinguish between types of sex offenders. (Someone who solicits a prostitute is lumped in with rapists in many states) We work on infinite incarceration for pedophiles, hoping that somehow we might be able to find them all and fix the problem.

You can’t solve the problem like this, you can’t identify pedophiles. It would be nice if all pedophiles grew antlers so that we could distinguish them from everybody else and keep our children away, but they don’t. They come in all shapes, sizes, races and sexes. They could be old, young, or somewhere in between. They could be drop-dead gorgeous, or not so good looking. They could be married with a family, or unmarried. There is no way to tell. Trying to do so or training our children to do so would just leave us both scared, tired, and paranoid.

There is good news. We do not have to identify abusers in order to protect our children. With the exception of the very rare violent molestation in sexual abuse, your children can be safe from abuse, even if they are left in the care of someone who might have ulterior motives. We will teach you how to teach your child to be safe in the care of a pedophile.

**Types of molesters**
We classify molesters into four major categories of individuals:

**The remorseful molester**
He or she knows that what they are doing is wrong, but the individual is unable to control his or her actions. The child going along with everything and abiding without fuss to the molester’s wishes is crucial for this type of molester, since he or she will generally care for the child and not want to hurt them. Most molesters fall into this category.
**The ‘enlightened’ molester**
This type of person has convinced themselves that what they are doing is not wrong. Many molesters of this type consider themselves part of a wrongly persecuted revolution. They do not believe that they are damaging the child, and take it a step further by swearing up and down that they are benefiting the child by exposing him or her to this type of experience. They often attempt to find justification for their claims by believing that the child did not resist, or that the child seemed to ‘enjoy’ the experience.

**The confused molester**
This person has had their sexuality damaged to the point that they cannot distinguish between maternal affection and sexual affection. They may care for kids more than anything in the world, and their acts are confused with ordinary affection, play, or simply giving the child ‘more love’. These molesters are more rare, and nearly all molesters from this category are former childhood victims.

**The ‘ME’ molester**
These cases generally occur in inter-family abuse, at the hands of a father, step father, or relative. This is a person who cares nothing for anybody else, and only cares about what they want, with no regard for the child or what is done to them. Lots of times they don’t even like kids. We commonly refer to them as the $%&-hole molesters. These types of molesters are generally make up less than 15 percent of the overall population of pedophiles.

**Every molester is different**
The other thing to remember is that every molester is a little bit different from the next. Most molesters like or love the children they are molesting, particularly the ones that the average parent will need to worry about. (Such as baby-sitters, neighbors, scout leaders, educators, family members, etc.) However, there are also some out there who have no regard for the child and care nothing about what they may or may not be doing to them. Victims of these crimes are usually either abducted and killed at the hands of a stranger, or occur at the hands of a father or step father who has his family by siege. However, they can also occur from ‘career’ molesters, who simply put on an act to do their deeds. Each pedophile also has a varying degree of urges. One pedophile may just enjoy looking at naked pictures of kids every once in a while but otherwise live a normal life. Others may be so driven by their urges that sex with children is all they think about.

**An Addiction mentality**
Finally, most psychologists are finally coming to realize pedophilia in the mentality of an addiction. Sex is a powerful tool. Many would argue much stronger than any external drug. The act of sex is now even classified as a need, not a desire. Why and how these urges become perverted needs to be a major focus of research. It also needs to be understood that these perversions are a strong need in the eyes of a pedophile, much like a fix to an addict.

The good news is, drug addicts can be cured and made sober, and so can sex offenders. Treatment has shown promising results. However, it can only work where it is attempted. More emphasis needs to go into rehabilitating sexual offenders rather than simply locking them up. We have only begun to understand how to treat offenders. We’ve just broken the surface. With more devotion, we may eventually become quite proficient at curing offenders.

**Violent sex offenders**
People often make the mistake of not distinguishing pedophiles from violent sex offenders and rapists. These are 2 completely different classes of criminals. Pedophiles are non-violent, rarely use any type of force, and are people who otherwise care for the child’s needs as any parent would. Molestation usually occur because a pedophile is in a position to lose control of their urges, and does. Molestation occur not out of violence or malice, but rather out of a confusion of affection, where maternal affection somehow takes on a sexual nature.
Rape and abduction crimes are different. Your average pedophile would never consider for a moment murdering a child, or for most, even attempting an abduction. If they would, they are no longer a pedophile, but a rapist, and sexual sadist. The type of crime shifts when it comes to rape and abductions. Rapes are often violent crimes, not sexual crimes, where the act of violence is what motivates the incident, rather than the sexual contact or gratification. Although this is another misunderstood perception, the problem is not that it isn’t a sexual crime, but that the person committing the act has had their sexuality damaged to the point that they associate violence and pain with sexual pleasure.

There is no comparison between pedophiles versus rapists or abductors. Just like you would not classify shoplifting the same as armed robbery, (though they are both thefts). The differences between molestation and rape are as different as night and day. They are perpetrated by an entirely different individual, and need to be dealt with separately.

**What makes a molester**

Most people find the thought of sex with a child undesirable. Why do pedophiles go through such lengths to seek this out? What motivates a person to commit these crimes is beyond most of our imaginations. Psychologists have identified certain traits and characteristics that can play a role, but we have only begun to touch the subject.

**Nature versus Nurture**

Many pedophiles report having these urges from a very young age, as early as 11 or 12, which suggest that there might be a biological or hereditary force at work in some situations. Other statistics, such as the number of abused children who become abusers themselves, strongly suggests a nurture connection. So which is it? There is an overwhelming amount of evidence to suggest that this problem is much more nurture than it is nature. When I started my research 10 years ago, I was convinced of a biological element, that it was nature. 10 years later, after finding mounds of evidence to point to a nurture connection, and nothing to support nature, I have come to believe that it is 100% induced by the persons environment and sexual experiences. However, there could be biological risk factors at work here as well.

**Prior abuse/Early sexuality**

One unfortunate tragedy is that often times a molester is someone who as a child went through the same trauma of being molested themselves. Because they were never able to get help themselves, they continue that cycle of abuse because that is what they have come to know. They confuse what they are doing with love. They engage in this behavior, which provides an eerie comfort to them. Statistics for the actual number of molesters who are in fact victims varies widely. Some experts have coined the phrase “Every child molester is a victim” and believe that every molester is a former sexual abuse victim, while others dispute the fact that it plays any role. While it is certainly not the case that every victim will go on to become an offender, (in fact, most won’t) the likelihood for those who have been abused of becoming an offender themselves is as much as 25 times that of the normal population. (Becker and Murphy, 1998)

**Psychological trauma/Social isolation**

Individuals who are overly ridiculed as a child, or otherwise suffer bouts of alienation or traumatizing experiences at the hands of their peers or adults throughout adolescence are more likely to withdraw from people. Because of their experiences, they have a hard time making friends as adults, engaging in sexual relations with adults, and functioning in their own peer group. Often, this will lead to an interest in children, (who are loving, safe, and accepting) which generally starts innocently but after time can lead to pedophile thoughts, as it becomes a substitute for sexual relations with peers of their own age. Any time a person becomes socially isolated, for whatever the reason, there is a huge risk for many types of perversions or disorders to form, one of them being pedophile thoughts.
A confusion of affection
Children are attractive to everyone. This fact cannot be disputed. To most they are attractive in a maternal sense. They are cute, cuddly, and downright adorable. To pedophiles, the difference between parental affections and sexual affections are sometimes hard to distinguish. I had a pedophile tell me that the actions he committed came from wanting to show the children “too much affection.” He would give a child a hug, a kiss, but eventually, that would not be enough. Although he knew what he was doing was sexual, it did not register to him at the time as sexual, but simply, ‘more loving’. It seemed to me almost like an insatiable touch hunger. To pedophiles, the difference between maternal affection and sexual affection can often be intertwined or reversed.

Sexual attractions are not biological. They are mental. They are controlled by the brain, not the genitals. The penis or testicles may provide the gas, but the brain tells it where it should go. (Pardon the crude analogy) Or look at it like this: The brother of the most beautiful woman in the world will not in normal situations be attracted to her. Not because she isn’t an attractive female, but because of the mental connection. Much the same is true with children. Pedophiles are individuals who have somehow had that mental connection eroded or distorted. It can happen to anybody under the right conditions and it can happen at various stages in life. One comment I got a lot from people in referring to their urges was “I can’t believe I feel this”

Other possibilities
There are other possibilities we do not yet know of. We will only learn them when we start to focus on prevention rather than reaction.

It can change
Urges can also occur or be halted at any time in a person’s life. Parents are sometimes shocked to learn their child has been molested by a grandfather, when they know their father did not abuse them as a child. These urges can develop when you are 13, when you are 30, or when you are 60. They can come out or stay dormant. They can be active or inactive. It depends on the route of the urges, and the situation in life the person is in at the time. I ran into a pedophile in a chat room who struggled with these urges when he was in his late teens, early twenties. He then got them under control, and they went away. (Much was attributed to his lifestyle when they were gotten under control) Twenty years later, in his mid forties, they again surfaced, and he began having troubles once more.

Exposure
One thing I have experienced in my studies and can say with extreme certainty, is that the more a person exposes him/herself to these urges, the more withdrawn they will become and the more he or she is likely to become enthralled by such feelings. Even without acting on any impulses, just by viewing the images of such acts, a person will become numb to them, and over time, will consider them more and more normal.

I first began my studies over the Internet. At the time I had the idea that the abundance of child pornography over the Internet might be a good thing, that it could provide a non-damaging substitute for pedophiles to focus their efforts on, therefore protecting children. I couldn’t have been more wrong. I’ve seen just the opposite happen. Having such readily available pornography and groups of other pedophiles to find comfort in, only seems to fuel the problem. Even worse, it has the ability to create abusers. This wealth of child pornography needs to be addressed. It is not a healthy alternative to the real thing. Rather, it is creating more and more abusers every day. It is plentiful, profitable, and way too easy to find. We need to eradicate it now.
The mind-set of a molester
Most pedophiles love children in more than just in a sexual way, and generally do not mean to harm the child, and do care for the child’s well being. In order to follow through with their actions, they convince themselves that they are not harming the child. They may believe that the child “asks” for abuse or desires it. They may believe that they are doing the child a favor by “teaching” them or exposing them to sexual activity. Many have had their sexuality damaged enough from their own abuse as a child, that they have difficulty distinguishing maternal affection from sexual affection. Sadly, most molesters know their actions are wrong and express sincere remorse over them, but are unable to control their urges.

Most pedophiles I’ve met would change if they could. The others that wouldn’t want to change have convinced themselves that they are not doing anything wrong. Much like that no homosexual wakes up in the morning wanting to be gay, no pedophile all of a sudden makes the decision that he or she will take a sexual interest in children. What causes this deviance is probably a combination of certain inherent traits, that with psychological occurrences throughout an individual’s life has damaged their sexuality. Whatever the cause, it needs to be recognized as more than just a person’s choice. While every molester has different degrees of urges, some are extremely driven by them, and very few pedophiles would classify their urges as a conscious ‘choice’ that they made. A good portion would like to change. Since many want help, let’s start finding ways to give it to them.

A molester’s make-up
People are different. Molesters are people. Molesters will be different. They are not all the same. One of the greatest travesties over the years has been this ‘cookie cutter’ teaching when it comes to child molesters. That they all act the same, think the same, work the same, and have the same degree of urges. This is as retarded as saying you are the same person as your neighbor. However, there are two basic elements driving every person who ever committed an act or thought about it. That is the amount of guilt they feel over their actions, versus their urges for the act.

I’ve met people who were riddled with extremely strong urges, but had enough guilt that they were able to refrain. I’ve encountered case files of people who I would classify as barely even pedophiles, but simply had no guilt or feelings for the child, and acted on an impulse because it was available. They vary all over the place, but every molester is a balance of these two things.

Weighing the guilt scale...

⇒ Account for a molester’s personality. Who are they? Are they the type of person who would help anybody out and make a great friend, or do they make no attempts to care about others?

⇒ Are they otherwise kind and caring, or cold and inconsiderate? How much do they care for others or take other peoples needs into consideration in everyday life?

⇒ How strong is the molester’s natural love for children? Is the natural route a love for children that turned to pedophile urges, or the other way around?

⇒ What is their perception of the act? How do they feel about the damage it does? Are they aware of damage, or do they believe that it is not damaging?

⇒ Does their own history of abuse come into play, and warp their perceptions on what is normal versus what isn’t?

⇒ What is their relation to the child? Are they close to the child? Do they love the child?
Weighing the urge scale...

⇒ How strong are the urges? They can range on a scale from mildly driven to extremely driven for them. From 2% to 100%. Where are they on this person?

⇒ What is the source for the urges. Is it something deep rooted, and if so, from what? Does it come from prior abuse as a child, or other psychological factors that has lead to these tendencies? Or is it simply a fly-by-night attraction.

⇒ What is the frequency of these urges? Are they an everyday thing? Hit and miss? One day to the next?

⇒ What is their sexual composure? Are they also married? Are they also attracted to adults? Or are they only attracted to children? Are they able to participate in sexual acts with adults? Or is their sexuality with adults damaged, and when they try, are they incapable of normal sexual relations?

⇒ What is their social life like? Do they associate with adults, or do they have few friends and have a hard time interacting with peers?

⇒ How withdrawn have they become? (There are many factors that determine this)

⇒ How much time is spent with child pornography or other media, or simply fantasizing about children? In other words, how much do they consume their lives with these thoughts?

You may run across someone with only mild urges, but only mild feelings of guilt or respect for the child as well. If the chance presents itself they may commit an act. Anytime you have the scale tipped in one direction or the other, then that is usually how the tale of abuse, or no abuse, will follow.

Pedophiles can swing. A person can shift from a molester to an inactive pedophile, based on a shift in their pendulum. Molesters do on occasion voluntarily stop, sometimes on their own accord., because of a shift in their pendulum. I’ve encountered pedophiles who stopped because the amount of urges they had went way down, usually because they were involved in another adult relationship at the time that was going well. I’ve encountered some who have stopped because the guilt scale shifted. By the same token, some will shift the wrong way, becoming more likely to commit acts. This is usually after an act is committed for a first time, and they begin to question whether or not it is actually damaging. Somewhere on that scale lies the point where a molester will commit an act, or choose not to.

I do believe that one day, we will be able to effectively treat pedophiles and actually eliminate their urges. After all, we know many routes that lead to pedophile tendencies, but we don’t yet know enough about them to effectively address or reverse the causes. Whenever a route can be identified, through better understanding it can always be treated. I hope we start devoting the resources needed to better research so that someday we can do so.

However, the reality of effective treatment today, can be achieved by shifting this scale. We cannot completely eradicate a persons tendencies at this point, but we can shift their scale enough to where they are not in danger of committing an act. We can do things that can bring their urges down. At the same time, we can do things that will bring their guilt up. We have many methods to influence a molester’s scale and prevent them from committing the act. I have been able to shift peoples scales in my online interactions. I believe I have shifted some of them enough that they have stopped. Dealing online without face to face interactions, it is hard to tell for sure. But I have been able to change opinions and tip peoples scales in the right direction. It can be done.
A molester’s conscience

Yes, molesters do have a conscience. Thank god for that, or there would likely not be a child alive who has not been sexually abused. However, one of the biggest problems with sexual abuse is that its damage is not instantaneous. It is delayed and elusive. It usually does not become evident for years and years.

Rapists see the pain and the fear in their victims eyes. Murderers see the death they leave behind right away. But rarely do molesters see any damage as they are committing an act. It is rarely clear and evident that they are hurting the child, which is why many swear they aren’t. It is not that they do not have a conscience, but that rather, their conscience is hidden from them at the time they commit an act. They have a hard time distinguishing it as wrong, and the degree of this varies depending on the molester’s background and how withdrawn they have become.

You only need to spend a little time in a pedophile chat room to realize they do have a conscience. They talk about their own children like any other parent would. They don’t take kindly to any child being hurt, or anyone posting anything where a child appears hurt. In fact, they will often cuss out and even turn in to the police people who show material with kids crying. They care for other children. I remember an incident where one of the child ‘models’ sites ended up getting busted in Indiana. (There are hundreds of child ‘models’ who sell subscriptions to their sites over the web, and pose in lingerie or sometimes nude photos.) By accident, one of these was discovered when a friend of the child talked to another friend about it and was overheard by a teacher. The police raided the home, closed the site, arrested both parents, and turned the child over to social services.

The child model was well known in the group, and the outcry that came forth was anything but what you would expect from a pedophile group. Expressions of sorrow that the child was in foster care. Prayer chains being organized to try and do what they could to help the kid get through this. Pure and wholesome sadness over what this child was going through by being removed from her family and thrown into chaos. You would never believe that the same people commit the acts that they do.

Pedophiles, even the ones who know better and are remorseful, often convince themselves that they can somehow make up for the abuse, or that they can somehow arrange it so that the child will not suffer from it’s effects. They may have an excellent relationship with the child, and feel that it could make up for what they are doing. They figure that they can help them through it later with hugs and healing words.

The truth is, even molesters who do know it is wrong, often have had their sexual identity damaged so much that they cannot comprehend how it is wrong, only that other people say it is. They may be in tune to public opinion and hear stories, but don’t really understand why it is wrong. This is because they cannot see the damage or the act committed in the same eyes. They may attribute the damage in those other stories to different factors that they can avoid. The child seems to be a willing participant. Often times, their own former abuse has simply made it impossible, without extensive therapy, to be able to distinguish the two affections and view the incident in a normal frame of mind.

How an act is committed

An act is rarely pre-planned. Some molesters are scheming and will go into great depths to arrange molestation opportunities, but the likelihood of parents encountering one of those types of pedophiles is far less prevalent. What is more likely, is that the person will be alone with a child when something will happen that will lead to arousal. The person is usually in a position where they are alone for another reason, not because they pre-planned it that way. Most of the time, it occurs out of an otherwise normal incident. They may be in intimate contact with the child, and start to become aroused.
At that point, they then will usually go through a battle session in their brain over the impulse. Sometimes they can defeat it. Sometimes they can’t. A lot depends on where their scale is tipped. If the impulse wins, they will usually start to test the child with different touches to see how they respond to it. 99 percent of the time, the child will respond ‘favorably’ to the touches, and they will go on. (By favorably, we mean that from the molesters viewpoint, they will seem to go along, they won’t kick and scream or cry).

From that point, unless a child is trained in prevention, a molestation will occur. The child may be uncomfortable, and the molester may even feel that discomfort, but the child generally will oblige willingly to everything the molester asks. They are usually coaxed and convinced very easily, unless they have been trained otherwise.

After the incident, the molester will swear the child to secrecy. Somehow, some way. After the incident, most molesters will feel guilty. They may do things to try and make it up to the child. This is often confused by experts as enticing the child or rewarding them. Some molesters do use bribes in their acts, for the purpose of helping in their act, and that would be a correct assumption. However, more frequently, it is simply nothing more than a guilt trip, and an attempt to make up for it.

Once the initial molestation occurs, the molester will jump right into the molestation phase anytime these impulses hit again. That may not be every time they get the chance. You still can leave your child with this person and might not have a molestation happen every time. In fact, it is likely not to. But chances are there will be more incidents.

The ‘average’ molester
Your average pedophile is not a ‘career’ pervert so to speak. They are otherwise everyday people. They could be your brother, your cousin, your aunt, a friend of the family, a coach, etc. You would not be able to distinguish them from anybody else. Michael Jackson is not your average pedophile. (He may not be a pedophile at all. He shows all of the signs and grew up with conditions that could certainly lead to it, but I’ve learned enough to not judge without all the facts. He could very well be a victim of people’s public perceptions just as easily.) Average molesters don’t look different. They don’t act different. Your average molester may end up being your best friend. A close member of the family. Someone you trust. Someone who you have probably trusted many times before. Most children are molested by your average molester. The minority falls victim to career pedophiles.

Your average molester seeks out gratification of this nature through fantasy and through media sources. Your average molester does not plan on molesting a child, but believe they can control themselves. Children are important to your average molester in much more than a sexual way. In some cases, the love for children came first, the perversion, second.

The average pedophile will molest 3 or less victims in their lifetime. Many may only molest 1. An unknown amount will never molest. It all depends on the degree of urges in the person and the number of opportunities they have to act on these urges. Your average pedophile does not consciously seek out victims, but rather, is a victim of losing control of themselves at the wrong place and time.

You may have heard of a ‘grooming’ phase in regard to child molestations. However, when it comes to your average molesters, this is often grossly misunderstood. Some pedophiles, the more rare, career perverts, will seek out a victim and intentionally court them for the specific purpose of molesting them down the road. But for average pedophiles, this ‘grooming’ phase is not anything pre-planned or cunning, but rather, simply a normal progression of the relationship with your child that gets to a point where it becomes sexual. If you want to exaggerate, then anyone who gets to know your child is ‘grooming’ them. Rarely is it done simply
for the act of molestation. Rather, the molestation becomes something that occurs out of the relationship that is 9 out of 10 times a normal relationship.

Don’t let this fool you. Once the relationship does get to a point where it is sexual, your average pedophile can be extremely talented in making sure they don’t get caught. Once it starts, the average pedophile is also a lot more likely to have much less self control, than they had in refraining themselves before it started. Once it starts, they are unlikely to stop until they no longer have the opportunity.

Your average pedophile is an otherwise loving and caring person, who under the right circumstances, can lose control and do something they shouldn’t. Don’t expect monsters to come knocking on your door in order for your child to be in danger.

**Pedophile Behaviors**

While not all children will be molested who are with a pedophile, nearly all follow a pattern of motive and opportunity. Although a pedophile is unlikely to seek out a particular victim, those children whom he/she is around the most, provide the most opportunity for losing control.

By the same token, there are some children who can be magnets to their affections. I’ve had pedophiles tell me that there are children who from day one they struggled with in their lives. They fantasized about all the time. They would have to use constant restraint to keep from acting. Through investigation, these urges amazingly did not appear to be caused by the physical attraction of their child of choice, (hair color, weight, age, race, body type, etc.) but rather by the behaviors or personality of the child.

Pedophiles will also often go through phases. They may be riddled with urges and struggling to control them one day. Other days the very thought of such actions will bring about the same disgust that it does to normal people. These phases can be from day to day, or can go over weeks or even years. Sometimes there seems to be contributing factors in the strength of the urge. Other times, the cause is elusive.

**The familiarity effect**

One consistent quirk is, once a molester starts with one child, the second time with that child can happen a whole lot easier. In some rare cases, I’ve run into people who were able to stop a sexual relationship with a child on their own. I was able to talk one out of a relationship, at least as best as I could tell, since we were talking through a computer connection. (To my experience, though, he seemed to be telling the truth.) However, for most, once it has started, it will continue until they no longer have the opportunity. The molestations may go through phases, they may try hard to hold off and cut down extensively, they may refrain from some period of time, but rarely does it altogether stop on its own. The psychology behind this is based on a few principles. The molestation will be easier a second time because...

⇒ It has something to do with the fact that the children usually respond ‘favorably’ to the molester’s advances. (Meaning they don’t kick and scream, and may even appear to the molester to enjoy or not mind the act) The ease of the incident leads to additional assaults.

⇒ There is a broken glass mentality, in that once you’ve done it, once it’s broken, you can’t break it more, and therefore there isn’t much harm in doing it again. You can’t break a glass twice. (This isn’t correct thinking, the truth is just the opposite, but many pedophiles view it this way).

⇒ Once the relationship has changed to a sexual relationship, the comfort level is much easier to accommodate the act with that child. The child most often times even learns to play the part, appearing to be a willing participant to the molester. It will often be perceived as mutual. Though the child has no awareness of what he or she is doing, the molester may view it otherwise.
All these things, as it progresses, will lead to the perception that it really isn’t that damaging to the child. The molester will begin to question that truth. People who claim their actions are perfectly normal and not damaging, simply have bought into that mindset. He or she may start to change their own opinions, and consider the relationship to be ‘not really abusive’.

Once a molester gets away with an act with *that child* once, the child usually becomes a drop zone for any or all of the pedophiles sexual attractions. The psychology of the crime simply lends itself well to continuing with ongoing abuse.

**Questioning why**

Why do molesters risk everything to actively seek something that most adults would not partake in if it was legal? It is a question that has confused parents, the public, and even professionals for all ages.

One thing that any psychologist will tell you is that for every condition, somewhere there is an underlying cause for the problem. It is the basic universal law of cause and effect relationships. People are not designed to be child molesters, so therefore, somewhere, whether it be hidden in some genetically inherent features or chemical imbalances, or most likely, in psychological events that have damaged and molded a persons sexual psychology, there is a malfunction going on. A root cause for this crime is there to be found, and eventually, fixed.

It is important for this question to be continually asked and regarded as the most serious question that can be asked of the subject. Humans need more understanding in every aspect of their life. While it is hard for most people to understand, it is also hard for a straight male to understand why a homosexual would seek sexual activity with men rather than women. Unlike homosexuality, we cannot simply learn to acknowledge or accept the problem. Every indication shows that this problem is likely psychologically imposed, not something with a predisposition to a persons nature. While there may be risk factors or personality traits that can make a person more likely to fall victim to such urges, I don’t think there is a pedophile gene that makes people this way.

This is one reason I believe a more serious effort needs to be made on researching abusers and what causes these urges. Why do they find gratifying what most people would find to be disgusting and disturbing? Is there a psychological link or a biological link, or both? Is it simply a confusion of affection, where what should register as maternal affection is instead registered as sexual affection? When kids are molested, how do we effectively treat the increased risk of them becoming abusers themselves?

