

Preventing child sexual abuse

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Video & Discussion Guide

Preventing child sexual abuse: Let's Talk About It — This 12 minute video features adult survivors of child sexual abuse from Hawai'i. They share their personal experiences of abuse and provide insights on how adults can protect children. The video also includes interviews with clinical psychologist Sherrie Takushi-Isara from the Sex Abuse Treatment Center and Detective Jim Maurer from the Honolulu Police Department, Sex Crimes Detail. They provide facts about this serious crime, explain how to respond if a child discloses sexual abuse, and highlight important prevention tips.

The video and discussion guide are tools for a group leader to use to share information about child sexual abuse with other **adults**. The group leader introduces the topic, plays the video and then leads a group discussion, using the questions in section III below. After group members answer each question, the leader can read the italicized responses to that question if those responses were not mentioned by the group.

NOTE: Prior to playing the video and leading the discussion, the group leader makes a copy of each of the 3 handouts (noted in the guide) for each participant. The leader distributes the handouts during the discussion where noted.

I. INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

Today we will be watching a video about child sexual abuse and discussing it. The goal is to educate ourselves about this serious crime and to learn how to better protect our children.

Sometimes people react emotionally to viewing this video or discussing child sexual abuse. I want you to know that after participating today, if you need information or support you can call the Sex Abuse Treatment Center's 24/7 hotline (524-7273).

II. PLAY THE VIDEO

III. LEAD DISCUSSION

- Initial Reactions to the Video-

What did you think of the video? First thoughts?

What parts of the video impacted you the most?

Any surprising or new information you learned?

-Telling about the Abuse-

Allicyn and Janelle, the child sexual abuse survivors in the video, kept their abuse a secret for many years. **Why is it so difficult for a child victim to tell someone about what happened?**

--The abuser usually has a relationship with the child; the child may not know how to talk about it or who to tell; the child may be anxious about telling because they are fearful they may be taken away from their home if the abuser is a family member, ashamed about what happened, or not sure they will be believed, etc.--

-All Children are at Risk-

While only female survivors of child sexual abuse are featured in the video, boys are also vulnerable to sexual abuse. **How common do you think child sexual abuse is?**

--While girls are more likely than boys to be abused, about 20% of all children will experience some form of sexual abuse by age 18. About 50% of those served by the Sex Abuse Treatment Center every year are minors, including boys and girls--

-Pay Attention to a Child's Behavior-

Monica (whose child Tina disclosed sexual abuse by her step-father) sensed a change in her daughter's behavior and was concerned about it. **What did Monica do?**

--Monica paid close attention to Tina's behavior and body language; she asked Tina questions about what was going on; she asked Tina how she was feeling, etc--

How did Monica respond when Tina disclosed she had been abused by her step-father?

--Monica stayed calm, told Tina she believed her, called the police--

-Believe the Child-

Monica told her daughter "I believe you" when Tina disclosed being sexually abused by her step-father. **How could the statement "I believe you" help a child victim?**

--It could make the child feel relieved, protected, reduce self-blame or shame associated with the abuse, provide the child the safety to tell the whole story, etc.--

**** Review Handout: How to Respond If a Child Discloses Sexual Abuse ****

-Warning Signs of Abusive Behavior-

In the video psychologist Sherrie Takushi-Isara and HPD Detective Jim Maurer discuss warning signs that a person may be at risk of sexually abusing a child and requires the parent to explore the situation further. **What were some of the warning signs that were mentioned in the video?**

--An adult or a teen who spends an unusual amount of time with a particular child for no apparent reason; a person wanting to spend time with a child or children without other adults present.--

**** Review Handout: Abuser Behavior: Common Warning Signs ****

-Stay Involved in a Child's Life-

In the video Janelle (who was sexually abused by an older neighborhood boy) talks about how important it is for parents to be involved in their child's life as a way to protect the child. **What are some things parents or other child caregivers can do to stay involved in their child's life?**

