



Kinship Link

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April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

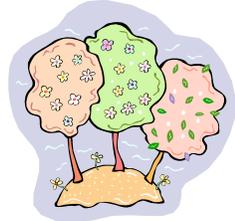
Pro Kinship for Kids

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When we help children do better today, we all do better tomorrow! The expression “children are our future” has been around for quite some time and is never more true than now. We know that child development is a foundation for community and economic development, as capable children grow to become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable society. We also know that the basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues through adulthood. The interactions a child has in his or her home, school, and community become part of this intricate brain architecture. Toxic stress, such as neglect or abuse, damages the developing brain and leads to problems in learning, and behavior, and increased susceptibility to physical and mental illness.

What is child abuse? Child abuse is any maltreatment of a child that results in harm or injury. Child abuse includes: **Physical abuse** - an injury to a child that is not an accident, for example, hurting a child by hitting, burning, biting, or shaking. **Sexual abuse** -

any sexual contact with a child, including exhibitionism, photographs or films, or prostitution. **Physical neglect** - failure to give the child food, clothing, medical care, shelter, or supervision. **Emotional abuse or neglect** - an abusive parent may scare a child by threatening to leave him or her, or may be severely critical. A neglectful parent may not spend any time with the child or may never show the child any affection. A neglectful parent may not provide enough food or medical attention.

Know the warning signs of abuse. Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs. Please pay attention to the treatment of children around you. You may be a child’s only lifeline to safety. Child abuse is everyone’s business. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call child protective services at Family Services.

General signs of abuse are present in children who seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults
- Reluctant to go home

- (for example, coming to school early or staying late)
- Very passive and withdrawn - or aggressive and disruptive
- Tired a lot or complaining of nightmares or insomnia
- Fearful and anxious
- To show sudden changes in behavior or school performances

- Some signs of physical abuse:
- Unexplained burns, bruises, black eyes, or other injuries
 - Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker
 - Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school

- Some signs of sexual abuse:
- Difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area
 - Sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for age
 - Running away from home

- Some signs of physical neglect:
- Missing school a lot
 - Begging/stealing money or food

Child Abuse Prevention continued

- Lacking needed medical or dental care
- Being frequently dirty
- Using alcohol or other drugs
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of them

Some signs of emotional abuse or neglect:

- Acting overly mature or immature for age
- Extreme changes in behavior
- Delays in physical or emotional development
- Attempted suicide
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent

You should also consider the possibility of abuse if a parent or caregiver shows the following signs. Signs of an

abusive adult:

- Seems unconcerned about the child's welfare at school or at home
- Denies problems at school or at home, or blames the child for them
- Sees the child as worthless or as a burden
- Avoids discussing the child's injuries or gives conflicting explanations for them
- Seems isolated from other parents, and school and community activities
- Uses harsh physical discipline or asks other caretakers to use it
- Depends on the child for emotional support
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- Seems indifferent to the child
- Seems secretive or tries to isolate the children from other

children

- Frequently blames, belittles, or insults the child

These signs don't prove that a child is being abused. However, they could be a sign that the child and his or her family needs help. Work with them to get the help they need to be a better, supportive family.

Overall, the ability to change brain architecture and behavior decreases over time, so getting it right early is less costly, to society and individuals, than trying to fix it later. This is why we need to support families as a whole community. For when we help children do better today, we all do better tomorrow!!



What are the Factors that Protect a Family in Stress?

Protective factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. They are attributes that serve as buffers, helping parents who might otherwise be at risk of abusing their children to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. These protective factors are key to all families in dealing with family issues that arise when under stressful situations.

The five protective factors are:

1. **Nurturing and attachment.** Building a close bond helps parents better understand, respond to, and communicate with their children. A child's early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development. When parents and children have strong, warm feelings for one another, children develop trust that their parents will provide what they need to thrive, including love, acceptance, positive guidance, and protection.
2. **Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development.** Discipline is both more effective and more nurturing when parents know how to set and enforce limits and encourage appropriate behaviors

based on the child's age and level of development. Parents who understand how children grow and develop can provide an environment where children can live up to their potential. Child abuse and neglect are often associated with a lack of understanding of basic child development or an inability to put that knowledge into actions. Timely mentoring, coaching, advice, and practice may be more useful to parents than information alone in these instances.

3. **Parental Resilience.** Resilience is the ability to handle everyday stressors and recover from occasional crises. Parents who are emotionally resilient have a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, effectively address challenges, and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children. In addition, these parents are aware of their own challenges - for example, those arising from inappropriate parenting they received as children - and accept help and/or counseling when needed.
4. **Social Connections.** Evidence links social isolation and perceived lack of support to child maltreatment. Trusted and caring family and friends provide emotional support to parents by offering encouragement and

assistance in facing the daily challenges of raising a family. Supportive adults in the family and the community can model alternative parenting styles and can serve as resources for parents when they need help.

5. **Concrete Supports for Parents.** Many factors beyond the parent-child relationship affect a family's ability to care for their children. Parents need basic resources such as food, clothing, housing, transportation, and access to essential services that address family-specific needs (such as child care and health care) to ensure the health and well-being of their children. Some families may also need support connecting to social services such as alcohol and drug treatment, domestic violence counseling, or public benefits. Providing or connecting families to the concrete supports that families need is critical. These combined efforts help families cope with stress and prevent situations where maltreatment could occur, because parents are better able to attend to their role as a parent.

All these factors working together build the foundation for a strong family in any time and type of stressful situation