We will not find a cure overnight. It may take decades, even centuries to come close to finding a so called ‘cure’ for the epidemic. But until we put forth a realistic effort to fight the problem at its source, it will continue to plague our society. Even now, while we may not know how to help an individual completely eradicate these urges, studies show that treatment does work. The fact is that with treatment, close to ½ of all molesters who would have re-offended can be stopped. If you look at the abundance of help available to substance abusers versus that of pedophiles, it is not amazing to see why sexual abuse is becoming more and more common. We need to help people with this, as with any other condition.
Chapter 4

The psychology behind sexual abuse and abuse prevention

Understanding how prevention works
Sexual abuse is a game of psychology. It is a delicate relationship between the child and the abuser. It rarely occurs through blunt force or by a molester overpowering a child. It occurs through psychological conditioning, subtle coercion, and survives through children’s inexperience and passive nature. Parents can defeat this psychology if they know how. They can teach kids how to actually stop a molester, as well as defeat the conditioning that results in children keeping the abuse secret.

**Intra-family abuse**
The psychology behind intra-family abuse is quite different than that of abuse outside of the home. It is far more damaging to children in many ways. At the hands of a parent, it is someone the child relies on. A child’s parents are looked upon as the center of the universe in a child’s development. It also is more damaging because it will be long term, drawn out, and most often, fairly severe abuse.

It is also much harder to prevent. Because the offender is constantly around the child, it creates a situation where the child is unable to escape the abuse. There is no stability, there is no loving home to fall back on. There are no real ways for the child to cry out. If he or she does expose the abuse, they risk losing at a minimum, one parent, and often times, their family. This is not an attractive choice for the child to make, especially since in most cases, the child will learn to ‘put up’ with the abuse. He or she will learn to tolerate it, and be willing to accept shouldering the burden in exchange for keeping the family together and ‘protecting’ the other parent or siblings. Let’s face it, as a child, how many of us would really choose to be thrown into a new environment and have our lives whisked away? It’s like a child asking to be left abandoned in a mall. It’s not a likely choice they would want to make.

Abusers inside the home are often at their own discretion to use blunt force or overpower techniques in their tactics, because they control virtually everything in the child’s surroundings. Conditioning through threats is nearly impossible to overcome, because the child does not have a safe haven to go to. They do not have a family where they can be kept safe. This is why intra-family abuse is far more damaging, and why it is nearly impossible to prevent. When you hear about the extreme damaging effects from sexual abuse that people associate with all cases, this is where it generally occurs, in intra-family abuse.

**External Abuse**
Abusers outside of the home do not have anywhere near the same luxuries that abusers inside the home have. They must learn to be discreet, tactful, and covert in their crimes. They cannot simply overpower the child and control their lives. They must strike a delicate balance of reluctant agreement, and then condition the child not to tell.

External abuse relies on the molester befriending the child, getting them to cooperate with their actions, and keeping them from telling. This is done through psychological tricks that rely on certain inherent traits in children, and rely on mistakes parents make in raising their children. By counterering these things, you can easily teach a child to defeat just about any advance a predator might bring.

If you have a case where a person hates children, (which is very unlikely for the type of crime and how they would access your child) he or she still cannot simply overpower the child or have their way with them. They are not in a position to do so. The only way this would happen is if the person had no intentions if bringing your child back. If this were the case, it would happen through an anonymous abduction, not someone you left your child with.
The psychology of how abuse occurs
Here in a nutshell, is the basic psychology of why most abuse cases occur:

An allegiance to adults
Children have a natural allegiance to adults. From birth, they learn to depend on them. They learn to trust them. They learn that not listening to them is usually met with punishment. They have an instilled desire to please adults and be liked and praised by them. When someone the child knows and trusts, (your average molester) asks them to do something of a sexual nature, they usually oblige without much fuss or question. They trust the adult. What they are asked to do may be a little uncomfortable, but is usually not painful or too horrible, so they will oblige.

Countering this…
In countering this fault, children will need to be taught the unfortunate realities of life. Even good people or people who they are friends with can make mistakes. They need to be taught a few very important exceptions to the rule they learn from birth: ‘You must always obey adults’. They need to learn of the few instances when they are allowed to say “NO” to an adult. They also need to learn a few basics of what is normal for adults to ask of them, and what is abnormal.

Bad things look like monsters
Parents are unknowingly contribute to the perception that molesters are horrible people and easily spotted. When it comes to the tough issues with their kids, parents try to write a fairy tale good guy/villain approach to everything, when they should just tell the truth. Parents refer to people who do such things as monsters. Kids pick up on this. They are concrete thinkers. If there are no monsters around, it can’t be bad.

Countering this…
Parents need to tell the child the proper information. The reality is that the molester isn’t a monster. It is likely one of the child’s best friends. Their actions may be disgusting, but the other aspects of the person are likely to be quite normal. Children need to learn from a young age the reality of life: People aren’t perfect. People make mistakes, and can sometimes make mistakes that harm you. They may not mean to, and even your friends can do bad things though they may not mean you harm.

They give in to coercion
Children will not initiate sexual behavior with an adult on their own accord. (Without a prior history of abuse). They give in to the coercion of the molester because they don’t know any better. All cases of sexual abuse involve some form of coercion. In rare cases, it is as simple as the molester saying “do this” and the child obliges. In most cases however, there will be a little more work and convincing on the molester’s part to get the child to go along with the abuse.

Countering this…
The good news is, children have an almost mystical skill to distinguish the difference between abusive behavior and non-abusive behavior. While they may go along with the abuse, studies show they always know something isn’t right. **Sexual abuse occurs because children do not forcibly say NO!!!** With the rare exception of the violent molestation, it is not forced upon them, and they are not overpowered. It occurs because children are inexperienced, and sometimes feel they have to go along with whatever an adult might say. By teaching children to obey this voice inside them, they will be able to decide for themselves which affection they desire and which they don’t, and will put an end to the affection they do not desire. By teaching them to spot conditions when they need to consult another party first, they can defeat abuse.
**Children are tricked**
Many molesters use simple tricks to convince the child that he/she should give in to the abuse. Molesters can be some of the most brilliant people with children you’ve ever met. In many cases, an extraordinary ability with children is what came first, then the perversion followed. They can convince a child in quite elaborate ways and using your own words as parents to back their statements up. Other times, it is simply a matter of using simple psychology that any fool can figure out, but works very effectively because of mistakes nearly every parent makes in raising their children.

**Countering this…**
We will teach some of the more common tricks. We will also teach them general rules to rely on anytime they aren't sure. We will also teach you as parents to avoid these mistakes that can be devastating in your efforts to protect your children.

**Children feel powerless**
Children, although not wanting the abuse to continue, often feel powerless to do anything about it. This is because they buy into the molesters conditioning. They feel trapped in a situation, thinking that their parents cannot or will not help, or would disapprove of the situation and inflict punishment on the child.

**Countering this…**
In countering this, we will teach children that there are ways out. We will teach you how to be a better confidant with your child, so that they can more easily tell you the tough issues. We will teach children that your love is unconditional, which many parents take as a given, but I can tell you from experience in early childhood, it is not always a given with children. Unless you constantly reinforce the issue, they may have doubts.

**Kids trust their molester**
In most cases, the molester is someone close to them that the child likes and admires. He or she trusts them in many aspects. This person is a friend, and probably has been someone to rely on in the past. They often might be third in line down the scale from parents in the ‘god of my universe’ arrangement. One molester ploy relies simply on the love the child has for the molester, telling them that if “anybody finds out, bad things will happen to them” (the molester). This works because the child likes their molester, and does not want them to get in trouble.

**Defeating this…**
A once again, children need to learn and be shown examples of how friends sometimes make bad decisions and do things that are wrong. They need to learn it is more important to keep safe than to keep a friend who might have a problem that is hurting you.

**They don’t know any better**
Few parents ever address the issue of sexuality with their kids. They go along with whatever a molester tells them is normal and believes it as normal because they do not have any other information to go on. Even if they don’t feel comfortable, nobody has ever told them why it’s not right, and all they have is their molester by their side convincing them this will be fun and beneficial. Unless they’ve been told otherwise, this will become their truth.

**Defeating this…**
When parents enter the fight for their children, child misconception will go away. Parents sometimes make a little too much of their child’s innocence. They think that discussing anything of a sexual nature will ruin their child’s innocence. Just the opposite is the case. Their children’s innocence is constantly widdled away at throughout childhood. Talking with children about very real human issues does not damage their innocence, it keeps it. Leaving them to external sources for their information about the world they see around them does.
The psychology of why children don’t tell

Half of the psychology behind why children don’t tell is on the part of the molester. However, the other half of responsibility falls directly onto the parents for how they raise their children.

Kids don’t tell because parent teach them not to
Parents unknowingly play right into the abuser's hands, ironically, often times in an attempt to prevent such a thing. From a young age children are taught to keep their genitals ‘Private.” Those parts are not to be mentioned or discussed. They hush any discussion of that area or of sexuality. Just about everything children learn from their parents teaches them to keep this to themselves.

Countering this…
Parents have to be willing to discuss this. Children need to learn they can talk about any part of their body openly. Those parts should never be referred to as private. You need to make an environment in your home where they feel a comfort level in discussing anything with you.

Upbringing
Parents often do not realize things they do in raising their children can often plays right into an abuser’s hands. They make critical mistakes when they discover the children in sex play with other kids. (A perfectly normal thing). They raise them in an environment where they do not feel comfortable talking about their sexual organs around their parents.

Countering this…
We well teach you how to avoid these common mistakes, while at the same time raising your children in a manner that will help them lead happier, healthier lives.

It is a one sided fight
Children will believe what a molester tells them, because in most cases, nobody has told them otherwise. Very few parents ever touch the subject. The only information the child has to go by is what the molester has told them. The molester is the one saying “don’t tell your parents”. This is supposed to be a secret. Everybody does it. “Your parents will be mad.” It is the only word they have to go on, so why would children risk reprisal from their parent by telling? They have no other information to counter what the molester has told them, so they believe it as the truth.

Countering this…
Parents need to start entering the fight. Don’t expect your child to be safe. He or she will at some time be in the care of someone with pedophile tendencies. It is too widespread of a problem. The odds are against your child. Most pedophiles your child will be in contact with will struggle. They will like your child. Pedophiles will only have success because you have not countered what they might do. Your child does not know better. Lets take that away from them. If you do that, you take away their opportunity, even if they spend countless hours alone with your child. You’ve started the first step by getting this far into the book, make sure you complete the programs.

Children are confused…
Children are confused about what has happened to them, and are unsure about exactly what to do about the abuse. Talking about an issue of sexual abuse is not always as easy as telling your parents you did a finger painting at school today.

Countering this…
If parents never address the issue with their children, it leaves them confused and alone to combat the issue.
A molester conditions them not to tell
Sexual abuse thrives among secrecy. It is a covert crime, and it is necessary for the molester to hide his or her actions. The molester thus engages in some form of conditioning so the child won’t tell, either through subtle direction or through blunt threats. These tricks are simple in many cases, but extremely effective. They can involve blunt threats of physical harm to the child or a loved one, instilling fear about what the parents would do if they found out about the abuse, or even using the child’s love for the abuser to keep them from telling. This conditioning can be very powerful.

Defeating this…
The parental bond will always be stronger than anything a molester can do to build up the silence. The ‘conditioning’ of the child is not black magic or mystical powers, as some people believe, but rather simple psychology that can be easily defeated. By going over some of the tricks molesters use to keep kids from telling, an instant alarm will go off in their head when someone tries to use one of them. This, combined with defeating the tricks before they happen, will defeat the molester’s stunts to try and impose secrecy.

How effective are prevention methods?
These programs will have a nearly perfect success rate if parents do a good job with their children reinforcing the concepts. These methods won’t work on all molesters. Some molesters may be too driven by their urges at the time, for the child to adequately prevent the abuse. However, this type of molester is far more rare, comprising at most only 20% of the pedophile population. The good news is, even if your child falls victim to this type of abuser, they will tell you. The abuse can then be discovered, contained, treated, and it is extremely unlikely the incident will be very disruptive in your child’s long term life. This again, depends on the extent of the abuse, and the particular strengths of your child.

In that regard, these programs should have a nearly perfect success rate. Even if the abuse cannot be stopped by the child, you can discover it quickly and prevent the damage and long term effects that parents fear when they think about sexual abuse.
Chapter 5

Sexual Abuse Prevention

How to abuse-proof your child

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”
-Edmund Burke

For centuries, molester’s have been the only ones in the fight for the children. Most parents never touch the subject of sexuality or sexual abuse. Because molesters are often the only ones talking to their victims, children have only their molesters to believe.
Step 1

Raising Sexually Healthy Children

Raising sexually healthy children is very important to sexual abuse prevention, not to mention a child’s overall development. We unfortunately live in a society where sexuality, and more important, the sexual organs, are treated as something dirty and disgusting. We learn from a very young age that we should be ashamed of our sexual organs. They are something private and not to be discussed. They must be covered at all times and kept to ourselves. The words penis or vagina are often times regarded as dirty words or as “potty talk”. This is something that has to change in order to better protect our children.

Because of this type of upbringing, children learn to feel ashamed of their sexual organs and therefore are uneasy when talking about them. It creates an uncomfortable barrier between the child and parent when it comes to anything on the subject of sexuality. This then leads to cases not being reported, and will subject the child to more abuse. It also amplifies their emotional burden and shame from the abuse.

Children need to be raised in a sexually healthy manner in order to be truly protected from sexual abuse. The bottom line is, how do you expect a child to be able to tell you someone may be doing something bad to their body if he or she can’t even speak about their private area comfortably? If they can’t even say the word penis or vagina in front of you in comfort, how do you expect them to be able to tell you about sexual abuse, something much more uncomfortable?

Aside from its value in sexual abuse proofing, studies have shown that children who are raised in a sexually open and healthy environment will have less emotional problems during their teenage years, and overall live happier, healthier lives. (Gardner, 1975; Smith,1986; Story;1979)

Defining a sexually healthy child

So what then is a ‘sexually healthy child?’ Does this mean that children know every little detail about their sexual parts or what they are used for? Does it mean that you will need to go over sex education with your 4 year old? Quite the contrary. A sexually healthy child is simply a child that is comfortable with all parts of their body, and does not show any shame when talking about his or her sexual organs. A sexually healthy child will be able to tell you “my vagina hurts” without giggling or being shy. He or she when asked to name his or her sexual parts will show no shame or discomfort in doing so. Children are born either a boy or girl. Their reproductive parts are as much a part of their body as their fingers or toes. Why should they be ashamed of their sexual organs?

It also means that children are raised in an environment where human sexuality is addressed, not shuffled into a dark closet. When parents hush questions and the natural explorations children have that are of a sexual nature, the result is they close down the communication of that subject with their children.

Out of all the abuse prevention precautions that you can take with your children, this is one of the most important. Many parents often close the environment in an attempt to protect their children. They throw a fit if their child is naked. They make a big deal about their genitals being “private” and to themselves. They hold back on shorts or skirts for the fear that it is showing too much. The problem with this is, the only people that the private parts become restricted to are the parents. A molester will not care what your child is wearing. A molester does not need free spirited children who are allowed to go nude to do their work, in fact, they would prefer otherwise.
A child who is uncomfortable with talking about his or her sexual organs will have a harder time telling anyone that someone is doing something bad to them. A child who is raised in a closed environment has only the information a molester gives them regarding sexuality, what is normal, and what isn’t. A child who is raised in a closed environment, plain and simply, makes an easy target.

So what does this mean for parents? Raising your children in a sexually healthy manner will require some slight changes in yourself and your lifestyle. It does not involve uncomfortable heart-to-heart talks, or major household changes. Rather, it simply means altering your home lifestyle to allow for an environment open to sexuality. Taking responsibility for your children’s sexual development, rather than running from the issue and leaving them to gather insight from others.

Some guidelines for sexually healthy children:

- Children’s natural self expression is encouraged, not punished
- Honest answers to sexuality are given when asked, though in child friendly terms
- Children are taught to speak of their genital area freely, without shame
- Human sexuality is not resorted to uncomfortable talks, and it is not hushed, but rather means honest answers to children’s questions as they arise.
- Sexuality is dealt with as soon as children are surrounded by it. (2 or 3 years old)
- Steps are taken to counter the influence children learn from media regarding sexuality, when it arises.
- Raising children to be comfortable discussing any subject with their parents.

The parent questionnaire

Take this quick survey to see whether or not you have a sexually healthy child:

- Does your child giggle or shy away when he or she says the words penis or vagina?
- How many times in the last month has your child used those words with you in normal conversation?
- Ask your child to name all of his or her body parts. Does he or she include the penis or vagina when listing those parts?
- Is he/she scolded around the house for nudity?
- Does he/she feel shy or embarrassed undressing in front of you? (Age dependent)
- When is the last time you had a discussion with them about anything of a sexual nature?

Understanding children as sexual beings

Believe it or not, children are sexual creatures. Sexual development will begin at birth. This does not mean that they desire sexual interaction or are ready for it yet, but they are sexual beings nonetheless. From infancy, children can derive pleasure from their sexual organs. From infancy, their sexuality starts to develop. Boys can have erections from birth. Girls will experience vaginal lubrication. Even girls as young as 3 or 4 are capable of stimulating themselves to orgasm. (Kinsey, et. Al, 1948) Childhood masturbation is common in children of both sexes. (Roberts, Kline, and Gagnon, 1978; Levine, 1957; Shaefer, 1964;

Children begin to experience their first sexual urges as early as 4 or 5. What is commonly labeled as a ‘crush’, referred to by psychologists sometimes as an oedipal phase, are really early signs of children’s sexual urges. A kind of ‘test run’ for the brain’s sexual development. Crushes can happen with other children, or more commonly, with adults the child knows.

It is important for adults to understand that children’s sexual development is as much a part of their growing up as losing a tooth or growing a few inches taller. Children are natural learners. Their curiosity about
themselves and others is a natural part of growing up. Their questions about the differences between boys and girls and ideas of human sexuality do not wait until they are 13 to appear.

This is yet another reason why it is important for parents to take a positive approach to sexuality from a young age. They will begin to pick up on your cues about the topic from a very young age. They will start to acquire knowledge of sexuality from a young age, with your help or without it.

**Sexual development in children by ages**
Children’s sexual development begins at birth. Here is a quick overview of the ages and stages for your child’s sexual development.

**Infants**
Infants have a basic need and hunger for touch. They desire the touch of their mother, their father, other children, and themselves. Infants also explore their own body, and will begin to stimulate their sexual organs. This is completely natural. Parents should avoid slapping their hand away or getting upset with the child over it.

**Toddlers**
Toddlers are open, and have not yet developed any shame for their bodies. Keep it that way! Toddlers should be open to talk about all of the different parts of their bodies, and should be encouraged to do so as often as possible. They should learn the names for their sexual organs as they start to talk, and should use those words when speaking of their sexual parts. Self exploration still occurs, but in many children, will begin to diminish during this age as they become overloaded with other sensory experiences around them.

**Early childhood**
Preschoolers should still be open with their bodies, although will probably have picked up a little more of a hint to hush regarding the matter. Sexual play is rampant in preschoolers, as children start to become more aware of each others bodies and develop a natural curiosity for each other. Childhood masturbation can also frequently start during this age. So called “potty talk” is frequent, generally regarding jokes of biological functions followed by hysteric giggling.

Childhood crushes will also often surface during this age. This is a perfectly healthy and normal part of growing up, but parents should take extra caution during this age. If their crush falls on a person who could be even somewhat prone to pedophile tendencies, it could be a disaster. Children’s affections can easily be registered by the wrong person as sexual advances. Children will often experience infantile sexual urges. (Desires to kiss someone over and over again, a more demanding touch hunger, etc.) Children can even act out what they see adults doing. They may want to pretend they are married to the person they have the crush on. I’ve experienced children with crushes who then took it a step further and tried to act out mommy and daddy relations. This is perfectly normal and natural, but should be viewed with a cautious and watchful eye.

A sexually healthy preschooler should be encouraged to be open and free with their bodies. This is usually when shame of their body is learned, so do everything you can to make sure that is not a tactic you are promoting in the home. They should be encouraged to discuss their sexual organs as much as possible, and extreme care should be taken when handling sexual play, masturbation, or potty talk.

**School-age children (grades 1-6)**
Usually sometime in the middle of the elementary years, children’s sexuality will once again go into hiding, until the wonderfully complicated age of puberty. School aged children will start to require and desire more privacy. They will become more guarding when it comes to their bodies. If you have raised them in a sexually healthy manner, they will still be comfortable in talking about the subject, but will engage in the conversation only as needed.
One unfortunate reality of our so called MTV society, is that oftentimes sexual pressure and suggestions from peers may start to occur during this age. Sadly, many children will be exposed to their first sexual encounter at this age with another child during their elementary years. Not as sexual abuse, but as mutually consenting children, neither with an abuse history.

School aged children should have a concrete, basic understanding of sexuality. As children get older, they should receive a full education in sexuality. Most schools promote sex education in Fifth grade, which seems to be an appropriate age.

Adolescence and teens
This begins a difficult time in a child’s life. Their bodies are changing, and their lives are changing as well. Children begin to shift from needing acceptance from parents and adults to needing acceptance from peers. This is when having raised a sexually healthy child will really pay off, because it will mean the difference between them feeling like they can talk to you regarding issues of sex, or feeling too embarrassed to do so.

It is important for parents to be a partner with their children during this age, to help them grow into a sexually normal adult. It is important to help them to combat all of the sexual hysteria and exaggerated rules that plague teenagers, and to help them make wise choices in their life. For children who are not sexually abused, pedophile tendencies have been known to develop under the collapse of children’s sexual identity during the teenage years, (often caused by myth and false ideas) so it is a difficult, but important time in your child’s life.

Why address sexuality with young children?
There are so many answers to this question, we will go ahead and list the major ones by point:

They start asking young
I can’t even begin to count how many times I’ve received a sexual question from a child, and for fear of being arrested or sued, had to painfully tell the child it is something they had to ask their parents. It made me cringe knowing their parents probably would not answer it. I even had a child tell me one time that “my mommy won’t tell me.” I wanted to scream. I gave her as best of a limited answer as I could and crossed my fingers that the parents would not be furious with me later.

Children start having questions about sexuality from a young age. You cannot shield them from it. It is part of their natural development. I can tell you from experience, for all of you parents who do not want to answer your child’s questions about sexuality, then hope that they can get the proper answers from teachers, child care workers, friends, and anybody else. Children who do not have their curiosity satisfied do not stop asking, they simply start looking elsewhere for their answers.

It is not damaging
Once again, we run into this sexual voodoo our society suffers from. Parents believe that somehow it is inappropriate for them to be discussing such things with young children. If a child has a curiosity about something, it does not damage them to know the truth. Truth is never wrong! Truth is never damaging! It is healthy for children to be know the answers.

It is the best time
One of the biggest mistakes parents make is waiting until the teenage years to address issues of sexuality. Rather than trying to wait until a time when you are beginning to lose control of your children, (which happens to all parents, even the best in the world) confront the issues now. Make sure you spend the first 12 years of your child’s life laying out a stable framework for your children to build their ideals and morals from. Don’t wait until they are 13 and riddled with urges to start addressing the issue of healthy sexual relationships.
Instill concepts when they are young. Confronting the tough issues and morals you would like your children to be instilled with begins at birth, and that includes sexuality.

**It is important for their sexual development**
For children to develop into a sexually healthy adult, they need to start learning from their parents about healthy relationships from a young age.

**It is important in protecting them from abuse**
Children who have a basic understanding of sexual abuse and sexuality are much more likely to be able to stop an abuser. Children need to start to understand the realities about life’s hard truths. Don’t hide death, confront it head on when it happens. Don’t pretend all bad guys are evil, teach them from an early age that people are imperfect and make mistakes. Once again, truth is always right.

**Who do you want to teach them?**
Look around at the television shows. Magazine advertisements. Do you want them raised with society’s obsession with sexuality? Do you want them growing up thinking that having sex with different people is as everyday as riding your bike? Do you want them to learn that sex is all that matters in life, and everything else revolves around sex? When you leave your children to learn from the world, that is what they will be taught.

**Getting started**
Creating a sexually healthy environment requires a few changes among parents. It is not something that happens overnight, but is definitely worth taking the time to accomplish. It is not complicated, it does not require a Ph.D. in psychology, but it does require overcoming your own personal attitudes towards sexuality. Here are some tips to help you get started:

**Don’t be shy**
The first step is to try and get yourself comfortable with the subject matter. One of the hardest things will involve trying to forget years of upbringing that have taught you to avoid the subject, if you are like most parents. Here are some tips:

1. Practice in front of a mirror. As ridiculous as it may sound, just as you may practice for an important speech to give, you can practice saying these words in front of a mirror. You don’t have to set aside a particular time for this, just every morning as you brush your teeth, comb your hair, or do whatever, practice saying those words.
2. Don’t shy away when the subject is brought up. Swallow that lump in your throat and use every opportunity to address the issue.
3. Practice makes perfect. The more you say those words, the more you talk in sexually correct terms, the more comfortable you will become with it. Practice does make perfect, and using this conversation more will help you overcome any uneasiness or discomfort you may have with the issue.