--Regularly ask their child about their activities and friends; ask them about their interactions and feelings toward adults or older children in their life and listen closely to what they have to say; whenever possible participate in/monitor their child's activities such as sports and church youth activities, recreational and enrichment program activities, etc.--

-Protect Children through Education-

Detective Maurer emphasized the importance of educating young children about personal safety. He spoke of talking to them about touching - good touches (e.g., holding hands), bad touches (e.g., being hit) and private or unsafe touching of a child's private parts (those areas covered by a bathing suit). **How could talking with your child about private/unsafe touching help keep them safe from sexual abuse?**

--The child would know about personal boundaries and that they can say "no" to unsafe touches; they could better identify abuse if they experienced it; they would know abuse shouldn't be kept a secret; they would feel more comfortable talking about private part touching with you or another adult if it happened to them, etc.--

**** Review Handout: *Talking to Your Child About Personal Safety* ****

IV. WRAP UP: SCHOOL & COMMUNITY EDUCATION

In the video Monica explained that Tina learned about personal safety (safe and unsafe touching) at school and that she thinks that helped Tina understand that what happened to her was wrong and that she could tell someone about it.

Staff from schools, churches and community organizations can be trained to teach children and teens about personal safety and how to develop healthy, respectful relationships. To find out more call The Sex Abuse Treatment Center at 535-7600.

*For more information visit www.satchawaii.org and click on
Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Toolkit*

...
24/7 Hotline: 808-524-7273

How to respond if a child DISCLOSES SEXUAL ABUSE

LISTEN.

A child may share their experience in detail or say little about the abuse. Try to avoid asking "why" questions because this can make the child feel as though they did something wrong.

BELIEVE THEM.

When a child discloses sexual abuse, believe what they say. It is often difficult for a child to talk about the abuse because the abuser is usually someone the child knows and trusted. The child may be fearful that they won't be believed or scared about what the abuser will do. Believing a child is the first step to their recovery.

STAY CALM.

You may experience strong feelings when you hear a child talk about being abused. Showing the child that you are calm will help ease their fears and make the experience of telling easier for them.

LET THEM KNOW THAT IT WASN'T THEIR FAULT.

Children often feel that the abuse was their fault because they didn't say no or tell the abuser to stop right away. Reassuring a child that it wasn't their fault relieves them of the burden of self-blame.

LET THINGS RETURN TO NORMAL.

After a child tells you about the abuse that happened to them, comfort them, take action to ensure their safety and let them return to their normal activities as much as possible. Focusing on the abuse or continual questioning can further traumatize them.

ACCESS HELP.

For information, support and treatment services call *The Sex Abuse Treatment Center's 24/7 crisis hotline: 524 -7273.*

Abuser Behavior: COMMON WARNING SIGNS

In over 90% of child sexual abuse cases, the abuser is someone the child knows and trusts. You can help keep a child safe from sexual abuse by monitoring the relationships a child has with the adults and older minors in their life.

While the following behaviors may not necessarily mean a person is sexually abusive, they are important indicators that steps need to be taken to ensure the child in question is not at risk.

AN ADULT OR OLDER YOUTH WHO:

- ✓ insists on physical contact with a child (e.g., hugging, rubbing, kissing, tickling) even when the child appears uncomfortable or says no;
- ✓ seeks emotional or physical comfort from a child instead of turning to another adult or someone their own age;
- ✓ frequently arranges playtimes or outings for children or youth and doesn't invite or encourage adults to participate;
- ✓ actively pursues baby sitting opportunities at no charge and/or gives certain children or youth gifts or money for no clear reason;
- ✓ shows inappropriate interest in children's bodies or genitals (e.g. talks about a child's developing body, takes photos of nude or semi-nude children or youth); and
- ✓ exposes children or youth to sexual talk and/or shows them sexually explicit photos or videos.

