



Mission: To restore dignity, trust, and hope to children traumatized by sexual abuse.

What to Say When You Suspect Abuse - Tip #1

Before you ask:

- Earn, don't assume, the child's trust. Be honest, informative, and respectful to the child.
- Give the child permission to talk to you about anything uncomfortable, confusing or threatening:
"I talk with a lot of kids about problems they may have. Sometimes kids tell me about things that have happened to them that they don't like or that make them feel weird or uncomfortable. Often it's hard for children to tell someone because they are afraid of getting in trouble or that no one will believe them. I want you to know that it's okay to talk to me if something like this has happened to you."

What to Say When You Suspect Abuse - Tip #2

Asking the question: listen and look, don't lead

- Talk in a quiet, private place
- Sit and speak at the child's level
- Keep the information confidential (inform only those who need to know).
- Be honest: tell the child why you are concerned.
"I'm worried about you because of all the marks I see on your back. Can you tell me how this happened?" OR "what happens when you get in trouble at home?"
(If they say "spankings," follow-up and find out what they are spanked with- a hand, a belt, a cord, etc.)
"You have been asking a lot of good questions about infections and private parts. Has anything happened that makes you more worried about these things?"

What to Say When You Suspect Abuse - Tip #3

When a child discloses abuse:

- Be open, receptive, and supportive...NOT judgmental, analytical, shocked or surprised.
- Ask open-ended questions:
Ask: "What happened to your arm?"
NOT: "Did Daddy hurt your arm?"
- Make no assumptions about what the child is saying; ask for clarification.
- Verify information by repeating the child's words back to them; do not paraphrase or interpret what is said.
- Some children may prefer to write rather than say what happened.
- Ask for only minimum information required to report and make any immediate safety plans, i.d. WHO the abuser is, WHEN it happened (or most recent event), and WHAT the abuse involved (hitting with an object, sexual contact, etc.)
- Thank the child for talking to you. Acknowledge their feelings and their fears, however different they may be from your own feelings (they may still love the abuser!)
- Tell the child your plan (who you are going to call and what you are going to do).
- DON'T make promises you can't keep.

If You Suspect Abuse

1. If you suspect child sexual abuse, call Child Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400 or local law enforcement.
2. Write down what you asked and what the child said (exact words) as soon as possible
3. Ask the child if they feel safe going home (when appropriate) and if concerned for the child's safety, call Child Protective Services.

If you think the child may need an immediate medical evaluation for injury assessment or a forensic examination, call your regional children's hospital or ChildSafe for further advice.

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