Children can read your non-verbal cues as well. If you are talking about their ears and their nose with a comfortable voice, but then say the words penis or vagina with a nervous tone in your voice, they will sense it. Do your best to get yourself comfortable with using the correct words for their personal area in normal conversation.
**Start Young**

Young children are born without any shame of themselves. It is adult perceptions pushed on them that forces them to learn shame. From a very young age, make sure you are raising children with no shame of their bodies. When as toddlers you might play games with them to point to their elbow, point to their nose, etc., include the penis or vagina in those games as well. Make sure they start learning from a very young age that it is completely acceptable to use those words, and that the sexual organs are as much a part of their body make up as their ears or hair color.

**Loosen Up!!!**

Sexuality isn’t horrible, its part of human nature. The sexual organs are not dirty parts, they are parts of our human anatomy, and should be treated in the same context as a child’s nose or elbows. Don’t get panicky about your child’s nudity. Don’t restrict your child from wearing a certain outfit over something they have no knowledge of. Don’t send your child the message that their body is shameful! Let’s get over this sexual voodoo we suffer from in this country.

**All about private parts**

Stop calling them private parts! Do you really want your children to keep those parts private from you? This will not stop a molester, but rather help them by blocking the child from communicating to you. A common molester conditioning is to explain to the child that this is something they keep “just between them.” Unfortunately, this ploy works very well, because it is consistent with what the child learns from his or her parents. Some molesters will even use examples of things the child’s parents have probably said to illustrate this to a child. This may seem like a picky point, but it is more important than you think. Children will develop and learn the meaning of the word ‘private’ from other experiences. You really don’t want them to associate their genitals with the word ‘private'.

Children should be taught that their genitals are personal parts, but certainly not private. They are open for discussion. They can talk about them with their parents, their teachers, or anyone else. They are not to ever be hushed up or kept secret. They are personal parts to which use and touch is restricted, but under no circumstances ‘private’.

Additionally, they should be referred to as the penis or the vagina more often than they are personal parts. It is not your child’s personal area, it is his penis. It is not her personal area, it is her vagina. The label of ‘personal’ to your child’s genital area should take back seat to the words penis or vagina.

**Pet names versus actual terminology**

Most experts will agree that it is always better to use the actual names for children’s private area rather than pet names. There are two main reasons for this:

1. A pet name is just reinforcing the shame factor. Are you using the pet name because you are uncomfortable with the correct terminology?
2. We want a child to be able to discuss their bodies with anybody. Especially as your child gets older, they may feel more comfortable in talking about possible abuse with a school teacher or significant other. We want correct terminology used so that there is no misunderstandings between pet names which may have different meanings in different households.
3. Pet names have been known to lead to confusions with false allegations.

The bottom line is, we want children to be comfortable when talking about themselves. While pet names may be an easier way to bridge that comfort level, they may not be the best. The ultimate goal is to have children be able to talk about their sexual parts openly. If you use pet names to get that across, then great, but you
should try also to introduce actual terminology so that children can be comfortable talking about both. You
can do it gradually, but start working towards actual terminology.

**Potty Talk**
Potty talk is normal talk! Children should be encouraged to talk about the sexual parts of their body. They
should be able to do so in normal conversation without any discomfort. You can still choose to alter their
conversation if they engage in inappropriate talk, just make sure you do so in the following ways:

- Make sure that you focus on the relevance of the talk to the conversation, and not on the actual
discussion of saying those words.
- Saying the word penis is perfectly fine, but talking about the functions that it does is rude for other
people, unless you are telling someone for a specific reason.

**Everyday chances to promote a healthy environment**
As said earlier, raising sexually healthy children does not mean long, uncomfortable talks. It is a method of
simply addressing sexuality and sexual issues as they rise. Here are everyday chances to promote a sexually
healthy environment with your children:

**Questions**
First off, make sure you answer your children’s questions honestly and openly when they come to you with
them. Look at these as cherished opportunities rather than the dreaded talks.

**Seeing sexuality**
Take the time to talk with your children about normal sexual relationships when something you see on TV
involves sexuality. If you see something inappropriate, don’t let it go, address it.

**Bath Time**
Point out and describe parts by their proper name. You can create your own games to do during bath time to
get children comfortable in talking about their sexual organs. Even if you just say something like “Make sure
you wipe your vagina clean” every bath time will help to promote comfort in using those words. The more
you use them in everyday talk, the more comfortable they will be to your child.

**Injuries**
Occasionally, your child may injure themselves in their private area. Make sure that when this happens, you
are using correct terminology and encouraging them to do so themselves.

**Diaper changes**
This is a great way to start young with your children. During diaper changes, talk with your child using the
correct names for his or her sexual organs. You can say “Now I am going to wipe your vagina clean” or “Now
I’m going to wipe around your penis.” Get them used to hearing those parts from a very young age. It will
carry over with them through childhood and beyond.

**Getting dressed**
With preschoolers and younger children you can play games when getting dressed in the morning. Tell them
“Next we pull your panties up over your vagina” or something similar. Create your own simple songs to sing
or routines to do that involve using correct terminology.
Potty training
Again, just a normal part of early childhood which lends itself well to the frequent use of correct terminology for the sexual organs. Make sure you take advantage of it!

Potty time
With young children, help to promote good hygiene and a sexually healthy child, after using the restroom remind children to “wipe their vagina good” or get all of the “poo poo” off of their anus.

Doctors Visits
Take a time out to talk to children about all of the parts of their body during a doctor visit. Also take the time to explain to them that doctors may sometimes look at different parts of their body’s to keep them healthy, but only real doctors inside of their offices, and with you knowing about it.

Helping siblings
If you have older children, helping siblings or other younger children can be a great way to promote a sexually healthy environment. For parents who have not started with their older children, this can be a wonderful way to bridge the gap without discomfort. It not only can provide opportunities for correct terminology to be used, it also gives them insight into parenting responsibilities. Let your older children help give the younger ones baths, or change their diapers. Let them help with dressing them or potty training. Use this opportunity to use correct terminology for the sexual organs. Seeing and helping you raise younger children in this manner can be extremely helpful in making up for the years you did not promote an open environment with your older kids.

Nudity and Children
Many parents have questions about what is appropriate and what isn’t when it comes to nudity and their children. While much of this is a personal decision, allowing children to go nude in appropriate situations is perfectly normal and healthy, and should not be discouraged. Remember, our ultimate goal is to get children to be comfortable and open with their bodies. Once again if we are making a big deal out of a child desiring to go nude while around the house or another appropriate area, we are reinforcing the ‘be ashamed and cover up factor’. Studies suggest that allowing children to go nude during appropriate times can have good benefits. It allows them to be more open with their bodies and comfortable with themselves. Nudity itself is not damaging to children. (Gardner, 1975; Smith;1986) In fact, it’s been shown that there are several benefits of raising children in such an environment, including its benefits in sexual abuse prevention. (Smith, 1986)

So how do you define appropriate? While you can set your own boundaries, one many parents find acceptable is within the confines of their own home, and amongst the presence of immediate family members only. As long as children feel comfortable in doing so, they should be allowed to be nude around the house. When they become of age where it is no longer a comfortable experience, they will put clothes on! But by all means, let them keep that openness with you for as long as they desire.

Adult nudity
When it comes to adult nudity around children, many experts have quite differing views about whether or not this is acceptable. Many parents may shower or bathe with their children. Some grow up in nudist colonies. There is no evidence to support that children who are exposed to adult nudity throughout their childhood are in any way damaged by such an experience.

Media sexuality and its effects on children
 Forget turning on the TV, reading a magazine, or listening to the radio without hearing or seeing something related to human sexuality. It is everywhere, and there is no avoiding it. It is in just about every television
show, movie, and even most advertisements. Some forms of simple sexuality are appropriate for children to see, such as a simple kiss or modest hug between adults.

On the opposite end, media sexuality can have some very negative effects on children. It can oftentimes trigger sexual play in children, or lead to sexual experimentation at younger ages. It also portrays an unreal depiction of sexuality that can damage the children who grow up trying to judge themselves by it.

**Distortion**

One of the major disadvantages of children viewing media sexuality is how often what is viewed on television becomes a guideline for sexuality in real life. What is seen on TV becomes the measure for the ideal sexual life. And why not? Look at the people on television. Young, good looking, cool. This is damaging because in nearly every case the images portrayed of sexuality on TV are highly distorted.

**Monkey see, Monkey do**

Remember, children are like little sponges. The more sexuality they are exposed to, the more it will affect them. If you let your children watch inappropriate media, it will affect them. If you let your children watch shows or movies that depict graphic scenes of sexuality, it will be imprinted into their minds. While it is each parent’s responsibility to decide for themselves what should be shielded from their children, take into careful consideration how much your children are affected by what they view.

**Countering the effects of media sexuality**

Keep an eye on what they watch. Four-year-olds should not be watching movies that are rated R or NC-17. (It’s amazing how many parents allow this, and I must say, I too, like most other parents, have at times gotten lazy, and been responsible for a child viewing something they probably should not have watched.) It happens, but put forth a concerted effort to ensure that children are not watching movies that a teenager must show an ID for in the theater. Do your best to watch the movies you like, while the kids aren’t around.

When you are watching a movie that depicts an unreal scene, or something you do not agree with, (excessive violence, sexuality, drug use or profanity) make sure you point that out to your children. You cannot shield everything, but do not let something go by without taking exception. The real tragedy is not that your children viewed the image or scene, but that you let it go without addressing it. Explain to your children why it was either unreal, or in your mind inappropriate.

Tell them real stories. Often times, stories from real people are a great way to communicate sexuality with children. Especially as children get older, it is helpful for them to hear real stories from you, from people you know, to counter what they hear through peers and on television.

You would not send your child on a trip across the country by themselves. Try to regard television, stories, and other media as an emotional trip. Make sure you are there to counter and guide your children in what they see. Don’t leave them to make sense of it on their own. Don’t let them form their own opinions about how they are supposed to act sexually from what they see on television. Now is the time when you do have the power to impact their morals in life. Don’t wait until a later age when they are listening to their friends, more than you, to try and address these things.

**Television in other rulers**

This rule applies to all negatives associated with television. Make sure you have conversations with your children about violence, scary scenes, drug use, etc. Seeing the act itself is not necessarily bad, although you should not let your child watch R-Rated movies. The real damage is done when what they see is left un-countered to become a guideline for them to go by for how adults should act. Not normal adults, but the cool, good looking, popular adults we see in the movies.
Some ideas for questions to ask of children when they encounter violence:

- Why do you think they did that?
- Was it very real?
- Why do you think the people put that scene in their movies?
- Do you think that would be a good thing for someone to do?

Some ideas for questions to ask of children when they encounter sexuality:

- What do you think was going on in that scene?
- Why do you think they were doing that?
- Do you think most adults really act that way?
- Do you think adults should act that way?
- What are some bad things that could happen from what they are doing?

The results of sexual influences on children

Because media continues to get more sexually charged, it is having very negative effects on our kids. I don’t think parents realize how young children are when beginning to experiment. Most parents assume they have until high school before this is a danger. The truth is, in many cases, you may not even have until fifth grade anymore.

The age at which many children start sexual exploration is now down into the latter elementary years. We are not talking about sexually abused children who are acting out. We’re not talking about innocent sex play or ‘show and see'. Were not talking about sexual abuse, although some might argue that. We are talking about children who without prior abuse, knowingly, willfully, and with mutual consent start to engage in sexual relations with their peers. It is a sad situation, but the reality is, they are learning to do these things from us.

America is obsessed with sex. We are so sexually unhealthy it is unbelievable at times. If you don’t believe that kids model our behavior, you still have a lot to learn. They are more likely to model the behavior they see us doing and telling them not to, without further explanation. They want to be ‘grown up'. They want to be cool by acting above their age in any way they can. That is what being ‘cool’ is about. They watch TV, see magazines, billboards, ads, most of which have sexual implications. It is something that they are constantly bombarded with. They hear the talk of other grownups around them. They are exposed to dozens of sexual suggestions a day, and the truth is, the more parents hush the subject and don’t address it, the more the kids will start to act it out earlier.

Parents who don’t understand this usually end up with children who start to experiment with sex younger, and who are susceptible to a molester’s advances. We spend billions of dollars each year to try and curb this epidemic of teen sex. (And I use the word teen liberally, as preteen might also apply). But it ends up being just another multi-billion dollar waste of taxpayer dollars. Spending all kinds of money to tell teenagers not to have sex is a waste, especially when society is telling them sex is everything. What about our own morals? Society is unlikely to stop its sex obsession overnight. But what parents can do, is come to the realization that these things do influence kids, and begin to address sexual topics and instill sexual morals from a young age. It doesn’t steal their innocence if you do so. It steals it if you don’t.

Addressing sexual play in children

Remember from earlier in this chapter…..
Sexual play with playmates is a normal and healthy part of growing up!!!!!

Children relate to themselves and their world around them through dramatic play, the process of acting out situations or scenarios that they may have seen or experienced, or just may be curious about. It is also normal for children to explore each other as a natural learning process.

Reacting to sexual play
All too often, parents ‘freak out’ over sexual play, not understanding that in most cases, sexual play is a normal part of growing up. How parents react to such incidences can leave a permanent stamp in the child’s memory, and do extreme damage to the sexually healthy environment we are trying to create, leaving them susceptible to abuse.

Step by step guide to handling sexual play:

1. Calmly ask the child(ren) what they are doing. **Listen to their answer.** This is crucial in determining what motivated the acts, and whether or not it was normal play or something that needs to be investigated further.

2. Redirect the children to other activities, explaining to them why it is inappropriate to be doing such things. Such emphasis should be placed not on the fact that they were exploring each others bodies, but that there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to learn about each other. *(Some experts would even advocate not redirecting them, but to oversee their game and take the opportunity to ask them what questions they have about each other and let them explore themselves. However, while this practice may be fundamentally healthy, sex play will usually involve your child and a friend. In this day and age, this is probably not a wise thing to do.)*

3. **NO PUNISHMENT** should ever be issued for sexual play. This sends them the message that they should hide anything of the sort from you. There is also no reason for punishment. They did not do anything wrong! They are either normal, curious children, or in the case where the sexual play was derived from an unhealthy source, they are victims. Redirect, counsel, but do not punish!

It is extremely important to handle sexual play in a calm manner, because not doing so can close your child off when it comes to anything on their body. If they know you get upset when you discover them playing that way with another child, are they going to be forthcoming when the same situation involves themselves and a molester? Or will they go out of their way to hide the abuse? What if the molester uses the psychology of “Your parents will be mad if you tell them” (A common coercion used among molesters). Is it likely your child will buy into that statement, and try just as hard as the molester does to keep the abuse secret.

**What is normal sexual play in children:**

- Getting Naked with peers of the same or opposite sex
- Lying on top of each other naked or ‘sleeping’ together naked
- Masturbation (Most cases)
- Touching each others genitals to one another (Most cases)
- Touching another child’s genital area
- Kissing
- Interest in biological functions around the sexual area

**What is abnormal sexual play in children:**

- Inserting items into the vagina or anus, or attempting insertion
- Engaging in oral sex with one another
- Attempting to insert a child’s genitals into another child’s vagina or anus
- Sexual play with a child who is significantly older than the other child.
- Any act that involves sexual knowledge above a level that a child should know.
What might cause sexual play:

- Normal exploration between children to satisfy curiosity.
- Viewing such acts on television or through another media source.
- Witnessing such acts performed, as in the case of a child walking in on their parents during intercourse.
- Being the victim of a molestation him/herself.


Childhood masturbation

It is relatively common for children to start masturbating as young as 1 or 2, (I have noticed this to be especially true in girls, although I do not have data to back that up). Such behavior is not necessarily anything to panic about. However, you should ask your child how they learned the habit, to ensure it was not learned through an episode of sexual abuse. Approaching the subject can also be tricky. Parents must decide from their own personal and moral beliefs what to do regarding the behavior. However, it is important to handle the matter in a way that does not send them signals that their body is dirty.

If you deem it acceptable…

From a child psychologist’s standpoint, this is generally the best option to take. It is unlikely you will get a child to stop. Once the habit is learned it becomes a continual way of self gratification. Trying to ask the child to stop can be like expecting them to not scratch an itch they have. Just make sure they understand that it is something they should do in private. Also, clearly explain the difference between the child touching themselves as opposed to another person touching them.

If you deem it inappropriate…

Have a talk with the child about the behavior. You can reason with him/her using this logic: It is not the use of the child’s genitals that is in question, it is how it is being used. While it is perfectly OK to talk about your vagina and to be open about it, having someone touch you in that area for no reason is not acceptable. While it is OK for a child to be free with their behaviors, this particular behavior, touching themselves in that manner, is not something children should do. Try to avoid shaming the behavior too much, emphasize it as something children should not do, much like adults have sex, children don’t.

Try to avoid saying things that shame the behavior, because this closes off the communication. Calling it a “dirty little habit” sends children the message that those parts are dirty. Calling it a “sin” sends the message that being touched there is the child’s wrongdoing, and therefore, can lead to later secrecy in a sexual assault.

Explaining the difference between secretive and private

Childhood masturbation also poses another unique challenge for abuse prevention advocates. How to explain to children that it is an activity that should not be done in front of others, while at the same time differentiating between that and possible sexual abuse and its secrecy. The best approach is to explain to your child that they can be allowed to do things with their own body in private, like to masturbate or go potty. But never is somebody else to help them do these things or touch their body in such a way.
When and what children should know about sex

It does not hurt children to have a limited understanding of sexuality, even at a young age. Some experts even advocate that preschool aged children should be taught and educated in sexuality. The reasoning behind this is that even at a young age, children are exposed to sexuality through their peers, through media, and their surroundings. When parents do not educate their children, their understanding of sexual acts is gained through these external sources, which are highly distorted and most often harmful.

The second reason is that children’s inexperience when it comes to this matter is what child molesters thrive on. Children who have a limited but concrete background on the subject are much less likely to be coaxed into thinking a molester’s advances are normal or something that ‘all children do'.

While we do not insist on complete sex education for preschoolers, it is important that young children have a limited understanding regarding their sexual organs. Young children should…..

Understand the basic usage of their sexual organs.
This does not mean that they have to know details or descriptions about sex. Simply that their parts are used to a) Go to the bathroom, and B) That they are parts that parents use to make a baby when they are adults.

By teaching children this you are at least giving them the basic understanding that they are adult parts. You do not need to show them pictures or diagrams, nor go into great detail about how sexual parts are used. But simply telling the child that…

- Those parts are used when adults have sex
- Those parts help adults to make a baby. The boy parts and girl parts go together to make a baby inside of the mommy’s tummy.
- Sex is something that only adults do.

Receive honest answers to their questions about sexuality as they arise
It baffles me why parents go through such lengths to avoid questions of a sexual nature or lie to their children about basic facts of life. There is no reason to lie to them. When children ask where babies come from, give them a simple but truthful answer. Don’t avoid the question, or lie to them. You don’t need to give them full sex education. But be honest to a point that satisfies their curiosity in a healthy way.

Remember…..Children who do not have their questions answered by their parents do not stop asking or do not stop being curious, they just find their answers elsewhere.

Sex Education
Sex education in public schools generally occurs in Fifth grade, or when children are about 10 years old. This is an appropriate age for children to gain a full (i.e.: graphic) understanding of sexuality. Sometimes, girls can begin to mature as early as 6 or 7 years old. Children who mature early should receive sexual education early and should have a full understanding of sexuality. While it is unfortunate that at such a young age they should have to deal with the sexual matters of an adult, it is a result of their natural maturation, and cannot be avoided.
Sex does not equal love
Another common mistake that parents make as well as our society is that sex equals love. Everywhere the correlation is made. Parents say that when you really love someone, you have sex. They use the phrase ‘making love’ to refer to the act of sex. This is damaging because it sends children the message that sexual actions occur out of love. The truth is, sex is sex, and nothing else. It should not be construed as love or related to love.

A common molester ploy is to reason to the child that the molestation is actually an act of love. If the child cares for the molester, or if the molester loves the child, then they will do this. This becomes both dangerous and effective because it is consistent with what the child learns from society. He or she may actually buy into the logic of thinking that what a molester is doing to them is really an act of expressing love.

You should also clearly explain that adults who do love each other often times have sex as an act of love. But it is always between two adults, and never with children.
The 5:00 Rush....

What do you think the potential molester in the room is thinking?
Step 2
Is your child a target?

What a funny, funny picture, isn’t it? Oh, I wish it weren’t true. I wish I could tell you that we don’t see that sight every single day, working in the childcare industry. But we do. From all kinds of parents. While some molesters do willingly and with precision pick out their potential targets well in advance, as you have read earlier, common molesters act if the opportunity presents itself. If a molester sees your child as an easy target, it will be much easier for them to lose self control than if they constantly have to consider the likely possibility they will get caught if they act. There are ways parents can show the molester that their child is not an easy target, and thus decrease the chance of their child being molested.

What makes your child an easy target

Here is a list of some traits that a molester may look for in picking his or her target:

- **Low self esteem** - Children with lower self esteem are more willing to participate in anything that makes them feel special or needed, even if it is abusive.
- **Children who are overly shy** - Children who are quiet and shy generally possess the other traits needed to make a great secret keeper.
- **Single parent households** - Children who come from a single parent household are at a greater risk because they often search for substitutes for their missing parents from people outside of their home. This can be dangerous if their affections fall on the wrong person, which is a more likely scenario than parents usually imagine.
- **A child who is overly subservient/fearful of adults** - Children who feel they have to do anything an adult or person of authority asks them to, obviously, are at a greater risk of being abused.
- **Parents that are ‘too busy’ for their children** - Probably one of the biggest risk factors, children of parents who are always busy make great targets. Not only are these children eager to make up and get any type of affection that they can receive from an adult, but they have little rapport with their parents and seldom engage in meaningful conversation with their parents. As such, they make the perfect target for a molester. Even as hectic as life is at times, parents need to be there for their children when they need or desire attention.

What makes your child a hard target

Here are some things that make molesters think extra hard before committing an act:

- **Loving, secure family setting** - A child who comes from a family that has good communication and is open with each other will always be seen as a harder target for a molester.
- **‘Nosy’ parents** - Parents who pry and prod into every little detail of their child’s life will oftentimes scare away any potential molester.
- **Children who receive lots of physical affection** - Children who receive lots of physical affection will not be starved of it and will not be as likely to seek out that affection from other people. They will also be less likely to accept an abuser’s affection, whereas a child starved of attention may take it from another source.
- **Children who have good communication with their parents** - Children who communicate well with their parents are too big of a risk. A molester will most often pass them up for a safer target. However, I would urge parents not to simply think they have a good relationship with their children and assume the
communication is there. It is more than just talking with your child, it involves how you talk to them, when you do it, and what language you use.

- **Children who respect authority but are not overly fearful of it** - These children respect authority but also know their rights as well. They do not ignorantly and without question do anything an adult asks.

### Steps parents can take to make their child a harder target

- Go over the materials in this book until they are fixed in your child’s mind. Knowledge is the best weapon against sexual abuse, and will equalize anything a molester will do.
- Keep a copy of ‘Children’s stories for abuse prevention in your child’s room. Try to read at least one of the stories every few days at bedtime.
- Make yourself visible. Ask lots of questions when you leave your child in the care of another person. Just asking non-sexual abuse related questions will scare off most potential molesters. Be sure to ask questions when you retrieve your child as well, in front of whomever cared for them. Ask what his day was like, what did he do, was there anything special that happened, did he play any new games, etc. Any child molester who knows that you get a detailed depiction of the child’s events, or hears you ask a child if they played any new games, will certainly think twice before committing an act.
- If you notice any of the ‘easy target’ symptoms present in your own child, take steps to start working on those. If you have a child who is particularly shy, start arranging different play dates and opportunities for her to overcome his/her shyness. If you notice a child with low self esteem, there is a wealth of publications and children’s books at your local library to help work on this.
- For single parents - Clearly explain the role of a mother/father figure to your children. This can be done through reading your child stories or watching media that depict healthy images of male/female role models. Also, try to surround your child with male/female role models that you can trust (under a watchful eye) as much as possible. It will help keep them from being too overzealous in seeking out affection from people as a substitute for the missing parent.
- Make sure children are attended while going to the bathroom in public places. Although this type of assault is rare lately, it can sometimes happen.
- Be sure to ask lots of questions before sending your child away on an outing. Be cautious and thorough anytime someone takes your child anywhere. Make sure you know who will be there, where they will go, and what they will do. Upon returning, ask your child what they did to see if there were any major discrepancies in what was told.
- Look at your discipline methods and interactions with children when around other people. Think about your actions and interactions with your children. If there is a molester in the room, they will be watching.

### The role of isolation in sexual abuse

After a molester has picked out and courted a potential target, he or she will begin to formulate ways to isolate the child and get them alone to molest them. This isolation can occur in several different ways. Sometimes it takes the form of a special outing with the child, such as a trip to the zoo, an amusement park, or other special destination. It could be a camping trip or picnic. It could occur at times when the person is put in charge of the particular child.

It could also occur in more subtle ways. In some situations, a person would molest the child in the bathroom after taking them to the restroom. It may sometimes happen in another part of the house sometimes with the parents in a different room. Or it may happen in the car, either on short errands, the car can provide a shelter for molesting children.
Generally speaking, these cases are less prominent because the abuser will generally want more time to condition the child afterwards, or “down time” and will not prefer a risky situation where the child will be put directly back with other people. This is not always the case, sometimes a molester will be so comfortable and confident it doesn’t matter to them.

As such, parents need to keep a watchful eye out for such things. Look for patterns that might be abnormal, or situations where intimacy between the adult and child is pushed by the adult, but isn’t really necessary to the situation. Also question cases where the adult seems to be overly zealous in getting the child alone or doing things with them alone. Most importantly, be sure to question the child about his or her activities regarding the situation as soon as they return.