*If you are concerned that a child has been sexually abused or is at risk of being abused, **call The Sex Abuse Treatment Center's 24/7 hotline at 524-7273.***



Talking to your child

ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY

As a parent or other caregiver there are things you can do to help keep your child safe from sexual abuse. Children as young as 3 or 4 years old can be taught basic messages and rules about personal safety – keeping their private parts safe.

Over 90% of child victims are sexually abused by someone they have a relationship with (e.g. a family member, neighbor, babysitter, staff member of a youth serving organization). Many children do not report the sexual abuse because of shame, confusion and manipulation by the abuser. However, if a caring adult talks to a child about unsafe, secret touching and what to do if it ever happens to them, that child if abused is much more likely to tell someone and get help.

HELPFUL GUIDELINES:

- ✓ **Before talking to your child** about personal safety, prepare by reviewing the Key Messages below. Decide how and what you'd like to cover.
- ✓ **Set time aside to talk to your child** or look for ways to weave the conversation into everyday activities– bath time, changing clothes, doctor visits, during car drive time, etc.
- ✓ **Be matter of fact and calm** as you speak with your child. A serious, fearful tone may scare your child or convey to him or her that there is something wrong or bad about their body.
- ✓ **You can refer to genitals as “private parts”** (the parts covered by a bathing suit) or better yet use the accurate terms (vagina, penis, breasts). Using these terms conveys to your child that you are comfortable talking about their body and personal safety and it gives your child the vocabulary to use should they need to report abuse.
- ✓ **Use “What if” scenarios** to ensure your child understands what to do should they experience unsafe touching (refer to “Key Messages” below). For example say, “What if a grown-up touched your breasts and asked you to keep it a secret, what would you do?” Or “If someone touched your body and it made you feel uncomfortable or confused, what would you do?”
- ✓ **Talk about this topic more than once.** Revisit it periodically, adjusting the language and approach to be more age appropriate as your child gets older.

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

✓ Your body belongs to you.

✓ No one should touch your private parts unless it's to keep you healthy.

(health related examples: a doctor examines a child's genitals; a child asks for help cleaning a hard-to-reach place, such as his or her lower back or bottom). Private parts: areas covered by a bathing suit; penis, vagina, breasts, bottom.

✓ It's okay to say "no" to showing or touching of private parts. If it happens to you, it's not your fault.

✓ Touching should never be a secret.

✓ If someone asks you to keep a secret about touching you should tell me or another grown-up right away.

✓ You can always talk to me – about someone touching your private parts or anything else that bothers you.

Pay Attention To The People In Your Child's Life:

- Screen babysitters or other adults who spend one-on-one time with your child. Drop in unexpectedly during their time together.
- Ask your child for details regarding their activities with the adults and older children in their life - ask them how they feel about spending time with them and listen closely to what they have to say.
- Visit and monitor your child's activities whenever possible (e.g., sports and church youth activities, recreational and enrichment program activities, sleepovers, campouts).

Helpful Websites:

www.stopitnow.org

www.darkness2light.com

www.kidpower.org

OLDER CHILDREN & TEENS

Keep the lines of communication open and supportive with your older child or teen. This will encourage them to share with you what is going on in their life and what may be bothering them, including sexual abuse.

Periodically check in with your child about the peers, teachers, coaches, and other adults in their life, and listen closely to what they have to say.

Talk about the qualities of safe, healthy peer relationships (e.g., trust; honesty; mutual respect in language and behavior, free of pressure, threats or intimidation).

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUTH:

- ✓ You deserve to be safe and respected in your relationships.
- ✓ Anyone who tries to pressure or force you into any form of sexual activity is an unsafe person.
- ✓ Sexual activity without mutual consent is a crime.
- ✓ Respect a “no” when another person doesn’t want to engage in physical or sexual contact or communication (including texts, e-mails, photos).
- ✓ No one has the right to sexually harass or abuse another person no matter what that person is doing or wearing.

Helpful Websites:

These sites help young people identify abusive partners, learn how to protect themselves, and establish safe and rewarding relationships.

www.loveisrespect.org

www.giverespect.org

www.teenluresprevention.com