Also, try to limit the times when your child is alone with another individual. If someone wants to take your child somewhere, ask if another child can go along. Just asking may give you a hint into whether or not you have a need to be suspicious.

**Keep an eye out for bribes**

Bribes play an important role in many cases of sexual abuse. While it is not abnormal for someone who is watching your child to have a tendency to spoil them, (Take them out to eat, buy them candy, gifts, etc.) you should always keep a cautious third eye out for bribes. Often times a molester will use bribes in their ploy to keep children from telling, or simply because they feel guilty afterwards about what they did and want to try to ‘make it up’ to the child. Sadly, I once had a pedophile in an Internet chat room brag about trading ‘blow jobs’ for happy meals. I once talked to a pedophile who used treats as a way to distract the child afterwards, and get their mind focused on something else to push the abuse to the back of their heads. He would molest a child, then take him to Chuck E. Cheese, an amusement park, or other special outing.

You should always question the motivation for such gifts or treats that are given to your child by another person. Most often, it is completely harmless, but always ask; Why did you take her to McDonalds? What did he do to deserve that? What was the toy for? Remember to ask the child later if he or she did anything for the treat, or if the person was just being nice. You may annoy a few people who feel they shouldn’t need a reason to pamper your child, but you may also startle a molester by the questioning as well.

**Tell me, Tell me**

Encourage your child to talk about her day. You may have to coax them a little, but find out exactly what they did. Do this in front of the caregiver who had been with your child that day. The next time your child goes anywhere with anyone, explain to the caregiver that you always have the child talk about their day, complete with minor details. You can even make a short list of questions to ask the child upon their return. This exercise has enormous potential for preventing abuse because it sends a clear message to the caregiver that you are checking up on everything your child does.

First, it will scare anybody who might be a potential molester, into not attempting anything with your child. Also, it simply helps children get into the habit of talking about their day, and after a while, they will freely do this on their own, and make their own mental notes about what they need to tell their parents about anytime they are away.
Good Parents Prevent Abuse

One molester once stated: “Give me a week watching a child with their parents and I can tell you which ones I could molest without their parents ever finding out.” Chilling words, but they seem to be true.

Of course, every parent considers themselves a ‘good parent’ and most parents try very hard to be one. I love the old “I thought it could never happen to us” response. Every person who ever uttered that statement probably sincerely cared for their children, loved them very much, and did whatever they could to try and protect their children. But if asked specifically what they did to prevent it, they had no answers.

The truth is, educated parents do prevent abuse. Some parents fail by spending little time with their children, use harsh language with them, and do not have good parent to child communication. Other parents may care deeply for their children, but simply do not know how to protect them or do not take the time to do so. Either way, the result is the same.

Do you currently take all of the precautions listed in this chapter? If not, do so. Good, persistent, and ‘nosy’ parents are the biggest deterrent for a molester. Parents who follow all of the guidelines contained thus far can shield out a good portion of the danger before it ever reaches their children. Don’t leave your child alone to combat a potential molester. You are the first line of defense.
Step 3
Talk to your kids

Most parents are probably reading the headline to this chapter with a curled upper lip and cross face thinking, “I talk to my kids.” I’m sure you might be thinking of several 4 letter words you’d like to let me know about right now. Sounds so simple, doesn’t it? Every parent talks to their kids. But only certain ways of talking will uncover an incident.

I once received a blunt and frightening response to a question I asked a child molester. When asked how he was able to do this to all of the children without the parents finding out about it, (he claimed to have molested 20 kids) his response was, “they never asked”. The biggest weapon against sexual abuse is parents who are open and communicate regularly with their children. Without this, molesters cannot work. But before you get out the shotgun and put some buckshot through this book, read a little further. Most parents try to have good communication with their children. However, the type of conversation needed to uncover abuse and protect their children is normally not used.

How to talk with your kids

Most parents communicate regularly with their children. However, they never stop to think about how they talk with their children. Parents often fetch their children from school or sports practice without a word about what went on with the child during the daily activities. Familys often switch from one activity to another, with conversation reflective around what is going on at the time. The following example was taken by a 2 parent household, who were very loving and otherwise good parents. Tell me if this sounds even remotely familiar:

“We wake up around 6:30, although after hitting the snooze button once or twice, it is usually about 7:00 before we are actually up. The first thing I do is to go wake up the kids. My oldest one has a hard time getting up in the mornings, so it takes him a couple of times to get up. Once up, they usually watch cartoons for about 5 or 10 minutes until we have to leave. We get in the car and they listen to radio Disney on the ride to daycare. When we get to daycare, I usually spend about 5 minutes dropping them off and then I am off to work. They eat breakfast at daycare.

After that, I begin my 30 minute commute and spend my thrilling 8 ½ hours at work in a cubicle. I get off work at around 4:30. Depending on traffic, I usually get to their daycare between 5:10 and 5:30. We’re usually off in a hurry, anxious to get home for dinner. I retrieve them in a rush, sign them out, and we are on our way. On the car ride home I usually enjoy listening to the news talk programs. It helps me to unwind a little on the way home. We usually pick up something to eat about ½ of the time. The other times we throw something together real quick to eat. After supper, I help my older son with his homework. He usually has about 45 minutes of homework.

After that, we will usually watch TV for a little bit with the kids until it is time for bed. We try to bathe them every day, but our younger two we often switch off. When we can get them to take a bath together we do. Our oldest one takes showers on his own. Bedtime is 8:30 for the younger two, and 9:00 or 9:30 for our oldest son. After they are put to bed, we usually get about ½ an hour to an hour all by ourselves, but we are often so tired we go to bed shortly after the kids.
On the weekends, we usually sleep in and the kids get up before us. It is normally about 10:00 or 11:00. Saturday is usually our ‘do something day’. We will plan something fun, like a trip to the mountains, going to a fun park, or special times for the kids to arrange to play with a friend. In the evening, we either cook or go out to eat, depending on the day. We will usually follow the same nightly routine as the other days, only a little more relaxed. We usually watch a movie in the evening on Saturday and Sunday nights.

On Sunday, we get up and get the kids dressed for church in the morning. Service starts at 10:00, and lasts until 11:30. The kids all have friends in church and will try and arrange a play date as often as possible for the afternoon. Sometimes it means an extra kid with us, often times they go over to their friend’s house. If we have the kids, they usually play by themselves for the afternoon. My husband uses Sunday afternoons to get yard work done. I use it to try and catch up on things around the house. We usually cook and eat dinner at home on Sundays. We’ll watch a movie Sunday night, and put them to bed as usual.

Does this sound like it could be your house? Most parents would look at this and say, there’s nothing wrong with that situation. They seem like loving parents. It may not even seem that bad. But there is something desperately missing. This is why parents who think they would know if their child were molested fall significantly short, and are shocked when their children fall victim, while they remained clueless to anything going on. Keep this scenario in mind over the next few subheadings. At the end of the chapter, we will tell you the mistakes this family made, that nearly all parents make, which left their child an easy target.

**Types of conversation**

It is not simply more talk, but a certain type of talk that helps to uncover abuse. We have classified types of conversation into 4 major categories:

**Authoritative**
Authoritative conversation is most of the parental conversation you have with your children. Giving them instructions, telling them to do something,

“It’s time to do your homework”
“We are going to be leaving in ½ an hour so make sure you are ready”
“Wash up for dinner”
“After you watch that show we need to…”

It is direct conversation to your children instructing them in a certain manner. You would be surprised how much of the conversation you engage in with your child is authoritative talk. (Hint: Noticing how much of this you do not only aids in abuse prevention, but can fine tune your parenting skills as well by helping you to realize how much you may badger your child.)

**Responsive**
Responsive conversation is conversation that you do in response to your child’s actions or statements. It can be direct answers to questions your child asks, or responses to their actions.

“Yes, you may have a cookie”
“No, we need to wait until evening before we open that”
“I’m not sure if Jurassic park is on tonight.”
**Current Event**

Current event talk is talk that focuses around what is going on at the time. It may be talking about medical procedures after watching an episode of ER. Talking about a dog that was in the park, or discussing the tricks your child wants to show you while swimming.

“Look at what that dog is doing. Did you know that dogs can…”
“I see an airplane. My teacher said that airplanes go really high up in the sky.”
“Why does that horse stand by the barn over there?”

Current event conversation can sometimes spark the child into disclosing abuse, but not very often. Because it revolves around something that sparks the conversation, it would have to be something that reminded them of the abuse. Many parents, because current event conversation can sometimes become quite deep or extend to other things, confuse it with reflective conversation. Many parents, because they can often engage their child in this type of conversation frequently and meaningfully, think that they have good communication that would disclose abuse. This is usually not the case.

**Reflective**

Reflective conversation is really the only type of conversation that will uncover abuse. It is also unfortunately the one type of conversation parents frequently neglect. It is the reason parents who are caring parents, are baffled that they did not know about the abuse. However, upon digging deeper, there were sometimes weeks on end that went by without any substantial reflective conversation.

Reflective conversation is conversation that looks back on the child’s activities and events throughout the day, or a past period in time. It talks about the events, the feelings they had, their triumphs and pitfalls, everything that happened at a previous point in time. Because the abuse will always happen at a previous point in time, this is the talk that will uncover abuse.

For most parents, reflective conversation ends after their child says ‘fine’ to a question of how was your day. It is something, especially in our busy lives, that parents simply don’t do. You can talk to your kids about the flowers on the side of the road or the tricycle in the driveway all day. Unless you get in the habit of ensuring you engage in constant reflective talk, (with substance) you are unlikely to uncover abuse.

**Assessing your current communication**

We asked parents to take home a tape recorder for a night, not telling them what it was for. The next day, the tapes were brought back and analyzed. The results showed that there was very little, and oftentimes no reflective talk engaged in. When there was, it was usually short and superficial, lacking real substance or quality to it.

Try the same thing yourself, and do your best to not alter your conversation. **DON’T CHEAT!!!** Be as honest as you can during these recorded sessions. It does not help to change your habits and get a warped sense of security. When you are done, listen to the tape and record the conversations you had on a chart labeling the four types of conversations. Use this information to see where you need to improve.

Put forth a conscientious effort to improve the quality of conversation between you and your child. When assessing your talk with your children for any purpose, think about…

- How many times each day are there for truly engaging in meaningful conversation with your child, free from distractions?
• Chart an average day on paper. Record what times you get your child up, what is done from that point, when they leave your care for school, when they come back home, when dinner time is, etc. Then think about the conversation that usually goes on during that time. At the end of the day, how much time have you spent in authoritative or responsive conversation? How much time did your child really have to just sit down and talk with you?
• Note how many encouraging comments versus degrading comments you gave them?
• When you look back at the conversation you had with your child, how much of it focused on past events or things that happened when they were out of your care? Is this something your child is naturally talkative about, or will it take some work to get them to open up?
• Make a pie chart for the amount of time you spend for each type of talk. How much is monopolized in which type of conversation? What needs to happen to even out the distribution?
• Write down what your child has told you about their school life or other events while away from your care in the past week. If you can fit it onto a few pages, your conversation needs work.

**When to talk to your kids**

You should make a habit of engaging in quality reflective talk with your children in any of the following circumstances:

• After returning home from a friend’s place
• After school or childcare
• At bedtime
• Whenever your child is upset about something
• Anytime they have left your care

**The importance of open ended conversation**

Open ended conversation is conversation with your children that encourages elaboration on their part and does not prompt the child into a yes or no response. It does not give your child suggestive answers or answers that they can simply agree with rather than forming their own thoughts.

Open ended conversation is important for two reasons. First, it is important when questioning children about potential abuse so as to not put an idea in their heads. Secondly, getting in the habit of using open ended conversation will over time develop a much more talkative child. It also builds cognitive skills and improves reasoning and problem solving. Using open ended conversation can increase your child’s IQ by as much as 10 or 20 points. It is beneficial for numerous reasons.

Educators constantly go through training to get better at using open ended conversation in their classrooms. It is too easy to form a habit of simply prompting the child into a yes or no response when talking to them. This has gotten worse in our high paced lives. The problem with this is, we can’t scratch the surface of what is going on in that little mind of theirs.

**Open ended conversation:**

• Encourages elaboration on the child’s part.
• Cannot be answered with a yes or no
• Provides the child opportunities to share his or her thoughts or ideas
• Forces the child to think to formulate an answer
• Takes an interest in children’s thoughts and opinions.
Closed conversation (Pretty much the opposite):
- Directs the child into a yes or no response
- Takes little or no thought to answer
- Encourages the most direct and prompt response
- Tells kids things rather than allows them to use their own thoughts to come to a solution

Try to get in the habit of using open ended conversation with your children. It encourages them to elaborate, think independently, and provides insight into their minds and what they are actually thinking. It takes work. The differences between closed conversation and open conversation are often subtle. But you will see a huge difference over time.

With every question you ask of your kids, think about...

- Is it provoking thought?
- Does it encourage the most extensive and elaborate answer?
Am I going to get anything of substance if it is answered in the way I ask it.

Open-Ended Conversation Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of closed conversation</th>
<th>Examples of open ended conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That's a nice boat you are making.</td>
<td>Can you tell me about the picture you are making?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh, its an airplane.</td>
<td>That’s a pretty cool airplane. How did you decide to make your airplane?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s not where the engine really goes.</td>
<td>That’s an interesting place to put the engine. Why did you choose to put it there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was your day at school today?</td>
<td>What different things happened at school today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you paint in art class?</td>
<td>What things did you create in art class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s a cool block castle you are making.</td>
<td>That’s an interesting arrangement you have with the blocks, can you tell me about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have fun playing at Jimmy’s house today?</td>
<td>What fun things did you do at Jimmy’s house today? What were the not so fun things you did?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the ride you rode at the fair fun?</td>
<td>How did it feel when you rode the new ride at the fair? What things made you like it or not like it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you play in the basement at his house?</td>
<td>Where did you play while you were over at his house?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have fun at school today?</td>
<td>What were the best parts of your day at school today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like penguins?</td>
<td>What is it you like about penguins?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have fun playing with your friends at the park?</td>
<td>Who did you have fun playing at the park with?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Raising a talkative child

You can read several 300 page books on the subject of talking to your kids. We could certainly go on for hours about how to talk to your kids. However, that would defeat the purpose of this book, and isn’t necessary. When you get down to it, being able to raise a talkative child who is comfortable in talking with you about everything, boils down to a few basic fundamental concepts. It’s not a matter of becoming a psychology expert, but rather learning these concepts by heart and putting forth an effort to stop yourself when you begin to go down the wrong path. If you focus on the next few pages of concepts and apply them in your life, you can increase the quality of the talk and the relationship with your child tenfold.

Use open ended conversation

Open ended conversation over time changes the way children talk to you, from short, quick responsive answers, to elaborate and real responses that actually come from their minds. Be sure to train yourself into using it. When you get good at it, you will be amazed at the difference. You will be surprised to find out how much more you can learn about your child and his or her thoughts. You will probably find it helps in your work environment as well.

Know the different types of talks

Now that you know the different types of talk that you engage in with your child, try to monitor how much of the important talk you are doing with your kids. Set aside times of the day for quality conversation.

Talk frequently

There is no substitute for talking frequently with your child. Quality talk is important, but it is not a substitute for frequent talk. In our busy lives, people are coming up with more creative ways and methods to make parents feel good about neglecting their children. Quality time is important, but it is not a substitute for short changing them with your time and attention.

Give your children Constant reassurance and praise

Children open up more when they are comfortable. When they are reassured. Opening up ones self involves going out on a limb with your feelings. Parents like to think that because they are the child’s parents it automatically gives them a comfort level. To some extent that’s true, but if you don’t think you need to work to keep and build up their trust and comfort, you are in for a shock.

Give your children abundance in praise and reassurance. People do not remember the weather man for the 99 forecasts he got right, just the one he got wrong. We remember not the millions of flights that occurred without a hitch, but rather the one that went down. This is common human nature. I’m sure you complain about your boss as well. (I have yet to meet anyone that doesn’t.) He probably does not praise you for the 99 times you get something right, but rather the one time you did something wrong. And finally, parents raise their children the same way. Too often little or no praise is received for doing something right, while punishment is always inflicted on something done wrong. Take a close look at this. I’m sure every parent can relate to how this feels being on the other end. You more than likely do the same with your children. Tilt the scale as much as you can towards praise.

Avoid Discouraging statements

Along the same lines, avoid discouraging statements. Not just statements against your child, but negative statements in general. People who are negative create a negative atmosphere around them. People who are positive create a positive atmosphere around them. You want to be positive with your children.
**Give rationale behind your basis for right and wrong**

This is an extremely important point. Too many parents take a dictatorship style of parenting. Do it because I told you so. That teaches the child nothing.

Always give rationale behind what you are asking your child to do. Never say, because I told you to. Children need to understand why they are allowed to do things, and why they are not allowed to do things. If you always give them clear rationale behind what you ask of them, they are more likely to obey you. They are also more likely to trust your judgment in the future and consult with you when they are confronted with tough issues. Children who are told “because I told you so” don’t come to their parents for advice with tough issues because they know they won’t get any good answer.

**Do as I say, not as I do**

Along the same lines, do not tell your child one thing and then do it yourself! Don’t tell your child not to play with fire and then play with it yourself. Don’t tell your child not to be rude and then be rude to other people who make you upset. (Traffic included) Don’t tell them not to lie and then lie yourself. Don’t tell them not to smoke when you suck down a pack a day.

We know you will not be perfect. But try to model how you want them to act. When you do mess up, or have an issue you struggle with, it’s better to explain to them how and why you struggle with it, than simply telling them no and doing the same thing yourself. If they catch you in a lie, it is better you explain to them it was something you shouldn’t have done rather than trying to rationalize why your lie was OK.

**Do not give a choice where there isn’t one**

Avoid giving children a choice when they are not going to have a choice. The less times you have to say no to your children, the better. I constantly see parents set themselves up by feeling they always have to give their child a choice. If there is not a choice, tell them, and explain to them why there is not a choice.

**Lots of “I love you, no matter what”**

Be sure to constantly tell your child that no matter what they do, you will always still love them. Parents sometimes take this as a given. It sometimes isn’t. Children sometimes fear that something could happen that would make their parents stop loving them.

**Never, ever, ever, ever, degrade a child’s opinions or feelings**

When you degrade a child’s feelings or opinions, you will begin to close them off to you. They will feel, (and justly so) that you don’t understand them. They will stop confiding in you their desires and feelings when you degrade them for doing so.

I see parents do this on a daily basis. Have you ever said something like…

“Your a big girl, start to act like it”
“IT was only a dumb goldfish”
“That’s a silly reason to cry”
“You don’t need to be doing that”
“Only babies would be afraid of that”

Understand and **address** your child’s feelings from **their** point of view, not from yours. When it is something that you consider childish, first remember, she is a child! Secondly remember, your opinions and feelings do not matter right now.
Listen to the child’s feelings. Understand their concerns. Address them as real concerns. It does not matter how dumb you think they are, they are very real to the child. Then explain why you are not as upset and why you think she should calm down about the situation. “I understand your feelings, but let me explain to you as an adult, why I’m not as upset.” Whatever you do, don’t get caught up putting your child down for her emotions or concerns. You will close your child up to you in a hurry that way.

**Showing empathy**

When they come to you with problems or issues, show empathy. Look them in the eye. Show emotion with them. Repeat what they said. It might help you understand more. Even just repeating it sends a message to the child that you care.

At times when you don’t know what to say, don’t speak. Usually the rambles that come forth just make things worse. In this case, a comforting hug and rocking the child does more than words.

Never say “I told you so”. Your child will make mistakes from time to time. Your child will disobey you from time to time. It is part of growing up. It is in the nature of children. The worse thing a parent can say to a child is “I told you so.” To rub it in. This only shames the child and discourages them from confiding in you with their problems.

**Support children’s thoughts and ideas**

When children come up with ideas, give them praise and support, even if they are terrible ideas! Once again, remember they are still a child. Praise them for coming up with the idea, and if it is bad, then use open ended questioning to bring them to that conclusion, and then to a better solution. They will still think they came to the idea themselves, and will be encouraged to share more with you.

**Discover true meaning**

Listen before you speak. Think before you talk. Every person 12 years or older should know the wisdom behind those words. Yet very few parents incorporate them into the way they talk with and discipline their children.

It is important that you discover true meaning before rushing off to conclusions. Be a good listener for your child. Ask questions. Make sure you pinpoint what is bothering them from their point of view. Repeat it to them to make sure you understand. Then respond, knowing you can do so from accurate knowledge.

**Never lose your temper**

*Expect* your children to mess up. *Expect* them to do things they are not supposed to. *Expect* them to misbehave. If children did not do these things, they would not need parents. The fact is that they do mess up, and when they do, they need parents who understand that they are children. I’m often amazed at what little things it takes to have an adult lose their temper with a child. I remember how many times adults screw up. (Just as much as kids, don’t lie to yourself) How would you feel if you had someone in your face slamming you every time you did anything someone deemed incorrect?

Never yell at your children. Never use abusive language with them. Do not overreact to their misbehavior. There is never any need for that, and the parents who do are also the ones who have the most problems controlling their children. React calmly and react lovingly when your children misbehave. When parents make a habit of this, when children know they can depend on their parents to be a calm, supportive staple of their lives, even through the bad, they will come to you with their problems.
Talk about your feelings with your child, but do not use them as a confidant
Children sense when you are angry. They sense when you are upset. They sense when you are happy. Don’t shy away from sharing your feelings and emotions with your children. It makes you more real. When you talk to your child about your feelings, it makes them more comfortable in talking about their feelings with you. When you hide your feelings, it teaches them to hide their feelings too. Showing open expression of your emotions and talking to your child about what you are feeling shows them that you can be angry and get over it. You can get happy when you are sad. Remember, you are god to them. When they see you talking about your feelings, it models similar behavior for them.

Just be sure not to go too far and use them as a confidant. There is a difference between making them aware of your feelings and shouldering your burdens with them. You can explain to them some of the reasons why you are sad or happy, but do not give them details or use them to ‘unload’ on. Doing so will only burden them. If your child asks what is wrong, you can explain that you had a bad day at work, because people treated you mean. You can say you are upset about people at work, without getting into specifics of what they have done. You can say you are grumpy because you and dad got into an argument, without burdening them with what it was about.

Remember that talk goes both ways
When is the last time you told your child about things you did at work? Too many parents take a one sided approach to talk with their children. Some of the best conversations can be when you can sit down together and engage in two way talks. Open up to your children. They will enjoy it. You will enjoy it. They will get to know you better.

Make time for your children to talk when they want to talk
Avoid brushing children off when they want to talk. When your child is excited to tell you something, they want to tell you right then. They don’t want to wait because they may forget later. If it is absolutely a time when you can’t talk to them, tell them that in a loving way. More importantly, make sure what you are brushing them off for really is important, more important than your kids.

No Fake listening
Make time for them to talk to you. If you cannot talk to them right then or are busy/involved in something else, it is better to tell them that than to fake listen. Explain to them that you are busy with something, that you might be distracted, but that you really want to hear what they have to say. If they tell you in a few minutes or when you are done, then you will be able to listen better.

Never sit there and let them go through a conversation while you are distracted on the other end saying “uh-huh, uh-huh, that’s nice dear,” while not processing a word they are saying. This is extremely frustrating for kids.

BE HONEST! BE REAL!
Above all else, be a real person to your child. The best parents in the world are the ones who are constantly honest and open with their children. The ones who don’t talk down to their kids, but rather talk with them. They are a parent, but they are also their child’s best friend. At times their child’s most loyal playmate. They are a personal and trusted confidant.

There seems to be this idea that a parent must be a dictator type who can never show weakness for fear of an uprising. This is simply bad parenting. Parents who raise their children like this raise children who lose trust in their parents to make a rationale decision. They raise children who will hide their life from them rather than coming to them for help. Don’t rush to rash decisions. Don’t say no just for the sake of saying no. If you mess up, admit it.
If you’re planning on perfection, you’re in for a hard road ahead. Be honest with your kids. When you do lose control, or do something that probably wasn’t best, apologize to them, and explain to them why you made the mistake. The road to almost perfect parenting lies in coming to realize your own imperfections, and being strong enough to admit them.

**For parents to think about…**

Effective conversation is the most important parenting technique you could ever learn. Every parent has room for improvement in this area. These simple little things can over time make the difference when it comes to the closeness of the relationship you have with your child.

Remember, good parenting is being able to look critically at yourself and at the way you parent. You should do it often and sincerely. You will not be perfect. Nobody is expecting you to be. You don’t need to be. But the one way you can fail as a parent, is if you refuse to understand that little things you do, can over time, have a profound effect in your child’s development. Don’t be perfect. You won’t be. But be aware. Making a mistake one time will not make you a bad parent. It won’t cause your child to be damaged. But making the same mistakes over and over again will.

The benefits of applying these principles in everyday life are worth achieving. Every one of us can improve our talk with our children. From the most humble first time parents to the most brilliant of educators, we all fall short at times. The better conversation you have, the more you will enjoy your kids. You’ll also notice, other things will start to fall into place as well, from how well your children listen to you, how well behaved they act, and how well they do in school and with their peers.

**Nag a little**

How many times have you gotten the old “nothin” response when you ask your child what he or she did at school? Don’t accept that! Continue to ask until **A)** Your child is reminded about something that happened that they would like to talk about, or **B)** Your child gets tired of you asking and goes ahead and talks to you about their day’s events just to shut you up.

Children often need to be pushed a little to talk, especially when they are not in the habit of talking with you. Sometimes they want to be prodded, especially regarding things they may want to tell you but don’t quite know how. Just use open ended prodding. Use open ended conversation to continue to pry until that wonderful little mind of theirs does open up. Don’t settle for anything less.

**Bedtime Talks**

Make it a habit to talk with your child for at least 5 or 10 minutes at each bedtime, while in bed relaxing. Discuss their day in detail. What were the fun parts of their day? What were the not so fun parts? Ask them about anything that might be bothering them. Ask them if they are having any problems at school. Ask how their friends are doing. What did they play or learn about?

Bed time talks need not be limited to your child’s day either. Share parts of your day with your child. Share your experiences at work. Something interesting you did or something that made you laugh. Something that made you sad or happy. Doing so will build a much stronger relationship with your child. It also helps when you may have a hard time getting your child to open up to you.

Bed time makes the ideal time to talk with your children because it is a time when they are more likely to be open with you. Your child will be nestled into their bed, cozy and comfortable with their loving parents by their side. It provides a complete feeling of safety and security. It will also be a time when you will have their
undivided attention, free of the normal distractions of the day. It will help build a better bond between you and your child. Heaven forbid anything should ever happen to them, it also provides the most opportune time for them to disclose a confession.

**Establishing Routines**

Bedtimes are just one of the times you can take advantage of to engage in reflective conversation with your children. Establishing routines is a good way that can often help the busiest of parents make sure they are still taking the time to have quality reflective talk with their children. Just like scheduling in the time to watch your favorite TV show, you should have time scheduled when you can talk to your kids about their day.

**Bedtime**

As stated in the previous sub-heading, bedtime is a good time to talk with your child about their daily events.

**Mealtime**

Mealtimes used to be a time when the family would have some time to talk together. Now, it is just as rushed as the rest of our lives. Bring back quality mealtimes with your family. Turn off the TV, plan around everyone’s favorite shows, and spend ½ an hour each night talking at the table.

**Keep them by your side**

Bring along a child during your normal busywork around the house. If you need to do laundry, bring a kid. “Jessy, why don’t you come down to the laundry room with me so you can tell me about your day at Frank’s.” There is no reason you can’t enlighten your busy work by including time with your kids while doing it.

**Exchange the TV for conversation.**

Limit the amount of television everyone watches. Replace a night or two with board games, card games, or other things where the family can engage in conversation, rather than watch the TV.

**Car rides**

Designate a certain car ride, such as the ride home from school, the ride to church, etc., to talk about things with your children.

**Good morning time**

Depending on how awake you and your child usually are in the morning, you can have good morning time. Good morning time, like bedtime talks, can be used to talk about any dreams or nightmares they might have had, to talk about what they plan on doing today, what they hope will happen, if they are worried about any of the days events, etc.

**Have fun with it**

There are several ways you can make a game out of talking with your kids or add a little enjoyment or pizzazz to it, so they look forward to telling you about their days.

**Make a ‘sharing’ bulletin**

Create a spot for a pin up chart or special place where kids can put up things or write things they would like to share and discuss with the family.

**Keep a family diary**

Keeping a family diary can be a fun and rewarding way of encouraging reflective talk. Pick a time of the day, bedtime often works best, to sit down with your kids and write down their days events and comments they make in a diary book. This is fun a the time, and it will also be a neat little keepsake to have 15 or 20 years later after the kids are all grown up.
Daily news reports
Turn off the TV, and make your own daily news. Either right before or after supper, or another time that is convenient for you, set aside 20 minutes for your children to bring you daily news reports. Kids will enjoy this, and it can be awfully entertaining. Invite them to write down things that they see at school. You can have your children take turns being in charge of ‘school lunch critic reports’ or other silly things like that. This is also a good time to reinforce that the news is supposed to be truthful and accurate. (To avoid embellishing that could potentially lead to a false accusation)

Listen to your kids
Unfortunately in most cases of sexual abuse there were signs present that parents should have picked up on but didn’t. They weren’t spotted because the parents didn’t listen to their child.

It is certainly true that molesters are very good with children, and it is unlikely that after the molestations start that your child will all of a sudden show excessive fear or dislike for the molester. However, there will be behavioral changes in the relationship between the child and the abuser that you should be able to pick up on.

Most commonly, this will manifest itself in the child not wanting to go somewhere, or expressing fears or uneasy feelings regarding a certain place. Your child may become more uneasy about leaving your side, or may ask you to “Please come with me” to a certain place. You will also start to see a decline in how much the child enjoys spending time with the abuser. The constant desire to do things with that person may drop off. There will also be a change in the way physical affection is sought after by the child, or how it is received when given. A child who might have been ‘hanging on’ the abuser before, asking to be held, played with, and wrestled with, will be more cautious physically and will lessen or stop altogether instigating or seeking this physical interaction. He or she may also show discomfort or uneasiness during normal physical affection with the abuser, such as being squeamish during a hug.

If you notice any of these signs, it does not necessarily mean that it is time to panic. Such things could be attributed to non-abusive factors as well. It does, however, mean you should take extra caution and do some prodding. (Be sure to read the chapters on how to question your kids first).

What was wrong in our sample family
Remember our sample family from the beginning of this chapter? They represented average, loving parents in just about every way. They were shocked to find out from a school teacher that their younger daughter had been being molested by a neighbor for a year and a half. Here was the problem:

1. They had not done anything in particular about addressing sexual abuse, other than the usual. They always told their children those parts are to be private and not shown with other people, but this was not sufficient enough to stop the abuse.
2. They had good communication in many ways and spent a lot of time with their children. To many people, it would seem just fine. But one major thing was lacking. No real reflective conversation was taking place. “How was your day?” was sufficiently answered with “fine” and “What did you do at Jenny’s house?” was considered answered as “played.”
3. The abuse was discovered by accident by a school teacher. It turns out she was molested frequently along with her best friend by her best friend’s father. It was discovered because they were talking about princesses at school, and one of the molestation games they played is where the children dressed up like princesses for movies.

Bottom line, no reflective talk, no talk regarding abuse prevention, led to a molestation, that luckily, by accident, was discovered.
"I don’t know. Something inside tells me I shouldn’t"
Step 4
Teaching Children to Trust Themselves

Since sexual abuse can come in so many different forms, we could talk all night with our children about which scenarios might be sexual abuse, and which aren’t. It would only leave both of you confused after a very uncomfortable talk. Fortunately, we don’t have to. Children have a defense mechanism that will tell them when something isn’t right. It works every time, we just need to teach children ways to recognize it.

Trust your instinct
We’ve all had that feeling at one time or another of that voice inside us telling us something isn’t right. That feeling we get when we are not comfortable with something. Children will get that same feeling when asked to oblige to any sexual advances a predator may bring. It is a natural instinct instilled into all of us. By teaching children to recognize that feeling and follow their instinct, we can protect them from sexual abuse.

Ask your children to recall times when they’ve gotten a funny feeling inside. Maybe it was a time they lied about something when they knew they should tell the truth. Maybe a time when they snuck a cookie and were not supposed to. This is a feeling they get when they know they are doing something wrong, or when something is being done wrong to them. Teach children that whenever they get this feeling, they should not do anything without checking with you first. Teach them to respectfully say, “I need to ask my mommy and daddy first.”

You can help teach children about their instinct without talking about sexual abuse. Maybe the opportunity comes up to hold a snake at the zoo. They may get a feeling that makes them shy away from that. But after consulting with you and being assured it would be OK, do they then want to give it a try? Or perhaps at an amusement park, they may get a feeling that gives them second thoughts about riding a roller coaster. Their instinct may hold them back, but after consulting with you and being assured it is safe, would they try then?

Have children do an exercise to come up with make believe situations that their instinct tells them would be wrong. It could be crossing a street your mom says to never cross, or taking something from a store without paying for it. Have them brainstorm made-up situations that their instinct tells them would be wrong.

It’s your body
Try asking your child this question flat out: “Who does your body belong to?” Many children will have to think about it for a minute. Some may respond with answers like “it belongs to you, daddy” or something similar. Children need to grow up knowing their body belongs to them.

- Make sure that children understand their body belongs to them, and nobody else. Their body is theirs and nobody has a right to do anything to their body that they don’t like.
While parents and caretakers may assist a child with his or her body, the child is in charge of themselves and ultimately has the final say when it comes to their body. When people take care of a child’s body, it is different than if someone has no reason to be touching their body, but does so in a manner they don’t like. For example, sometimes a teacher may have to get out a splinter. It might hurt, but it will make their body better to get it out. Sometimes a nurse or parent might have to spray stuff on a wound or put something on a wound. It will hurt, but it needs to get done to keep you safe from infections.

Sometimes a doctor may have to look at or touch your penis or vagina to make sure you are healthy. But when this happens, it is always in a doctor’s office, and your mom and dad always know.

Teach children that the area covered by their swimsuit is especially theirs. Nobody should have a reason or right to touch them there unless they are a doctor in a doctor’s office or have a good reason to. Nobody ever touches that area without mom and dad knowing. While you should not be ashamed of that area, and it is OK to talk about or in some cases be bare in that area, nobody should touch you there without a good reason.

**Side Note**
Make sure you are respecting children’s rights to their body as much as possible. If it is an appropriate circumstance, give them that right. If you tickle them and they ask you to stop, stop. Ask permission prior to assisting them with dressing, undressing, etc. Be sure to send them the message that it is their body and this will carry over into their life outside of the home.

“Can I help you with your belt?”
“Can I help you put your shirt on?”
“Would you like me to help you take your pants off?”
“Can I give you a back rub?”

**The three touches**
Teach children that there are three kinds of touches, a good touch, a bad touch, and a confusing touch. Explain to them that a good touch is something that makes them feel good inside, like a hug or a kiss from someone that loves them. It makes them feel good inside and safe. It is a touch that they like to do, and would choose to do on their own.

The second type of touch is a bad touch. A bad touch is a touch that you do not like. It makes you feel funny inside and uncomfortable. If anyone, no matter who it is, touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable you should ask them to stop right away.

The third type of touch is a confusing touch. A confusing touch is a touch that we don’t understand. It is probably a touch that nobody else has given us before. We are confused as to whether it is a good touch or a bad touch. If someone gives us a confusing touch, we need to tell them to stop until after you ask your mom or dad if it is OK.

Explain to children that sometimes an adult may touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable without knowing it. Explain to them that they need to make sure that if an adult touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable that they let that adult know about it.
Ask your children to give you examples of touches that would make them feel good, bad, or confused. Remind them that…

**Good touches…**
- Make you feel loved
- Make you feel safe
- Are not uncomfortable

**Bad touches**
- Make you feel funny inside
- Don’t seem right or normal
- Are touches that you don’t want
- Are touches that you think you shouldn’t be doing
- Are touches that hurt you
- Are touches that make you feel bad or hurt your feelings

**Confusing touches**
- Are touches you aren’t sure about
- Make you confused
- Might be touches nobody has given you before

**A child’s instinct**

Some experts criticize the good touch/bad touch method on the basis that young children cannot distinguish between good touches and bad touches. Despite this criticism, it has been proven to work. Experiences I’ve witnessed and just about every pedophile I’ve talked to has been able to testify to this fact.

I once had a child in my class who was constantly posing for pictures. We always took a digital camera with the class on field trips so that we could post pictures of our trip for parents. This particular child, would strike a pose everywhere we went and ask you to take a picture. Take a picture of me on this rock. Take a picture of me laying down in the sand. We were on a beach field trip, and she wanted someone to take a picture of her laying in the sand. So I did. Everything was fine. Then, a little curious as to whether what we are teaching kids actually works or not, I decided to try something. So after taking the normal picture, I pulled on the top part of her bikini bottoms up a little to stretch them towards her belly button while taking a picture. Not exposing anything, not touching her near her genitals, but simply providing a non-normal situation. Sure enough, her instinct kicked in, and I could see her instantly get more tense. Even with such a slight change in the situation, her subconscious was able to discern the two relatively similar scenarios. I asked her if she liked that, she told me no, and I apologized. This was an amazing feat. She hugged me, after all she was no stranger to physical affection from me. But doing this one thing out of context set off an instant internal alarm.

This has been expressed not only by the children who have been abused, but by their abusers as well. In fact, I have yet to run into a single case where the child was unable to discern between abusive behavior and normal affection. Here are some more to illustrate this fact:

**Amy- Victim- 5 years old at the time, recalling at a later age**

“I remember he used to come into my bed and rub up against me in a way that did not feel right. I did not know exactly what was going on, I just knew something was wrong.”
**Michael- Molester- Speaking of an 8 year old victim**

“We would always play together and have fun. The first time I did it, I took her to her room and sat down with her on the bed. I gave her a hug and started to rub her vagina on the outside of her clothes. As soon as that happened, she instantly began to ask to go outside to play again, even though she had just wanted to come back to her room. I could feel her get uncomfortable with things.”

**Jenny- 3 years old- Interviewing with a psychologist**

Jenny- He puts me on his bed and I’m naked and he goes like this (indicates licking) on my pee pee.  
Interviewer- What do you do?  
Jenny- Just lay there.  
Interviewer- How do you feel when he does this?  
Jenny- It makes me have bad tickles and makes my pee pee sting.

The truth is, nearly all children will instantly distinguish abusive behavior as inappropriate and either a bad or confusing touch. To test our prevention methods, we were even able to get children’s instincts to kick in with such subtle variations from the norm as tugging at the top of a child’s swimsuit (next to the navel) during a picture. (GCF, 2004) While the same child would be no stranger to having their picture taken, or no stranger to even having one of us help them with their swimsuit, this ever so slight variation set off their internal instinct that something wasn’t quite right.

There are a few exceptions to this rule, mainly in cases of slight sexual abuse such as fondling involving very young children. But when the situation becomes abusive, nearly every child will have their internal instinct kick in.

**Children know best**

Children need to understand that they are in charge of their own bodies. When they get sick, the only one who feels it is them. If they get hurt, they are the ones who feel it. Bringing home this point is important because it impresses upon them that they are responsible for letting someone know they are doing something uncomfortable to them.

This concept is one that young children develop as they grow. Not until about age three do children even begin to understand that their feelings are not necessarily the feelings of everyone. They live by the concept, “I want this toy, so therefore you must want me to have it as well.” Even as old as 6 or 7, children often expect everyone to know what they might be thinking or feeling. Children must learn that when it comes to their bodies, nobody else feels it but them. Their bodies are their responsibility to maintain and it is their responsibility to inform adults about how they are feeling.

Start off by asking your child these questions:

- When you get a tummy ache, who feels it?
- If you fall down and scrape your knee, who feels the hurt?
- If you are feeling sad, does everyone know you are sad or why you are sad?
- If you have a headache, who feels it?
- When you get hungry, do I get hungry too? Or do you have to tell me you are hungry?

Explain to children that they are the only ones who know what is going on to their body. Only they can feel if something is being done that is hurting them or making them feel uncomfortable. It is their job to speak up about it, just like they would tell their mom or dad if they are hungry.
Basic Do’s and Don’ts

There are some basics that you should lay down as ground rules for children. These are very concrete examples of behavior that is inappropriate. We have left it very general, because family lifestyles and preferences toward certain areas may effect what ground rules you have with your children. You should sit down and come up with a list of your own. You can become more specific or more general, making sure to take into careful consideration any possible times when something could conceivably happen in a normal circumstance that would violate that rule. Try to keep them simple so that children can understand.

♦ A grown up should never ask a child to touch his or her (the grownups) private area.
♦ Adults shouldn’t ask to touch a children’s bare private area, unless they are a doctor in a doctor’s office or have the parents permission to.
♦ You should only use your personal parts to go potty.
♦ Nobody else should ask you to do anything with them while you are naked
♦ An adult should never ask you to keep something a secret from your parents, especially something that involves you.

Go over those basics with your children. They are very good concrete things that under just about any circumstance would define sexual abuse. It will give children something to go on and reinforce their instinct when an adult may ask them to do something similar.

Dirty Little Tricks

A molester will oftentimes try to trick children into doing something they don’t want to do by offering them bribes or convincing them that what they’re doing is “OK” or “will be fun.” Children will need to be able to stand up to such coaxing.

Start off by teaching children the difference between gifts and bribes. Tell them that gifts are something someone gives you because they want to be nice. Bribes are something someone gives you because they want something in return. Bribes are not a good thing and you should never take bribes in exchange for doing something that you are uncomfortable with.

“I’ll let you stay up late and watch TV if you take off your clothes for me.”
“I won’t tell your parents you broke the rules if you let me touch your vagina.”
“I’ll give you some candy if you get naked and lay down with me.”
“We’ll be the best of friends if you let me touch your penis”
Step 5
Empowering children

Just Say No
It sounds so simple, doesn’t it? Just say no? In nearly all cases of sexual abuse, children’s ability to hold off a potential molester hinges on this. If you’ve been paying attention earlier in this book, you know that most assaults occur at the hands of someone the child knows and trusts. A child not agreeing to go along with a molester’s wishes will in most cases prevent the assault from happening.

Molesters use coercion to get the child to give into their wishes. Without this reluctant agreement on the part of the child, most incidences would not occur. In the rare cases when the person is so determined to go on with their actions despite the child’s pleas to have them stop, then your child most likely has worse things to worry about.

When it’s OK to say no to an adult
Sit down with your children and have a talk with them about when it is OK to say not to an adult. While children should be trained to be respectful to adults and generally listen to them, there are certain times that it is OK to say no to an adult:

- When an adult ask you to do something that you know is wrong.
- When an adult wants to touch you somewhere you do not want to be touched.
- When an adult uses your body in a way that makes you feel funny inside
- When an adult wants you to do something that is a secret from your parents

Try going over a few scenarios with your children and have them tell you whether or not it is OK to say no to the adult in that situation. Here are some examples:

- Your mom asks you to take out the trash
- Your teacher tells you to sit down on the floor.
- An uncle wants you to put your hand on his personal area
- Your dad asks you to change the outfit you have on
- A neighbor wants to take pictures of you with your clothes off
- Your mom tells you to take off your clothes for bath time

Have your child tell you their answer and then explain to you why they came up with whether or not they should listen or say no. Don’t be alarmed if they get a few of these wrong, this is why we are working on it.

A Child’s Rights
Many parents make the mistake of assuming that teaching children they have the right to say no to an adult means teaching their kids to defy authority or that it is OK to talk back. This is simply not the case. Teach your children that they have certain basic rights as individuals. These rights are:

The right to their body
As an individual being, their body is theirs. It belongs to them, it affects them, it is who they are. Their body is for their use and their use only. Adults should never use a child’s body for their own use. An adult may
hug and comfort a child. An adult may apply medicine or help their body to heal. But an adult should never use the child’s body for their own purposes.

**The right to not hurt**
Every child has the right not to hurt, and as such, has the right to tell an adult to stop if they are hurting them. It is also the role of any adult to protect any child and to make sure they do not get hurt, let alone to hurt the child themselves. If there is an adult that is hurting the child they are doing something wrong.

**The right to be taken care of**
Every child has the right to be taken care of in a proper manner. They have the right to have their needs met and have loving adults look after them and keep them safe. Children do not take care of adults. Adults take care of children. As such, an adult should never ask a child to do something to meet their needs. Children should not always feel obligated to do what an adult asks. They can if they would like to, but not if it means hurting themselves.

**The right to speak for themselves**
Every child has the right to speak for themselves. They have the right to speak up when something hurts them. They have a right to express their needs and their desires. They not only have the right but the duty to tell an adult how they feel.

If anyone violates these rights, they have the right to protest. You can go over some different situation scenarios with children and explain how the different situations may violate these rights.

**The resistance progression**
We have formulated a progression for children to be taught when resisting a molester’s advances, or to use in everyday life when they are uncomfortable or hurting.

When someone asks them to do something that makes them feel funny inside or uncomfortable, they should tell that person. First they should respond with something like “I don’t like that” or “Please don’t do that to me” or “That hurts me”.

If for some reason that does not work they should yell “NO!” or “Stop it!” in a loud and confident voice. Practice this with your children. Provide them with a scenario where they would want to say no, and then have them practice saying the lines, starting off with the more polite ones and then progressing to the stern “No’s!”.

If anyone ever proceeds beyond that point, then they should start to cry. Tell your child that if someone ever continues after they have said no to that person, they should cry, fuss, scream, and do whatever they can to let that person know they do not like what is happening to them.

**Basis for resistance**
A child’s cry is a very effective tool. It is instilled into adults by nature so that we respond to it. It also works wonders for taking child molesters out of the mood to commit an act, and revive the maternal instinct that they also have fighting within them.

To test different resistance methods, we created different slide shows or took movies off the web and modified them. They would go about a minute into the movie and then we would add or modify the tape to add a resistance method. We then re-posted them over the Internet and waited to get the feedback. It proved very fruitful.
The first one posted was a slide show where we put together a variety of popular pictures that had been created by professional child pornography companies. After about a minute of the pictures, we added audio of a child crying and saying “please don’t”. We posted this to the group in a zipped file and waited to get feedback. It was exactly what we were hoping for. We received dozens of comments posted back. Things like:

“Thanks for that. I needed to get off this damn computer and get some work done anyway.”
“What kind of sick joke is this?”
“What the $#@% is up with that?”
“Well that killed my erection.”
“Time to turn off the computer and head down to confession”
“Go post that &*%$ elsewhere you %$#@$ and leave us the $%#@ alone.”

The second one we posted was a movie we had found and were able to modify. It depicted a man undressing a child and fondling her. It included some audio of the child questioning the act but still going along with it. The child’s back was faced to the camera, so we were able to manipulate the audio easily without making it appear out of context. We kept the first part of the child asking questions, but then at the point where he has her undressed and begins fondling her, we had her say “I’m going to tell my mom and dad you are doing this to me.” Many of the results were the same. It did, once again, get people out of the mood and would have stopped the incident. However, it had a very concerning negative. It induced panic. Here was some of the feedback:

“Oh, shit!”
“That’s when you know you’ve adopted a child and are headed on your way to Mexico”
“Help her get her clothes back on and get creative with your stories”
“That’s why I stick to pictures. They can’t go to the police”

We tested other forms of resistance, which had some effect, but not nearly the same results we had in the first two. So the bottom line was, a sincere cry seemed to be the line that none of the molesters would cross. (At least none we ran into) We also discovered that to look the person in the eye while doing this also helped. There were other forms of resistance that did work in many situations, but none received the same results as a good cry.

Also consider this: If you were to take a look at the child pornography that is posted on the web, (Don’t try it, take our word for it) you would see a constant theme in everything that is desired and sought after by pedophiles: Submissive and ‘flirty’ children. The professional kiddy porn companies take their subjects and dress them up in child sized thongs and lingerie. They pose them in suggestive poses, smiling, laughing, and appearing to have fun in an inviting manner. They dress them up in clothes and make them up like child models. In movies, they are scripted to act out scenes which depict them luring adults in and show them to be either instigating or willfully enjoying the acts.

In the private media that is posted, it usually isn’t staged, but a common theme is there still the same. Children who are all willfully participating. Some of the more popular movies were ones in which children are directing the adult on their own accord or initiating the acts. (Children will do this after being molested a time or two. It is where many pedophiles lose sight of reality and convince themselves that what they are doing is not damaging, or that the child deep down desires it) I remember one piece in particular that was posted and was highly sought after, was simply a movie where an adult was performing oral sex on a 4 or 5 year old girl, and halfway into it she asks him to “do it harder.”

When something ‘offensive’ was posted, (and yes, pedophiles do rate their pornography on what they consider offensive) it was a completely different story. This was any scene where a child was crying or shown in physical pain. Such images were usually widely cursed by the community. Fellow pedophiles
would call the poster a “sick fuck”. I followed an incident where an amateur who was new to the group posted something where the child was crying through the abuse. It was not well received. Dozens upon dozens of other pedophiles spoke out against it. Some of the ‘heavy hitters’ so to speak, took offense. Keep in mind, these were consistent posters who every day posted material of their own. They were also very skilled at remaining anonymous in their posts, and as such, knew exactly how to track someone who posted something. The person who posted it was an amateur poster, did not cover himself (or herself) very well, and so other people in the group traced their information, and sent everything (The pictures and address of the poster) to the police in the town they resided. This is just another example that illustrates the mind frame of molesters, and that there is a very thin line between them being able to condone an act and curse another.

I’m going to tell
Some prevention programs call for children to tell their abuser “I’m going to tell my parents you are doing this to me.” We do not advocate doing this for the following reasons: 1) Our main concern is for the overall safety of the child in this circumstance. Although it may be rare, we do not want a molester to panic and do something irrational that he or she otherwise wouldn’t do. I’m sure that most parents would rather get their child back and treat the effects of one incident rather than not get their kid back at all. 2) The other forms of resistance in this book are just as effective as telling an abuser “I’m going to tell” would be. If someone is continuing with their actions despite the child asking them to stop and crying, saying “I’m going to tell my mom” to that type of person could end up being a fatal mistake. While this also showed some results in our studies of getting a molester to stop, it was not as effective as crying, and also induced panic, making it much more dangerous.

‘Good’ People do bad things
One of the hardest obstacles in sexual abuse prevention is that children have a hard time understanding that someone close to them could do something to harm them. Ask a child to tell you what a stranger is. In most cases, the child will come up with visions of fire breathing monsters or ‘bad’ people with scary faces and spikes coming out of their heads. Better yet, ask them to describe what someone who might to something bad to them would look like.

Children are simple thinkers. What’s good looks good. What’s evil looks evil. This perception has plagued children’s safety for ages, leading to difficulties with stranger education, abduction prevention, and sexual abuse prevention. Unfortunately, fighting this concept means going up against children’s normal psychological development, but it can be done.

Your child needs to understand that bad things do not always come wrapped up in scary packages. Sometimes, people who might otherwise be ‘good’ can sometimes do bad things to them, either on purpose or by accident. This can be done by reinforcing the following concepts:

Bad Apple concept:
Make sure you reinforce the concept that most people love children and would do anything to protect them. However, there are a few bad apples out there who would hurt children.

Pinocchio is make believe:
Try using this example with children. We all know the story of Pinocchio, the boy whose nose grew every time he told a lie. If it helps, read the story with children beforehand. Then ask them the question about a time when they told a lie. This is something almost surely every child has experienced. If they can’t recall, you might recall a lie you remember them telling, or a time you told your own lie. Ask them afterwards, if their nose grew longer when they told the lie? Did their face stretch out or did some deformity occur? Of course the answer is no. Use this then to illustrate that, just because someone does something bad, it doesn’t mean they look any different from us.
I didn’t mean to
Try to think of actions a child has done that has resulted in harm to another individual, whether they meant to or not. This could be instances where a child accidentally injured another person or sibling. It could be times they broke something they didn’t mean to. Times when they hurt someone else’s feelings. Explain to them that sometimes people may do things that they do not mean as harmful, which is why children must speak up for themselves and tell that person exactly how it feels.

Adults do not always know best
Even though you should always respect adults and generally listen to them, this does not mean that adults are always right. Adults can make bad choices too, and if an adult asks you to do something you think is wrong, you have the right to say no until you ask your parents.

Who feels your pain?
Children are passive by nature. They often have a hard time voicing their opinions or their wishes. They also oftentimes expect everyone else to automatically know how they feel. This is especially true of younger children. A child’s identity of self develops all through childhood, and it starts with the perception that their wishes, desires and feelings are automatically the opinions of everyone else around them. If I want this toy, you must want me to have it as well.

Children need to understand that the only person who feels their feelings, shares their pain, is them. Just because you are hurting, does not mean the other person knows they are hurting you. Just because you are uncomfortable, does not mean another person knows they are causing you discomfort. Because of this, we need to always be sure to voice our feelings loud and clear so that there is no confusion on the part of others about how we feel.
Step 6
Overcoming secrecy

The ploys that molesters use to develop a sense of secrecy are relatively simple psychological tricks that play on children’s passive nature. It is not voodoo, it is not black magic, and it is not something that cannot be easily countered and conquered if parents know how.

How molesters invoke secrecy

Molesters use three main methods to invoke secrecy in their victims:

Threats

Threats can be a very powerful tool with children who are young and inexperienced with the world. Threats can involve promises about bad things that will happen if they tell, or blunt promises of bodily harm or harm to others around the child. Threats can be perceived as very much fact with children. The only other threats they’ve probably had is from their parents, who would usually carry through with them. Threats can shut children up in a hurry if nothing is done to counter them.

Reasoning

Some molester conditioning can be very detailed and thought out. Molesters will sometimes use a parent’s own words to throw at the child and explain to them why they shouldn’t tell anyone. Things like “Your parents tell you to keep those parts private, so this is something we can’t tell anyone else about, or people will be mad at you.” Things like “Your mom and dad said that you should listen to me and do what I tell you. If you tell someone about this, they’ll think you just don’t want to listen to me and are being naughty, and they’ll punish you.” Or another common one is to explain to the child that all adults do this (which they can see from ads and television and people around them), and that the only reason adults say not to do this is because they don’t want children to have fun, or be grown up like them. They need to keep it a secret, though, because if adults found out, they would be mad at the child for having as much fun as they have. (We call this the Adam and Eve approach)

Kinship

Molesters will sometimes simply use the kinship they have with the child to keep them from telling. A simple ‘Don’t tell anybody about this’ will work in many situations. They may get a little more advanced than that, and explain to the child that bad things will happen to them (the molester) if they tell anyone, So they should keep it a secret. The child will oblige because they do care for their molester. They also might use promises of gifts or other things if the child swears to secrecy, another way to buy kinship.

Things to remember about secrecy

There are three things to remember about secrecy:

1. The parental bond will always be stronger than anything a molester can do to build up the silence. If it isn’t, your children are already so starving for the attention you need to give them, that they are damaged anyway, and may still come out ahead in the molester relationship.
2. It works only because parents don’t counter it. There is nothing mystical or mysterious about it. If the molester gets to your child first, last, and everywhere in between, guess whose word they will be going by.
3. If you do take the time to counter it, and you do have a bond with your child stronger than the molester’s, there will be no secrecy. Your child will tell you if they are molested, or if they haven’t been, they won’t or it will seem shady. There are no magic tricks or secret spells, there is no “I think they might have been molester but she won’t tell me about it.” If they have been molested, they will tell you.

The difference between secrets and surprises

Does your child know the difference between a secret and a surprise? If you are not sure, try sitting down and asking them. Unless you have previously addressed the topic, chances are they won’t. So teach your child the difference between a secret and a surprise.

**Surprise**

A surprise is something that you’re saving to tell at a later time, like a present or a surprise party. You are not going to keep it hidden forever, you just want to wait to tell or show the person until a certain time.

**Secret**

A secret is something that you’re not going to tell at all. It is something that you will forever keep to yourself. You should never keep secrets from your parents, and if anyone asks you to do so it’s because they are doing something wrong.

A molester may not use the word ‘secret’ when conditioning a child, so it is important you reinforce the concept of a secret as well. A secret may mean someone saying to you…..

- Don’t tell your parents
- Don’t let anyone know about this
- We don’t want anyone to know about this
- Lets pretend this never happened
- This is just between you and me

Just tell someone

Give children this basic rule: Any secret you keep from your parents is a bad secret. No exceptions. If anyone ever asks you to keep a secret from your parents it is because they are doing something bad. It is a parent’s job to protect their children, and they need to know everything that is happening with their children.

Tell your children that if there is something like this they are keeping a secret it will make them feel a lot better inside if they tell somebody about it. If you have something inside that is hurting you or making you feel funny, you need to tell someone. They can come tell you, tell a teacher, or another adult.

**You should tell when…**

Someone asks you to keep a secret from your parents
Someone gives you a bad touch
Someone does something that hurts you
Someone tries to scare you or does something to scare you
Someone does something that makes you feel funny inside or uncomfortable

**When and who to tell**

Children should tell as soon as they are safe with their parents or another trusting adult. Teach your children that it is always best to tell their parents first. If they do not feel comfortable in telling you, they can tell another adult that they trust, such as…

- A teacher
- A friend’s parents
- A policeman or firefighter
- An adult from church

Teach your children that it is always OK to ask questions as well. If they are not sure whether or not something is right, they can and should ask another adult.

**All about threats**

Threats can be a powerful silencer with children. You need to remember that children are easily moved. A molester telling them that if they tell anyone they (the molester) will kill them or someone they love is a very strong rouse. Or probably one of the most cruel and harsh things a molester could say, after luring the child into succumbing to such acts which are confusing to them and the child knows nothing about, telling the child that their parents would no longer love them if they knew about what they had done. What child would risk losing their parents love? Children may believe what a molester may say unless proper measures are taken to counteract what is said to the child. One of the best ways to help take away the power of threats is to go over some of them with your children. If you take a little time to talk these over with your child, then if used, will set off an instant alarm with the child.

- Don’t tell your parents because if you do they won’t love you anymore
- If you tell anyone about this I’ll come into your house at night when you’re sleeping and kill you. I can do it you know.
- If you tell anyone I’ll kill your whole family and then you’ll be all alone
- I can read minds and I’ll know if you tell anyone. I’ll come hurt you if you do.
- Don’t tell your parents because if you do they’ll just punish you for making up stories.
- If you’re really my friend you won’t tell anyone
- This is just our own special little secret that we share and nobody else does.
- If you tell your parents you will be in big trouble. They will be so mad they’ll never forgive you.

**Steps to counteract conditioning**

- Remind children constantly that they can always talk to you about anything. There is nothing that cannot be discussed with you. If anyone ever does something to them, they shouldn’t feel ashamed to tell. If people have done something mean to you, it’s not your fault. So nobody will be mad at you for telling, and it is the other person that will be in trouble, not you.
- Remind children that they are always safe when they are with you. Explain to them exactly how they are safe. Even if somebody hurts them elsewhere, as soon as they are home with their parents they will be safe. There are policeman to protect them, parents to protect them.
- If someone wants you to keep a secret from your parents, then it is them who is doing something bad, not you. Your parents will never be mad at you for someone else’s secret.
- If an adult does something to you, it’s not your fault. You did not do something bad, the adult who did it to you did something bad. Your parents will not be mad at you.
- Inform children that oftentimes people say things that they can’t do or will not do, in an attempt to keep you from doing what is right.
- When you tell your child “I love you” at night, elaborate. I will always love you no matter what. I’ll always love you no matter what you do. Make sure you re-enforce this concept when dealing with them after they have done something wrong as well, and when disciplining your child for normal day to day things. Parents often mistake this for a given. It is not. Children frequently have a worry in the back of their mind that they could do something that would cause their parents to stop loving them.
Explain to kids that sometimes friends can do bad things. They can develop problems they don’t like. They can do things that hurt children, not because that is their intention, but because they do not understand how it hurts them. They can’t always see how it hurts them. You may have somebody you like a lot who might get this problem. No matter how much you like them, it is more important that you tell your parents so they can keep you safe. They will make sure people treat you good, and can help make sure other people only treat you in a way that makes you feel comfortable, loved, and safe.

Talk to child about the way the world works. That adults are responsible for helping kids know right from wrong. If an adult gets the child to do something bad, it is the adult’s fault. If an adult threatens to hurt a child, there are other adults and policeman who will help keep the child safe.
Abuse Prevention Review
Checklist of Important concepts

- Develop a children’s healthy body image. Use terms for their sexual organs whenever you can and make sure they are comfortable when talking about the sexual parts of their body.
- Ask your child to name all of the parts of his or her body. IF they don’t do so naturally, have them include their sexual organs as well.
- Make yourself aware of what makes a child an easy target vs. a hard target. Start ensuring that your child is the last choice of victim for a molester.
- Make sure you are making yourself visible to anyone who has access to your children. Ask lots of questions. Be ‘nosy.’ Make sure they see you asking your child about their day and their activities in detail.
- Put forth a conscientious effort to increase verbal communication with your child. Even if you think you have good communication now, make it your goal to improve on what you have currently. Find out specifics of what they have done during the day.
- Make sure you put forth extra effort to find out in more detail what goes on while they are out of your care, such as at school, at a friends, or other outing. Do not accept short answers or explanations. Always find out in advance where they will be going and what they will be doing.
- Start initiating bed time talks as a time to go over some of the concepts for abuse prevention and as a time to simply have an intimate conversation with your child about their day. Try to spend at least 10 minutes every bedtime.
- Explain to children what their instinct is and why it is important to follow it. Their instinct is that silent voice inside or that funny feeling they get when they think something is wrong.
- Ask children what they should do if they get that funny feeling inside. They should always check with their parents or another adult first if they are ever unsure about whether or not it is the proper thing.
- Ask children if they can remember times someone asked them to do something they did not want to do or something they felt funny about. Go over the situations and reason with the child about the appropriate responses.
- Teach children that their body belongs to them and only them. They have the right to dictate to anyone how it is used.
- Teach children the difference between good touches and bad touches. A good touch is a touch that makes you feel safe and loved. A bad touch is a touch that makes you feel funny inside or uncomfortable.
- Re-enforce the concept that they are the ones who feel what goes on with their body. Nobody else knows, so it is their job to let adults know what they are feeling.
- Set some guidelines for basic do’s and don’ts that are consistent with your family values, and go over them with your children.
- Teach children the difference between a gift and a bribe. A gift is something somebody wants to give you to be nice. A bribe is something somebody gives you because they want something in return or to make up for something bad they did.
- Teach children that they should never let anyone trick them into doing something they don’t want to do. If they do not want to do it they shouldn’t, at least without checking with their parents first.
- Teach children they have the right to say no. They need to be respectful to adults and listen to them in most cases, but if an adult asks them to do something they think is wrong or makes them uncomfortable, they have the right to say no.
- Go over times when it is OK to say no to an adult.
• Review children’s rights with them. Go over these rights with them until they can name them from memory. Talk about different situations and how they relate to their rights. Explain what they should do if someone violates these rights.

• Teach children how to say “NO!” Make a game of it by having the child go through the progression of what to say to someone who is making them hurt or be uncomfortable. Get loud, pretend to cry, and have fun with it.

• Ask children who they think might hurt them? Review with them that sometimes even an adult who might care for them can sometimes do something that may hurt them.

• Ask your child to tell you what a secret is. Go over their answers with them. Make sure they understand that they are never to keep any secret from their parents.

• Ask your child to tell you what a surprise is. Go over their answers with them.

• Ask your child what they should do if someone is doing something that hurts them or makes them feel uncomfortable and will not stop. Make sure they understand the importance of telling someone in this situation.

• Have your child name some people that they can tell if they do not want to tell their parents. Let them know they can always ask another adult if they are ever unsure about anything.

• Talk about threats with your child. Why someone would threaten them. How the threats are probably made up, and they can’t really do the things they say. Go over some specific threats that a molester might use. Remind them of the ways that you can keep them safe from such things.

• Remind your child that they are always safe when they are with you, and if someone threatens them, that is all the more reason to tell just as soon as they are back safe with their parents.

• Remind your child on a constant basis that you will always love them no matter what. Even when they make mistakes, you still love them. Re-emphasize this fact when disciplining. When you say “I love you at night, tell them “I will always love you no matter what.”

• Explain to your children that when an adult tricks a child into doing something or asks them to do something that is wrong, it is the fault of the adult and not the fault of the child. You will never be mad at them for anything an adult asks them to do.

• Explain to kids that people aren’t perfect. People are prone to mistakes. Even their friends and loved ones can be imperfect. Just because someone is a friend, does not mean everything they do is always right.
Chapter 6

If You Suspect Abuse
This is the one of the most important chapters you will read. It clearly explains how to uncover potential cases of sexual abuse, along with more importantly, how to avoid creating a false case on your own. Children are highly suggestive. They are very imaginative. They are easy to manipulate. Their ability to separate fact from fiction is still developing. You may be the one who ends up hurting your child, if you plant a memory into them through inappropriate questioning. It is easier than most parents think.

**False accusations are a huge problem**
False accusations occur every day, and probably outnumber real cases being prosecuted. Parents use false cases of abuse to win custody. It is widely known that in order to get sole custody of your kids all you have to do is implant an idea into your child’s head. Sexual abuse is an easy way to gain insurance settlements. It’s the new frontier of the lawsuit lottery. No hard evidence, a simple touch could be turned into sexual abuse, and a child is the only witness. It does not get any easier than that. For revenge, what better way to get back at someone? Even if it turns out false, even if it does not net a conviction, you have ruined that person’s life. Crushed them both financially and spiritually. Even more frightening, there are an enormous amount of false cases being brought forth by well intentioned parents, who simply do not understand child psychology that well, and the importance of questioning their kids in a non-suggestive manner.

False memories are damaging to the thousands of people who have to suffer every year because of them, and the public continues to make punishment for this crime tougher and tougher. Without proper education this trend will get worse and worse. The pendulum has shifted too far and put innocent people at risk for false accusations.

There are those out there who try and pretend false allegations don’t exist. They are afraid that if they admit to false allegations existing, it is a ticket to call any child a liar. But these individuals are doing a great disservice to their field. Most false allegations, if you look into them, smell fishy. Rarely does a child make an outcry about abuse and have it turn out false. However, that is not where the problem lies. The problem lies in over-ambitious parents and social workers questioning children, not because a child makes an outcry on their own, because the well-meaning but misguided parents and educators wrongly assume that a molestation has occurred. The numbers of false allegations are often underestimated, because they are only exposed when a child breaks down in court and admits mommy had her lie. It is a huge problem. While some organizations will try to pull out stats from a certain study pretending they don’t exist, it’s best to take a look at what the leaders in the field are saying:

“Use of these protocols should reduces the serious problem of false positive errors that plagues the field of sexual abuse.” --Institute for psychological therapies, in response to a review of “protocols for the sex abuse evaluations” by Richard Gardner.

**Human psychology /Child psychology**
Adults are easily suggestible. When it comes to children, you don’t even have to try. Children can easily have a false incident coached into their memories, or create one on their own under the pretense of a suggestion. Their susceptibility to this is as inherent as a child’s ability to fantasy play.

Suggestive psychology in action
To demonstrate this phenomenon to teachers, I would gather together a group of children for story time. With a variety of mixed aged children, anywhere from 3-8, I would sit down with the kids and tell them a story. I would start it out in the pretense of another child. When I was working at one nationally known daycare, I knew this kid who…and proceeded with a completely made-up, relatively outlandish story. In one situation it was a goon underneath her bed that kept coming out at night and scaring her. In the other situation it was a little boy waking up to find a strange man in his house.
After the story, anywhere from 60% to 75% of the children would adamantly swear that they had had the same thing happen to them. Not only would they swear the same experience, they could go into amazing detail about what the people looked like, where they were, what had happened, and the stories were very believable. Most often, they were formulated through a combination of other experiences the child has had. Each one was a little different. Each one was very detailed. Each one was built around real experiences and real people. Had we been talking about real abuse trial cases, they could have gone to trial and been extremely hard to defeat.

**Active imaginations**
Children have active imaginations. If you have not realized this yet, spend a lot more time with your kids. Children are naturally story tellers and story builders, and this presents a problem when it comes to false cases of sexual abuse. When they don’t understand things, they will piece together stories using real events and people around them. When they do understand things and simply are story telling, they will piece it together using real people and similar events.

**Go with the group**
Children, like all other humans in general, are pack animals. They will go with the group. If they are surrounded by a group of adults or even other children who think this happened, they will go with the group. They will go along with what other people think, do, and act.

**Parent Pleasers**
Children are naturally parent pleasers. They will automatically go along with whatever they think the parent wants them to do or say. This is dangerous because the way parents question children is often in a “you’ll do the right thing by telling” manner. In their attempt to defeat possible conditioning and get the child to tell, what they are really doing is encouraging the child to confess something to be a good child, true or not.

**Cognitive ability for reality**
Much like children’s inability to even begin to comprehend death until about age 6 or 7, their ability to distinguish the difference between reality and make-believe, is still a developing ability throughout childhood. They simply don’t have the brain maturity yet to clearly distinguish fact from fiction, especially in a suggestive environment. Monsters are real to children. It doesn’t matter how many times you tell the child that monsters aren’t real, if they perceive there to be a monster in the room, it is just as real to the child. You can’t simply say “Monsters aren’t real” to calm them down. They are not yet mature enough to clearly make that distinction. They believe that their favorite cartoon characters may be real, that they exist somewhere in the world. The fact that we can convince kids with ease that a fat man delivers presents to every house in the world, while flying around in a flying sleigh powered by reindeer, and gets into the houses by squeezing his plump rump down the chimney, is another perfect example of children’s inability to distinguish what is fact, from what is fictional.

**Interpretation differences**
Children interpret situations differently than adults do. When they don’t have a context for something, or do not understand what someone may be asking, they create a context for it. Especially true when non-trained parents, or even psychologists start to question the child for something they do not have a context to. If they have not been sexually abused, they will not have a context for what it means. As such, they will create one using the adults cues and other experiences from life. (Hughes and Grieve, 1983). This results in many associative false memories.
The parents role
When a parent thinks that their child could have been sexually abused, the first thing they do is subconsciously start working it out in their head. Who could the culprit be, where could it have happened, what could have happened? They start questioning their child in suggestive ways without even realizing it. Then, to their dismay, the child ends up with a story that resembles what they had formulated, what they were thinking. They don’t realize that the child has mimicked the suggested scenario.

Does this mean that you can never question children about abuse? Not at all. It just means you need to be extremely careful how you do it, and do it in a manner that does not suggest, in any way, shape, or form, any possible conclusions that could be your own or that of your child’s imagination, rather than that of reality.

How coached memories occur
Coached or created memories can occur in several ways. Here are the main ways they occur. A coached memory could occur out of 1 of these mistakes, or through a little of all of them together. It could even occur through ways not listed here. However, here are the more common pitfalls that create false memories:

Good-child memories
Good child memories occur because the parents question the child in a way that leads them to the impression that they want the child to tell them something has happened.

“If something happened, you’ll do the right thing if you tell us.”
“We’ll be proud of you if you tell”
“You need to make sure you tell us if something happened, no matter what anyone says”
“If you tell us, everything will be better.”

These cues may seem subtle to the parent. Oftentimes, the parent thinks they are doing the right thing by saying such things, so that the child knows they can tell and not suffer any consequences for it. Good intentions, but the problem is, they might as well be handing the child a twenty and a lollipop and saying “Tell me this, if you want to be good”. Not only do they give the child the impression that they should be telling them something, but the parent is often giving clues that something has happened. The child then starts to think that something really happened, and that they should tell. They may also be aware nothing happened, and tell just because they think that is what the parents want. I better tell them what they want. I’ll be good if I tell.

Associative false memories
Good child memories and associative memories make up the majority of well meant coached memories. Associative memories are memories that occur when the parent asks a question, and the child associates what the parent is asking with another thing that is non-sexual, but the most similar to what they are asking. For instance, a parent asks “Did he touch you in the private area?” The child then associates touches that could be close to what the parent is asking. An accidental bump in that area. Sitting on the lap and reading a book, while the adult’s hands are holding the book close to that area. A touch on the thigh that was close to the area. Tummy touches, kissing, holding, pats on the rear, incidental contact, assistance with a potty accident, changing, helping with a swimsuit, zipper, or other clothing item, are all non-sexual things that could easily be falsely associated to sexual abuse. (Rosenfeld et al., 1986, 1987)

Switcheroos
This occurs when a child has been previously abused, but the abuse ends up getting blamed on a convenient scapegoat, rather than the actual abuser. This happens when a parent discovers the child has been abused, but does not know by whom. (Or they know, but do not want to admit that it could be true) This usually happens when a child comes with an open confession, or states something that shows they have been sexually abused
without providing a suspect. They may be scared to tell who really did it. They may have been young at the time and not exactly sure. They may know who did it and not want to tell because the person is someone close to them, or someone close to their parents. The parent, anxious to find out who could have done this, starts to suggest their most likely suspect to the child. The child may then replace in their mind the real abuser with who the parent suggests.

Switcheroo’s are also common when a person is accused of abuse in a position of working with children. The first thing police start to do is go on a hunt to try and come up with more victims. They start interviewing every child the accused was ever in contact with. Statistically speaking, some of those would have been abused. If they find abuse, in any of the children, it will be blamed on the accused without further question or digging. The abuse is then pinned on an innocent person, when in reality, the child was abused by someone else.

**Imaginative memories**
Imaginative memories occur when a parent cues the child in a particular direction, and they simply start to story-tell, something children are prone to doing. Imaginative memories can at times seem very real, because the child usually puts them together using information of things that are real around them. The example given about the children in group time in the last subheading is an example of an imaginative memory.

**‘Yes’ memories**
Yes memories occur because children are simply agreeable. A parent asks yes or no questions in their probing, and the child says yes. Yes memories are especially common in younger children. (8 or younger). Yes memories would be fairly easy to defeat, if not for this: Once the first yes is given, it isn’t asked again. It becomes how it did happen, and the child will be easily implanted with the idea he or she has been abused. Children will naturally mold their responses to what they think pleases the adult. (Ceci and Bruck's (1993a; Ceci et al., 1987; Cole and Loftus, 1987)

**Suggestive false memories**
Suggestive false memories are blunt suggestions on the part of the parents that result in a made-up story. They can occur by accident, or on purpose if a parent is using a false case for their gain. Moreover, there has been a huge problem with suggestive false memories resulting from suggestive questioning on the part of psychologists and child advocates. Recent studies have provided dramatic demonstrations of the degree to which young children can be influenced by an interviewer. (Ceci, 1994; Ceci and Bruck, 1993a, 1993b; Ceci et al., 1994; Clarke-Stewart et al., 1989; Leichtman and Ceci, in press; Thompson et al., 1991).

“He touched you in your privates, didn’t he?”
“How did you feel when (so and so) happened?”
“Did he make you (fill in the blank)”
“Where were you at when it happened”
“Tell the people that he did this”

**Persistent confessions**
Persistent confessions occur from parents who worry something might have happened, and continually question their children about it.

“Did this happen?” Child: “No”
“Did this happen?” Child: “No”
“Did this happen?” Child: “No”
“Did this happen?” Child: “No”
“Did this happen?” Child: “No”
“Did this happen?” Child: “No”  
“Did this happen?” Child: “yes”

Amazingly enough, after a parent asks a hundred times and finally gets a ‘yes’, it is seen as this revelation that the abuse was finally uncovered. Nobody looks at it as “Wow. This child showed incredible restraint in telling the truth for so long before she caved in.” Studies show that chances of getting a correct answer go down dramatically with the number of times asked, or the amount of time after the event. (Poole and White, 1991, 1993)

**Dishonest memories**

Dishonest memories are rare, but do exist. Dishonest memories occur from children who intentionally make up something to get back at an adult. This is especially common in troubled children. Here’s the beauty of this Pandora’s box: Once a child does something like this to get back at someone, once again, it is never questioned. After all, children never make up stories. Also, the fact that the child has emotional or behavioral problems does not come into play as to why the child might be making something up. Rather, the abuse ends up being listed as the cause for why the child could have emotional problems. The child, already having emotional problems, (which lack of proper love and attention plays a role in all emotional problems in children.) will be showered with love and attention. He or she is no longer a troubled child, but a victim, who is coddled and pampered. It is likely to be exactly what the child was looking for and truly needed, but unfortunately, it comes out of a lie.

Resources for false memory: White and Quinn (1988) and Quinn and White (1989)

**Repetition becomes reality**

The biggest problem with any kind of suggestive memory is that, all that needs to happen is for it to start off in the wrong direction. A simple yes to a suggestive question will avalanche, because once people hear this, they run with it. It becomes matter-of-fact to everyone. The longer it goes on, the more the truth will disappear through repetition. A false case becomes reality regardless of how it started out. With people around the child treating it as a truthful fact, it will become a truthful fact to the child. Even lies the child knew as lies at first, will become ingrained as truth with repetition.

After the initial accusation, shift goes from if to how, and is treated as a real event from then on. Meaning once the first yes is given, whether that yes occurred through suggestion, cues, associative memories, or whatever reason, it will become a fact. Everyone around the child will treat it as something that did happen. With such faith from everyone around them that it did happen, it must have!!

There is also the problem that once a yes answer is given, the child may revel in the extra attention and support they are suddenly surrounded with. They may enjoy the spotlight of sympathy that reigns down upon them after a false confession. In every case they will be coddled, pampered, and given extra love and attention.

**Here’s the hard truth**

If you refer to a child as stupid, they will believe they are dumb. If you start calling the sky green, the child will begin to accept it as green. If you suggest to a child that someone is a mean person, he or she will start to think that and be scared of them. And if you imply to a child that they have been abused, they will perceive it as true, and what was once a coached memory, is now indistinguishable from fact.
Motivations for false reporting.
There can be several motives for false reporting:

**Well intentioned parents**
Unfortunately, becoming more and more common, are well-meaning parents creating false cases simply by how they question their children. Parents who do not realize the effect their statements have, and the ability they have to coach their children. Something happens or parents see something that makes them suspicious and causes their fears to run wild, and in their panicked state, they plant a false memory in their child without realizing it.

**Custody**
False cases of sexual abuse are used constantly in custody situations. It’s a sad thing to see happen, but parents do it, because it works. I don’t know how these individuals can live with themselves afterwards, but it is done, and is often very successful.

**Revenge**
I can’t think of a better way to get back at someone than this. People who are thirsty for revenge against an individual who might have had contact with their child can achieve the ultimate satisfaction by creating a false case of abuse. As stated earlier, I even had a parent threaten me with this because of a $200.00 bill that she justly owed. It’s a sick world we live in.

**Money**
It’s sad to say, but people are motivated to false reporting for money. It is an easy way to gain insurance settlements. In fact, it is the perfect way. No witnesses, no evidence, only a child’s uttering will win you some cash. Most of the time you won’t even need to go to court, simply make the accusation and at least some money will be thrown your way. If you don’t believe me, then just look at what is happening to the Roman Catholic Church. While some abuse is real, some are also copycat crimes and are settled out of court.

It is even sometimes done for gain not only in paper money. Their emotionally disturbed child may now be eligible for state assistance and counseling. Everything from special private schooling, government programs, scholarships, and therapy are opened up to parents, and the parents benefit by having other problems with their child addressed which may not related to sexual abuse. It is also especially common when aggressive prosecutors are dealing with a case where someone had contact with other children, and need multiple charges to make their case look better. They can make it look attractive for someone to get their child to confess. Look at the things you can get as a victim.

**The common ‘good’**
The world is full of way too many self-righteous people who try to play judge, jury, and executioner all by themselves. When prosecutors are convinced they are in the right, (as most are) the means you use to get a conviction does not matter all that much as long as you think this person did it. Truth is thrown out for a persons own perception of what he or she thinks is just. Anybody accused of this type of crime is guilty to nine out of 10 people, regardless of the proof. We do not live in a system were people are innocent until proven guilty. People will often easily consider it good and just to make something up, if they believe the end result is what they believe is just.

Unfortunately, the nature of the job of detective and prosecutor attracts people who believe that they are always correct. Even if they believe that nothing happened, they nevertheless have to represent the state and prosecute this person, and win, if they are to be considered for their next career advancement. Court becomes a forum to test out your legal skills, not to get justice.
If someone is accused, they must be guilty, it’s just a matter of finding ways to make them guilty. This is dangerous when it comes to a subject like sexual abuse, where most evidence is circumstantial and easily corruptible.

**Children do make up abuse!!!!**

For the longest time it was believed that children never created false cases of sexual abuse, and for a while, it was mostly true. However, times have changed. You are foolish if you think children are completely clueless to their environment around them. They hear stories on the news and through other media about sexual abuse. There are documented cases of children making up stories to get back at someone. As our children continue to get smarter, harder to control, and with more social adjustment issues, the problem will get worse.

**The damage of false reporting**

Unfortunately, false reporting of sexual abuse has become an all too familiar reality in our society. A falsely reported case of sexual abuse can ruin individuals and their entire families. Defending a case of sexual abuse, innocent or guilty, will run legal fees of anywhere from 50,000 to 250,000 dollars. This is in addition to the costs of bail and court fees. A falsely reported case of sexual abuse will financially ruin just about anybody. It will also ruin reputations, because of the vast stigma surrounding the subject and the ignorance of the general public. Despite how much we try to kid ourselves into thinking we have a fair and just society where civil rights are respected, when it comes to sexual abuse, all anyone has to do is hint at an accusation for it to be perceived as true for 90 percent of the population. This is why it has become the perfect way to get back at somebody. All you need is a false witness with no evidence.

This is all assuming a person has the money to defend a case. More than likely, they do not. While again, we kid ourselves into thinking we give these people fair and equal representation, the truth is far from that. Public defenders are swamped with cases, and although many are great lawyers, they simply do not have the time or resources to do the work that needs to be done. They seldom have time to interview witnesses, review evidence appropriately, or do anything to come up with a real defense. Many Public Defenders are just out of school and learning the trade. While they are better than no defense at all, they are far from being able to present a fair and equitable defense. The county resources (money) by far are spent more toward the prosecution’s side and the defense side gets what is left over.

Often, people will take plea bargains though they are not guilty, to avoid being convicted of the worst sentence. In most states, a fondling charge will net mandatory 16 years to life. This means that after 16 years are up, the person could be eligible for parole. However, the way the politics are working around this subject currently, life is the more real likelihood because parole is not generally granted very easily. So innocent people admit guilt and plea bargain to avoid the scary possibility of being convicted of worse. They then are placed on a Sexual Molester list and have lifelong restrictions and hostilities directed at them by paranoid parents and lawmakers. This system is designed to be so overly restrictive as to make the person fail at abiding by the rules, and in most cases goes back to jail for non-compliance. Don’t kid yourselves. It is a nightmare you are throwing someone into with a false accusation. You better be damn sure you are right.

**Understanding repressive memories**

Repressed memories are very real. They are also very made up. Does that make sense? Repressed memories have been proven to exist. However, they are also surrounded by a lot of misunderstanding, stigma, and are grossly abused by the psychological community.
Represseed memories are very real. They do happen. They occur when over time, a person suppresses damaging memories from their childhood. Repressed memories usually occur as the result of fairly significant trauma. The problem with repressed memories is, they are constantly abused by psychiatrists. When someone is suffering from problems later in life, there is an overwhelming desire to try and point to something in the individuals childhood as the cause. While right in it’s principle, (people are a result of their upbringing) this results in coached repressed memories. The human mind is highly suggestible. When this is suggested, the individual starts to believe it. They rack their brain to remember what could have happened. They begin to come up with possibilities. Most often, the repressed memory that surfaces is nothing more than a creation of the persons active imagination. Most repressed memories that occur after the help of a psychologist are suspect.

To quote the chaos theory: “Something as simple as the flap of a butterfly’s wings could ultimately result in a typhoon hundreds of miles away.” The principle of this theory is not that everything is indeed true chaos, but that the intertwined nature of the system is sometimes so complex that minute things can contribute to an overall outcome. Things that seem to be chaos to the naked eye are really a combination of subtle differences. Bottom line, there is not always a red flag waving at you. If there isn’t you shouldn’t create one. A person’s problems could have been developed through ever so subtle occurrences in their life, not from a typhoon. Not from sexual abuse or other major trauma. Psychiatrists who want to find a trauma for a reason for drug addiction, promiscuous behavior, or difficulty in relationships, often do their clients a disservice. It is likely there are reasons to be found for their problems. But that does not mean it was necessarily through massive trauma.

Having suffered from real repressed memories myself, I also know how fleeting and elusive they can be. They are easy to discredit at first. After time, they get harder and harder to ignore. However, to this day, I still could not tell you enough details about them. They will happen at the strangest of times. They are very real. They are very detailed. However, a few minutes later, I can’t remember a thing about them unless I had a pen in my hand when it happened. Sort of like that dream you have that is so moving and real, yet by morning time you can’t remember exactly what it was. This is the same feeling, only you are wide awake when you have them, and moments later, once your thought switches to something else, they are back inside that vault of your mind.

Represseed memories pose a very problematic ethical question for the psychological community for this reason. With the help of a psychiatrist, some repressed memories have been recovered, and turned out to be seemingly real and accurate. However, any time you attempt this, you always run the risk of suggestive memories coming out, or imaginative memories surfacing. We need to learn more about them before they can be known to be trusted enough, especially if you are using the memory to take someone else’s life from them.

**Important for parents**

Keep in mind, real repressed memories occur, when a child, **over time**, as a defense mechanism, begins to hide episodes of abuse or severe trauma deep down inside the depths of their brain. The child more or less develops a roadblock to that part of the brain. They will usually block out vast parts of their childhood along with it. Repressed memories are something that occur over an extended period of time. **Your child will not** forget about abuse that happened a few weeks ago due to repressed memories. Studies show that both short term abuse, and abuse that happened recently is very detailed in memory. (Terr 1990, 1991) Once again, there is no mystical powers here, and repressed memories don’t work in such a way. If the memories surface for a couple of years after the abuse stops, then repressed memories are a possibility. But they are not to be blamed for every child maladjustment.
Stories of false accusations

Here are just a few of the thousands of stories of false accusations that occur every year. These are some of the lucky ones, as the truth eventually came out. There are just as many which occur that remain undiscovered.

- A dad called the police on his neighbor after his 4 year old came home and said that his friend’s dad had touched his bottom when he went over there. After an investigation, it was discovered that the child was referring to him picking him up and holding his hand underneath his bottom to support him.

- A woman called the police to report sexual abuse after her 5 year old son came home and said that “David’s mom pulled my pants down and put pokers in my butt.” The police once again investigated. In reality, the child had slide down a hill onto a cactus. His friend’s mom had then helped to get out the prickers from the child’s rear end using tweezers. While probably not the wisest thing to do in our society, (she should have called the child’s mother ahead of time to let her know or had her drive over to do it), it was certainly not sexual abuse.

- Charges were brought against the owners of a daycare center in New York for sexual abuse. The owners and several of the employees, male and female, were charged with several hundred counts of sexual assault. Hundreds of children were involved in the allegations. It was like something you would read out of a horror story. Satanic rituals. Hidden doors that would lead to underground studios where the children told stories in great detail of being molested, raped, and video taped. The stories were extensive and elaborate, and so many children were involved in the same sort of details they figured it had to be true. Several million dollars and several years later, there was not a single conviction. The building had been demolished and excavated in an attempt to find these underground chambers, and in all the several hundred victims accounts, there was no evidence whatsoever to support the claims, other than the children’s testimony. Most of the charges were eventually dropped, and the few that were not did not have any evidence to support a conviction. While there is the outside chance something did occur, most of these cases were disproved by the children’s own admissions, and years later, some of the children admitted being coaxed into what they said.

- A four year old girl was left in the care of her mother’s boyfriend for the morning. Later in the day, after he had left and she was back in the mother’s care, The child told her mother that “Ron put his pee-pee in my pee-pee.” After calling authorities, a social worker, using suggestive questioning such as “Where were you at?” and “How did it feel?” determined that the abuse had happened, and suggested to the police to file charges. After a medical evaluation was done and turned out to be negative, the child was taken to a better psychologist, who with better questioning methods, was able to discover what had actually happened. “The child urinated in a toilet, did not flush it, and then mom’s boyfriend, Ron, had used the toilet and urinated where her pee-pee had been, hence the “Ron put his pee-pee in my pee-pee.”

- A man called the police after finding out that his six year old daughter sat on the lap of a male day care worker, and that in questioning his daughter further, she continued to tell about stuff that was done. What started out as sitting on the lap, became fondling, undressing, and eventually oral sex. It turned out to be a case of ‘yes’ memories. The child agreed to go along because she enjoyed the attention she was receiving from her father.

- A Boy Scout troop leader was accused of sexual abuse by one of the children and was arrested. The boy said that he had fondled him, committed oral sex and sodomized him. After a lengthy investigation, several of the other children in the troop said that nothing of the sort ever happened to their knowledge, and disclosed that the child in question was extremely angry at the leader for not letting him lead a portion of the trip that he thought he should lead.
A child said something that caused her mother to be suspicious that she had been sexually abused. Her mother instantly suspected her ex-husband and started questioning her child about it. The child said something that she thought revealed abuse by the child’s father. She went to the police, who pressed charges, and it took several months for the truth to finally come out. She had actually been abused by a next door neighbor at her father’s house, not by her father.

You can find thousands upon thousands of false allegations if you ask around or look for them. They are all too common. As a society we need to come to that realization. We can still protect our kids.

**Note:**
This is certainly not included to try and discourage parents from reporting true cases of sexual abuse, but rather to emphasize the need to be thorough, competent, and not too hasty when it comes to questioning children and reporting abuse. In all of these cases, there were damaging effects that occurred from parents being too quick and judgmental. At the least, it amounted to unnecessary tension and hatred between the parents and an innocent individual. A child lost his best friend because of tension between parents. It resulted in breaking up a long term relationship. It resulted in children being interviewed and put through medical exams for nothing. It resulted in innocent people spending time in jail. It cost innocent people money. In many cases, it resulted in psychologists having to work with the children to undo what the other adults had created through their assumptions and subsequent programming of the child. In effect, many parents molested their own child without even realizing it.

If an incident of sexual abuse has occurred, this book and its resources for working with kids should uncover it very clearly and effectively, if you follow the suggestions contained. If you are still unsure, take your child to an independent psychologist to find out for sure. Don’t be too quick to jump to conclusions or get too carried away imagining things in your own mind.

**Recognizing possible signs of sexual abuse**
It is with extreme reserve that we give parents this list. In the past, ‘symptom’ sheets have been grossly abused and used to create false accusations, by creating panic in parents about their child having one or more of these symptoms. These are guidelines only, and many of these symptoms will be present in non-abused children as well.

**Children 2 years and under**
- Urinary and bowel problems
- Fretful behavior
- Inappropriate fear of adults
- Lacerations of sex organs/anus
- Fear of being abandoned
- Excessive crying
- Sleep disturbances
- Bleeding, discharge or odors from sex organs

**Toddlers and Preschool**
- Fear of a particular adult or specific places
- Sex play with toys
- Lacerations of sex organs
- Bleeding, discharge, or odors from sex organs
- Advanced knowledge of detailed adult sexual activity
- Sexual play or acting out that is inappropriate for his/her age
- Increase in genital play
- Fear of refusing to do something an adult asks
- Sleep disturbances/talking in their sleep (Many children talk in their sleep, it’s what they talk about that’s important. They may say things like “Please, No” or “I don’t want to.” If you start hearing things like that then you should start investigating further.

**School age children**
- Presence of a sexually transmitted disease
- Sleep disturbances
- Problems in school
- Poor peer relationships
- Role confusion
- Eating disorders
- Feeling overly responsible for family or younger siblings
- Excessive masturbation

**Adolescents**
- Drugs and/or alcohol problems
- Pregnancy
- Eating disorders
- Poor self image
- Presence of sexually transmitted disease

**The physical signs of abuse**
If you suspect extreme forms of abuse that would actually be causing the child physical harm, the best thing to do is to take your child to a doctor to do an evaluation. That is by all means the best way to tell. With that in mind, here are a few rough guidelines, but they should not replace the need for a physical examination:

- Swelling, bruising or discoloration around the anus or vagina
- Bleeding from the child’s anus or vagina
- Severe sharp pain in those areas

Remember that the presence of one or more of these items in children does not automatically mean that they have been sexually abused. This list is meant to be used as a guideline only. Many adolescents suffer from poor self esteem or eating disorders for reasons other than sexual abuse. Preschoolers without fathers may fear men in general, or a preschool child may have a fear of a certain place that has nothing to do with being sexually abused. Most of these symptoms could be caused by any number of things. (Emery, 1982; Hughes and Barad, 1983; Jaffé et al., 1986; Porter and O'Leary, 1980; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Wolman, 1983). They are meant to be guidelines only.
About the only thing on that list that will definitely indicate sexual abuse is the presence of a sexually transmitted disease or other physical problems around the child’s genitalia. Genital herpes and other forms of sexually transmitted diseases cannot be present in children without having had sexual contact.

**How to question your child about abuse**

First off, I would like to discourage parents from questioning their children at all regarding sexual abuse, and here is why: if you apply the program laid out, you won’t need to. If you have reinforced the concepts of sexual abuse prevention, you won’t need to question, because if anything happens, they will tell you. The minute you start to question them you run the risk of making a mistake in doing so.

However, we realize many of you will not take that advice under the panic that comes during suspicion. So if you decide to question your child, do so by carefully following these instructions.

**erà**

Do not pull them aside out of an otherwise normal part of the day to sit down and talk with them. This gives children the impression that something abnormal is happening or has happened and that they should go along with it. Question your child during normal times, at dinner, while at play, etc. Don’t make your questioning seem too out of place.

**erà**

If you feel a need to ask them at a quiet time, or to cozy up to them, then wait and do it at a time where doing so is not abnormal. Once again, bedtime makes the most ideal time for something like this.

**erà**

If you have read them the books included in this series, you should have them in a mind frame to defeat any type of conditioning they may have received. However, if you would like, you can re-confirm to them, how much you love them, how safe they are in your arms, and that you will always protect them from anything that ever happens to them. (We would suggest wording it just like that. There are major differences in context between stating it in that way and saying “If someone told you not to tell, you will always be safe”.

**erà**

**DO NOT ASK** yes or no questions. Anytime you ask a question that can be answered with a yes or no, and one that can be so easily associated to something else or something similar, (touching for instance) your odds of getting an incorrect response are better than they are of getting the truth. You can’t ask questions such as…

“Did he touch you there?”
“Did he hurt you?”
“Did he put his penis in your mouth?”
“Did she feel your pee pee?”
“Does she touch your privates?”

**erà**

You may ask some of the following questions:

- What did you do today?
- Do you like to play with (person in question)?
- What is the favorite thing you do with (person in question)?
- What is the least favorite thing you do with (person in question)?
- Do people ever say mean things to you? (Not does the person in question say mean things to you. Saying such would fall into suggestive questioning)
- Do people ever do mean things to you? (same principle as above)
- Who are your favorite grownups to play with?
- Why do you like playing with those grownups?
Mommy and daddy have to go out one night next week. We need to find a baby-sitter. We were thinking about having ______ come over to watch you if he/she can. Would you like that?

(If yes to previous question, unlikely abuse is happening. If no, it does not mean it is happening, but ask the child why using open-ended questioning)

Make a habit of role playing with your children frequently. This is important! Role playing is a wonderful tool to enable you to view the world from your child’s perceptions. It is also a great way to get insight into your parenting. As teachers, when we wanted to gain insight into our practices in the classroom, we would set up a dramatic play set for the children to play ‘school.’ Every bad habit you use in the classroom, every harsh thing you’ve ever said that you shouldn’t have, every insight into how you discipline, what they are thinking when you discipline, comes out. (Just be prepared for the sometimes humbling realization of how children perceive the things you do and why you do them.) Role playing also is great for knowing what goes on in your child’s world. Parents should make a habit of engaging in role play a few times a week with their children. Your kids will love it, and this is one thing you will instantly see the rewards from, even if it has nothing to do with abuse prevention. During normal playtime with your children, say “I want to play…. (House/friends/school/daycare/Freddy’s house, etc.) But I don’t know what to do, so I’ll be you, and you have to be (your teacher/friend/Freddy, etc.) and tell me what to do.” Enjoy it. Have fun with it. Take it with a certain grain of salt, as children sometimes exaggerate impressions they get from the adults around them. (They may exaggerate a teacher’s emotions when they were angry with them, they may exaggerate a fight with a friend). But rarely does anything sexual come out of this play, unless something sexual has happened. If you role play consistently with your children, you will know how the others treat your child when you aren’t around, without ever having to sit down and question them.

Remember, pedophiles do not practice black magic. They’re methods fall into simple psychology, and can be easily defeated if you know how. Do not go making victims where there aren’t any. I’ve seen this happen way too often. If you ask the right questions, and you cannot seem to uncover any abuse, it is likely none occurred. Do not be too eager to make your child into a victim if they aren’t one.

In real cases of abuse

The story will not change from one time to the next. Details may be added, as your child begins to feel more comfortable, but the story won’t change. Facts said before won’t change, but will remain exactly the same.

It will be very clear to you that something did occur. Cases in which the parents think something happened but aren’t quite sure, are usually cases of suggestive questioning or cases where a parent is letting their imaginations get the better of them, and in reality, it is their perceptions that are making the creating the story.

Usually involve things beyond adult-to-child fondling. This is possible too, but most fondling charges are often a confusion of another non-sexual physical contact.

Confessions will usually occur with the child’s free will, not through aggressive questioning. In my experience, generally speaking, nearly every confession that occurs as a result of an adult’s hard questioning is false.

Confessions won’t occur the fourth time you ask, but not the first three. If done properly the confession will happen right away. By the fourth time the child may be wanting to give you the answer you want to hear.
Two children are riding their bikes on the road. They each fall down and scrape their knee. They both run to their parents for help. The first child’s parents see their child crying and go out to comfort her. They tell her that everything is going to be all right. They explain to her that even though it hurts now, the pain will soon go away and her knee will heal. They talk to her and calm her down while giving her a Band Aid. They tell her everything is better now and give one last hug before she goes out to play again.

The second child gets to her house. At the sight of her injury, her parents start screaming. “Oh my god! What has happened to you!” They run up frantic and burst into tears. They start talking about how bad the injury looks. They begin discussing among each other whether or not it will ever heal or if she’ll be able to walk the same again. They fix the injury by applying bandage over bandage, until it is thick around her leg.

One of these kids will limp for weeks, be afraid to ever get back on her bike again, and be constantly terrified that something is going to happen that could cause her to lose a limb. The other is off and playing again in no time, and has no effects or lingering trauma over the painful incident. Can you guess which is which?
Chapter 7

If The Unthinkable Happens
Despite all these precautions, there is still the possibility that something can happen. If your child is actually abused, how you react during this crucial time plays a very important role in determining whether or not this will be something your child easily walks away from and will soon forget or something that will leave him or her with lingering problems.

**Understanding your role**

Although not a popular or politically correct thing to state, parents play a role in how damaging an incident of abuse can be, and can actually inflict further damage upon their child if they are not careful.

The illustration on the other page may seem a bit eccentric, but that is exactly what parents do when it comes to sexual abuse. Yes, sexual abuse is not the same as falling down and scraping your knee. But the laws of human psychology still apply despite the nature of the injury.

Parents need to understand their role in the damage sexual abuse plays. You decide whether this will be something the child quickly recovers from. You will also decide if you would like to help molest your child yourself by providing an environment that throws the abuse back at the child rather than makes it go away. You need to provide a healing environment, not a victim environment. We live in a society that, unfortunately, takes a victim stance to everything. We like to focus on what has happened to us, rather than come to the reality that, if you can stand up afterwards, you are just fine. You can overcome it. Too many parents will treat their children as victims after they are sexually abused. This will only damage them further.

If you perceive your child as damaged goods, then they will perceive themselves as damaged goods. If you address the incident as a bad thing that is done with and they can recover from, then that is what will happen. If you address it as something that will scar their lives forever, then guess what, it will. The fact that peoples lives tend to follow how they perceive themselves and how others treat and perceive them, is not a novel new idea. It is as consistent and true as the laws of gravity. Several scientific studies have shown that the majority of the damage from sexual abuse comes from extrinsic factors of how those around the child regard the abuse, and not by the abuse itself. (Walters, 1975;

**A few concepts for your comfort**

Here are a few things to think about that should hopefully get you in the right frame of mind when it comes to how you handle a case of sexual abuse after it is discovered:

**Think about this…**

Remember what you have going for you. Don’t dwell on what happened, but rather the assets you have in your arsenal to counter it. You have your love to give to your child. You have the power to get your child back to a normal environment, free of abuse. You have the power to counteract what the abuser did.

**Think about this…**

The recovery from the damage of sexual abuse is not about what happened then, it’s about what happens now. If our lives where based on the bad that happened to us in the past, none of us would be right. Don’t dwell on the past because it can’t be changed. Instead focus on the future.

**Think about this…**

I can spot a foster child about 3-4 times easier than I can one who is sexually abused. Why? Because the damaging effects from that situation tend to be far more severe than they are for sexual abuse. I can see the pain and damage from a mile away on their faces. Yet, I’ve never looked at one of them as disadvantaged or damaged goods. Why?
Because I know THERE IS NOTHING in this world that extra love and attention cannot overcome, and I knew I could give them the love and attention needed to help overcome it. This is not wishful thinking or lame philosophical mumbo jumbo. The truth is, children have been brought from horrible and tragic situations, much worse probably than what your child went through, and by love, they have been healed.

**Think about this…**
There is generally only one side effect of sexual abuse that is not easily countered, and that is sexual side effects. You cannot deal with sexual side effects in pre-pubescent children. You will have to wait until they become sexually active to deal with that. Every other damaging factor is dealt with by truth and love. Dwelling on something you can’t deal with yet only causes frustration.

**Think about this…**
The damage done in your case is extremely unlikely to be like the debilitating cases you hear about on television. Your child’s abuse did not come at the hands of a parent, which is the worst type of abuse. It was also discovered before it had the chance to warp your child’s reality. There is a loving family to fall back on, and to keep your child’s world intact.

**Think about this…**
Sexual abuse is psychological damage, either mild or severe. It can always be countered or erased psychologically, whether minor or severe. Your child is only permanently damaged if you want them to be. Studies such as Kendall-Tacket, Williams, and Finkelhor (1993) show that for abused children who do suffer psychological harm, symptom abatement occurred for most within two years after the incident, with or without treatment.

**Handling a child’s confession**
Should your child come to you with a confession, here are a few guidelines for how to handle it initially:

1. Let the child talk. Downplay the situation at first. Talk in a conversation as if it is business as usual. It will be hard, but don’t sound excited or angry, anxious or disturbed. Children will tend to test you with a little information at first to see how you react, saving the entire story for last. Listen to your child until he or she is completely done without getting over anxious or exited. It will help your child emotionally if he or she gets everything they have to say out.
2. Be careful not to send the child signs that you think it is their fault that this happened. This can be done accidentally by saying things like “Why did you let him do that to you?” or something similar. Reassure the child that he or she has done the right thing by telling you and that you are proud of them for doing so. (Do this only after a confession, not before)
3. Be sure to use lots of healing words, such as “It’s not your fault” “Nobody is mad at you” or “We all still love you.” “Everything will be OK” “This was a bad thing, but we will get over it.”
4. Stay close to the child afterwards, especially if he or she was threatened to keep from telling. It will give them comfort that they are safe now.
5. Be sure to handle the matter in a calm and appropriate manner. Give the child time. Don’t automatically take the child and go running down to the police station. There is no hurry. Give the child time and respect for their feelings.
6. As soon as you get the opportunity, write down in detail everything you remember your child telling you. This will help in ensuring you are getting a fully accurate story, when you can compare it to what the child says at a later time. It is also important for the psychologist to be able to address the specifics of the abuse, what was said, the conditioning used, etc. The more details you have the better.
7. Follow all of the guidelines contained in the next section of this book.
How a confession will occur
Confessions vary slightly depending on the age of the child and extent of the abuse. However, don’t expect your child to pull you into a quiet room and have a heart to heart talk. In most situations, it will occur out of the blue in normal conversation. This is why it makes it all the more important to watch what you say, and keep your calm. Most parent’s response when blind-sided by something like this is to panic and get irate. With older children, it will be something the child probably knew was wrong and took some courage to tell you about. In younger children, they will probably not know very much about what happened, and the confession will take more the tone of the child questioning or inquiring about the situation.

What the child could be feeling
What the child will be feeling will vary from case to case. Younger children will probably not be feeling much of anything other than confusion and curiosity. They will not necessarily know exactly what happened, and probably don’t recognize the situation as abusive. You want to do everything you can to keep it that way. You need to address the problem and let them know it wasn’t right. You don’t want to put into their heads how damaged they are. You want to explain to them why it was wrong and move on. They will also probably be curious about the situation. You want to be sure to answer all of their questions appropriately to make sure that curiosity is satisfied. Children who have sustained abuse may be feeling…..

Confused
In most cases, this would have been someone the child trusted before. It will probably leave them confused and wondering why this person that always liked them and cared for them wanted to do something bad to them. It may also leave them confused about their place in life and what is normal. They had just been asked to do adult things, even though they were not aware of them as being very wrong.

Curious
He or she might be curious about the things that were done to them. They will be curious about the sexual acts that they performed or had performed on them. They will be curious about why it happened. They will be curious as to why the person did this to them.

Scared
In some circumstances, the child might have been threatened into not telling. He or she may be scared about how you will react. Will you still love her? Will she be taken away from her parents? She also may be scared that something bad will happen to you or her if she was threatened not to tell with bodily harm. Even in cases where no threats were used, he or she still might be scared of your reaction to the situation.

Ashamed or embarrassed
Much of this depends on how sexually open your children are. The more sexually healthy the child, the less they will feel shamed by the incident. This shame can also be controlled by the parents. If parents make a big deal of the situation, they will be more shamed, feeling that they have somehow let their parents down.

Angry
Older children or children who are violently or seriously abused may be feeling anger towards their abuser. Younger children who are not violently abused will generally not have any anger issues, because they will not in most cases understand exactly what went on or recognize the situation as abusive.

Isolated
Generally this is a symptom found primarily in children who have been abused over an extended period of time. As a result your child may feel isolated from his or her peer group. He or she will tend to withdraw from their normal life as a child as the abuse goes on, and will need some help getting back to normal.
Addressing the perpetrator
Addressing the perpetrator is a very important step in dealing with the damage of sexual abuse. Some parents will get too carried away bashing the molester, calling him or her a ‘monster’ or something similar. While this is completely understandable, it is not the best thing for the child. Remember, this is probably someone the child knew and liked. He or she will probably be confused about why someone who liked them did something bad to them. Making the perpetrator look evil may damage the child’s perspective on all adults, making them overly distrustful or paranoid. It is better to tell it like it is: This person probably didn’t mean to hurt you. They just have something wrong with them that makes them want to do this. They don’t realize that it is wrong and that it can hurt children.

Evil can take on many forms. I’m sure all of us have experienced someone we love get tied in with drugs or alcohol. We’ve had youths who are otherwise good kids steal or get in trouble with the law. We ourselves have made bad decisions that we shouldn’t have. Children who are well behaved sometimes do things they know they shouldn’t. **CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THIS!!!** Don’t confuse them by trying to write a fairy tale good guy and villain approach to what happened.

Again, try to treat a child molester as you would an alcoholic. Just as an alcoholic is not truly evil all of the time, he or she has a sickness with drinking. When he or she drinks they do bad things. The same is true with a molester. A molester may be nice most of the time, but he or she has a disease that makes them want to do this to children. Don’t get too carried away calling the molester a monster or a bad person. After all, the child probably liked this person. He or she seemed really nice. They got along good together, he or she was their friend, but they ended up being a monster in disguise. What then about all of her other adult friends? They seem really nice. Are her parents really monsters in disguise? How about her teachers?

Taking this approach does not lesson the perpetrator’s crime in anybody’s eyes. It is also understandable how much anger you will be feeling towards this person. However, for your child’s sake, you need to keep it under control.

**Addressing anger**
If your child does have anger, then it will be your job to counter that, not to add to it. Anger never does anyone good. It never helps any situation. Rather, it can eat us alive and damage us emotionally. Your job is to remove anger the child may have about the situation. You can do this by reinforcing the concept that the person involved probably did not mean to hurt them. Don’t add to it. It may seem justified or appropriate, but it isn’t helpful.

**Addressing sexuality issues**
Start off by asking them if they have any questions about the things that happened. Address those, and also these:

**Talk to them about sexuality**
Talk to them about normal sexual relationships. That it is something between two adults. That as people get older they will start to become attracted to other people of the opposite sex. When they meet someone they like and want to get married to, they do, and they can have sexual relationships to make a baby.

**Sex is something adults do, but not something that children do**
Your child may be curious about the entire subject of sexual relations. Explain to them that when people get older, they become sexual, which means they start to enjoy different kinds of physical contact with other people, [usually] of the opposite sex. They enjoy touching, hugging, and doing things with their different parts
with other people. People are only *supposed* to do this with other adults. Most people only want to do this with other adults. Children are not ready for it yet, nor do they like to do such things yet.

Sometimes, something will happen to a person that will mess this up. Instead of wanting to do this with other adults, something makes them want to do this with children. (If same sex abuse, sometimes it makes them want to do this with boys instead of girls; girls instead of boys)

**Sexual Play**
If you encounter the child engaging in sexual play, try not to make a big deal out of it. Redirect the child’s activities and have a personal calm but stern talk with the child about why such behavior is inappropriate. If sexual play persists, consult a psychiatrist to intervene. Ongoing sexual play is a sign that there are still unresolved issues your child has.

**Sexual Curiosity**
Answer it. After an incident of sexual abuse, you should answer any questions a child may have about sexuality. Yes, they may be graphic, and it may include more information than you might have otherwise wanted your child to know, but you have no choice. Helping the child to make sense of the situation is key to recovery, and any questions they have should be answered truthfully and honestly.

**Addressing fears**
Fears generally aren’t too common or severe in most cases of non-parental sexual abuse, but they certainly can happen.

**Find the cause of the fear**
There are several ways they could develop fears. They might have fears from the act of abuse itself, which could have been scary to them or painful. The fears might be from conditioning the molester used to keep them from telling. Pinpoint the exact nature of the fear, so that you can address it properly.

**Teach them how to be safe**
Counter any fears they have by teaching them how to be safe. Teach them how they can prevent this in the future. If they were threatened with harsh conditioning, teach them why they will always be safe with you to protect them.

**Stay Closer**
Stay closer to the child for a time afterwards until the fear subsides. Walk them to school if you hadn’t before. Take some time off work to spend some extra time with them. Don’t give them away to other people’s care for a while.

**Addressing Order**
Sexual abuse can oftentimes cause the child to question his or her role in life.

**It’s not your fault**
Make sure that the child understands that this is not his or her fault that this happened. They have nothing to be ashamed of and didn’t cause this to happen. It is the fault of the person that did this to them. Children cannot bring on this behavior. It is strictly up to the adult. Adults should not do this with children. All adults understand this and they should know better.

**One bad incident**
This is just one person who did a bad thing. They shouldn’t be afraid of all people, because most people are not like that. Sometimes there are bad people out there or people who do bad things because they can’t help themselves.
Addressing the specifics
As stated earlier in this book, there are many variables to what dictates the extent of damage an incident or incidences of sexual abuse can have on a child. This makes it important to find out specific details of the abuse and make sure that you treat each case appropriately. Find out specific words that were said. The particular threats or abusive language that took place. Find out how the child feels about the situation. If there is anything that is still bothering them about the abuse.

Distrust in adults
Make sure children understand that most adults are completely loving and would never do anything to harm a child. There are just a few bad apples out there, and unfortunately one of them got to them. Give them opportunities with adults you know well and trust to rebuild their faith. Emphasize all of the positive adult relationships they currently have.

Reinforce the child
Here are some things to reinforce to the child:

We still love you
The most important thing you can give your child during this time is extra love and attention. Your child needs to know that things are back to normal now. Your parents still love you, your family is still intact, etc. It is said that love conquers all ills, and when it comes to child abuse situations, this is more true than any other time.

You did the right thing by telling
Make sure children know that they did the right thing by telling. (Notice the difference, this is done only after a child voluntarily admits abuse, as noted earlier in this book, not as something to encourage them to report abuse.) They may be feeling guilty in some cases about telling. Guilty because they got someone they care about, (the molester) in trouble. Guilty that he or she did not do more to stop this from happening to begin with. Remind them that nothing is their fault. Their telling did not get their abuser in trouble. It was the actions of their abuser that got themselves in trouble. Remind them that they did what they were supposed to do. Children can’t always stop things like this from happening. The important thing is that you told your parents what was going on.

We’re proud of you
Explain to the child that even though something bad happened to them, they did exactly what they were supposed to, and that you are proud of them for doing so. Make sure they know that it took a lot of guts to come and tell you and that they did the right thing. Openly praise the child for making a good choice.

This is over, let’s move on
Explain to them that this is a bad incident in their life, but it is over, and things can get back to normal.

Let’s talk
Every night for the first couple of weeks, you should talk about what happened. Spend time discussing it, getting every detail out and simply listening and comforting your child, helping to put their world back in proper order.

⇒ Talk in depth about the perpetrator. Talk about the fun things they did together. Talk about why they liked each other. Talk about why you think the person did this. Talk about whether or not you think the person knew it was hurting them, or how much it might have hurt them. Talk about the reasons you think this person might have gotten this way. Just talk.
Talk about what the child was feeling during the abuse. What did they think was happening. Was it very uncomfortable for them, or did they not really mind it but weren’t exactly sure what was happening. What kind of discomfort did they feel.

Talk about why it was wrong. Get the child’s opinions and feelings as to why they think it was wrong. Then address what they have correct and what they might have incorrect.

Talk about other adult friends they have. Discuss what types of things they do with each other. Talk about how that is the same or different from the different types of things they did with the molester. Use this time to emphasize normal adult to child relationships.

Talk in a healing manner. Don’t condone the crime, but don’t bash the molester either. Talk about what things might have been like if this person didn’t have that problem. Talk about the good times they shared together and the bad. Talk about all the things you have going for you and how you can prevent such things in the future. Sit down with your child, and talk it over. Heal them. Do your best to explain and rationalize the situation, rationalize why the person did this, make sense of the situation in a way that will not throw everything they have come to know into chaos.

Get it out, and get it over with
Get back to ‘business as usual’ as soon as possible. Don’t get frantic, don’t make a big deal out of the situation. This does not mean that you simply brush it aside, or pretend it did not happen. It should be carefully dealt with ‘behind the scenes’ so to speak with a good psychologist. If adults around the child make a tremendous deal out of the situation, and constantly force the subject back onto the child, emphasizing the negatives, then that child is likely to pick up on the attitude and begin to view themselves as ‘damaged goods'.

We live in a society that likes to create drama for itself. We can’t even get enough drama in our own lives, we have to watch reality TV shows depicting other peoples childish drama. Having suffered more drama than I care to remember, I simply don’t understand this hunger for it.

Psychologists often make the mistake of wanting to draw everything out. People are a creation of their experiences. But understanding how experiences in the past may affect you does no good, if you are simply going to dwell in the past without moving on. There is only so much therapy can do. It is often a very valuable resource, and should be employed at first, but ongoing therapy sessions that simply hash out the incident over and over again are counter-productive.

Many psychologists would argue with this point. They would say that past trauma’s can only be overcome with years of extensive therapy. To get an objective view, you must realize that psychologists have a biased view. Although most are wonderful people, and all mean very well, whether they like to admit it or not, they don’t get paid when people get better. They get paid when people spend years and years in weekly therapy.

Several studies, such as Seligman (1994), have shown that drawing out the abuse with the use of therapy actually has extensive disadvantages, and can frequently do more harm than those without therapy. Bushman et al, 1999; Stocks, 1998; Loftus, 1997; Parr, 1996; Ofshe and Walters, 1994)

Sexual abuse should be countered effectively, but not simply drawn out for the sake of it. Therapy should be carefully applied and for specific reasons, not done simply for the sake of therapy. The role of it should be healing, not victimization mentality.
**The role of a psychologist**

If your child is truly sexually abused, you should definitely employ a psychologist to help with the treatment. However, it should be someone who is open to alternative means of in-home therapy as well.

Oftentimes, little or no face-to-face therapy can be the best. Psychologists do not necessarily need to be the only ones always dealing with your child. Finding a psychologist who is willing to work with you to help you overcome the abuse with your own child, and combat issues that will arise because of the abuse, is often the best.

Be aware of psychologists who tell you there has to be years of extensive therapy. This approach will only amplify the damage. It won’t do any more for helping to heal it. If you treat your child as a lifetime victim like this, they will become one. The only thing parents can’t overcome with love and a band-aid is the possibility of sexual side effects. You can’t deal with these until children’s sexuality comes alive anyway. Years of therapy after the incident in pre-pubescent children is simply a ploy to get you to spend your money, (or someone’s money, if it is covered through other programs) and does much more harm than it does good.

**Patterns for psychological help**

After the abuse is discovered, some traditional face-to-face therapy with a qualified child psychologist should occur. A few sessions within a month of the incident is best. After that, the psychologist should back off. This is when a psychologist should work with you behind the scenes to help you with any issues that come up, without having to throw the abuse back up to the surface every week for ‘therapy’. If you have a psychologist who is unable to work with this, we would suggest a new psychologist.

Around the time your child becomes pubescent, a few sessions of regular therapy should pick up again. This we are forced to leave up to the psychologist for how frequent and regular. If no signs of sexual side effects are suspected, it should just be a periodic check up throughout the teenage years. If there are signs of sexual side effects or deviancies, therapy should continue until they are taken care of.

If your child is OK through this point, stop your worrying. Your child will likely be one of the many who overcame the abuse easily, because it was discovered and treated.
Chapter 9

Becoming an Active Parent
“It is always much easier to hate and condemn, than it is to forgive and work towards understanding. In the history of the world, not a single tear has been dried through hate. Not a single conflict has been resolved through hate. Not a single injustice has been cured through hate. It’s been proven time and time again, that even a little understanding has been shown to cure all these things. So tell me, why do we continue attempting to resolve our societal problems through hate and condemnation?”
Get started protecting your children
So now that you are done with the book, let's get started! Hopefully, you have a much better understanding about the reality of sexual abuse. You don't have to be a child psychologist for this to work. You don't need to have every conversation with your child scripted or go exactly as planned. The quote from Edmund Burke listed earlier in this book, is especially true. The only thing necessary for molesters to win is for you to do nothing! If you do not work to counter what the abusers are doing, you cannot really expect to win, nor can you really blame anybody but yourself if something happens.

Teaching resources
During our trial phases of this book, we discovered an interesting flaw. After testing this book the initial time, we realized how many parents would read through the material, understand it, say “this makes sense”, but then weren't quite sure how to go about applying it. For this reason, we began work on the practical application to this book, ‘Children’s Stories for Abuse Prevention’. Also published by our organization, it is a compilation of children’s books, poems, and other resources that will go over every little detail of abuse prevention. We try to use these books in a fun and informative manner, so that your child can learn and you are spared difficulties in teaching this to your children. If you keep a copy of the books by your child’s bedside, and make a habit of reading just a couple of stories a week, you will be able to easily teach this information. Even if you feel comfortable in your ability to apply the concepts, we still recommend these books. Prevention involves psychology, and changing children’s perceptions and abilities over time. It is not something you can go over once and never touch again. Having these books as a resource makes it fun and easy for you to continually reinforce the concepts that children will need to defeat abuse.

We offer this material free to anyone interested on our website. We only ask that you use it and benefit from it. We want to stop child abuse right away. If you found this material interesting, then please let a friend know as well.

Contacting our organization
Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions, concerns, or to let us know how helpful this information was. Let us know if these programs either helped uncover abuse or helped to stop a potential occurrence. We’d love to hear about times our efforts were successful. It is such feedback that drives us to continue to perfect our programs. We also are aimed at stopping an ever changing problem. You never know, but what happened in your child’s case just might be something new we need to pass on to others.

We are also glad to answer any questions you might have or listen to suggestions on how you think our programs could be made better. You can get into contact with us in any of the following ways:

E-mail: support@keepyourchildsafe.org
Web Site: www.keepyourchildsafe.org
Mail: P.O. Box 559, Sedalia, CO, 80135-0559
FINAL COMMENTS

Sexual abuse in our society is a real problem and will only get worse with the internet influence. We have put together a guide and a complete package of material that you can use to help make your children abuse-proof. We offer prevention programs that provide realistic protection. Responsibility has to lie on the parents to use these tools to protect their kids and keep them from becoming a victim in the first place. We believe our program works and isn’t duplicated anywhere else.

Because the abuse problem is such a social epidemic, our society has overly reacted to it and we have created a world of mistrust where false abuse charges are rampant. Our justice system doesn’t really care that it serves out justice. Instead it is a competitive world of lawyers that feeds on taxpayer money, and is out of control. Too often, District Attorneys prosecute weak and unfounded cases because they don’t want to look weak to the voters in the next election, because they know their opponent will use any means to get elected. The justice system is this country is big business and accounts for a growing share of our expenses and in the end do nothing for the productivity of the nation.

I would estimate that as many as 1/3 to ½ of all cases that go to trial these days are false cases of abuse. It has become a scary world out there. Parents use false cases in custody battles. People make up false cases for lawsuit money. People make up false cases for revenge or to get back at somebody. Parents, through their own incompetence, create a false case of abuse because they do not understand the reality of suggestive memories in children. Every daycare is required by law to have insurance coverage and it’s out there for the taking by dishonest people. Insurance companies routinely settle out of court for tens of thousands of dollars, even without any proof of an injustice because they know that the jury system is unpredictable and court expenses are costly. I even had a parent threaten me with a false case of abuse when I turned her into collections over a $200.00 balance. Every teacher could be a pat on the backside away from life in prison.

It costs a person on average, $50-$250,000.00 to defend a case of sexual abuse. If they lose, they are likely to spend life in prison, or close to it. If they can’t afford the lawyer, they will likely make an easy conviction, as court appointed attorneys don’t have the time to do the research needed to defend a sexual abuse case, or uncover the truth, primarily because our society doesn’t fund the defense side of a trial as much as the prosecution side. After all, most people in our society believe that if you get arrested, you must have done something wrong, and you need to be put away, so why spend too much taxpayer money defending someone like that. Every year, we are destroying the lives of hundreds of people, simply because of a biased justice system. Let’s not lock up and throw away the key for every accused molester out there without adequate proof. Let’s keep our minds open to all the facts and use the “innocent until proven guilty” approach. The abuse problem is real but we don’t need to make it worse.

The punishment in most cases does not fit the crime. In many states, a simple charge of fondling is likely to net more prison time than many murderers will receive if convicted. Minimum sentencing laws have gotten out of hand. And once in the jail system, there is no attempt to counsel the offender so that they can be released later as a productive member of society. Around 90 percent of pedophiles released with treatment, will not re-offend. Instead they most often receive life sentences at taxpayer expense. The number of children killed by repeat drunk drivers are far, far more than the one killed by a repeat sexual offender. Should we start locking up first time drunk drivers and throwing away the key? We could save the child that one of them might kill later on.
The most seriously damaged children of sexual abuse, are kids who fall victims to parental offenders. The **only** way we will ever be able to help these children is through better treatment and understanding of the offender. No matter how hard we try, a child is unlikely to choose breaking up their home and sending their family into chaos over sexual abuse. They are not seeing it from the same perspective an adult would. The outcome after a child reports abuse is often just as damaging as the abuse itself. More children are damaged by rogue social workers every year than those we end up helping. Or did you really think that tearing a child from her family can be done without damaging long term effects? The best option, when a parent is abusive is not always to whisk the parent away, but to help overcome the abuse without destroying the family.

All the punishment in the world would not have prevented the Columbine massacre. Tougher penalties will not prevent future molestations. You can’t deter crimes such as drug addiction, alcohol abuse, or molestation through stricter punishment. Columbine might have been prevented through better awareness in the school and better counseling. We need to remember that ridicule and harassment during the teen years can have a severe and profound effect on behavior. By the same token, child molestation will only be stopped by better understanding of what makes a person commit this crime, and by helping would be offenders overcome their urges, or keep them in check. When I started my studies, I was convinced there was a biological or chemical reason for a pedophile’s urges. After years of research, I realized I was wrong. A common phrase that is frequently coined among many experts in sexual abuse is that “all molesters are childhood victims.” While not _every_ molester is a former victim, you can find underlying reasons in just about every molester’s life that are causing the deviancies. With the help of quality psychologists, and if the offender wants to, (which **most** do, not all) they can learn to control themselves, and possibly get rid of their urges. Let’s work together to bring about change in the rehabilitation of child abusers. **Until we learn how to treat offenders and how their urges develop, we cannot adequately counter the effects of malformed sexuality.** In effect, we can only take care of our children who are victimized today by learning more about how it occurs in the first place. We can then help them so that they do not become abusers themselves.

Parents are completely in charge of what happens to their child! Parents need to stop placing all of the blame on the offender. Parents can prevent abuse. It is time for parents to start taking responsibility for the protection of their children. Get involved. If you found this material helpful, please recommend it to a friend, and encourage them to apply it with their children. Work with your political representatives to take a sane approach to the problem. Take a stance that will save more children and be better for humanity in the long term. Please speak out to anyone you can to help control the content presented on the internet. You can be instrumental in preventing another person from developing sexual deviancies. Monitor your child’s internet activities. Use these materials to train your child to avoid sexual abuse. The program won’t destroy your child’s innocence any more than telling them to not cross the street without adult supervision. All we need is educated voices, so start by becoming a voice for abuse prevention reform yourself.

I think it is time we need to look within, and start to think seriously about the society we want for ourselves. Thanks again for caring about your children enough to read this material and we hope that you can raise your child without any problems from sexual abuse.
Much of the information contained in this book is based on our own online studies and interactions with pedophiles. Most figures contained within are listed by the most commonly accepted numbers and averages for sexual abuse, not any one particular study, as studies in this subject are inherently flawed and can provide conflicting results. The subject of sexual abuse is a widely contested subject, and we encourage all parents who would like more information to do as much research as they can. There are a variety of resources available on the web and in your local library. The more you learn, the more I’m sure you will agree with our methods and techniques, and the more you will begin to understand the realities of child molestation.

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