



How to Respond When You Suspect Your Child Has Been Sexually Abused?

If your child makes a disclosure about being sexually abused:

Remain calm.

Overreacting can frighten your child or prevent your child from telling more.

Emphasize that your child did the right thing by telling.

Say, *"I'm glad you told,"* And, *"I'm proud of you"*.

Stress that your child is not to blame.

Say, *"It wasn't your fault"*, and relay that your child will not be in trouble for telling.

Do not talk negatively about the suspect in front of your child.

These situations can be very confusing to a child, especially if the abuser was someone they love, talking negatively in front of them could cause stress and confusion.

Try to document your conversation.

Write down the entire conversation, capturing the child's exact words as closely as possible.

Call the child abuse hotline immediately!

At **503-378-6704** or your local law enforcement agency. You can report the incident anonymously, and you do not need proof to make a report.

Leave the investigating to the authorities.

It is important to let the authorities handle any investigation. Don't confront the suspected abuser or allow others to do so.

Keep your child safe from the suspect.

Seek legal counsel if necessary. You may need to find out if it is possible to take legal steps to ensure your child only has supervised visits with the person of concern, to determine whether contact can be stopped entirely, or to see whether there is some other legal recourse to keep your child safe.

Do not talk about the abuse to others or look up Internet information in front of your child.

Talking or reading specifically about the suspected abuse where your child can hear you or see can be overwhelming for your child and may compromise any legal investigations that take place.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If your child has pain or injury in the genital area, get medical help right away through your child's doctor!

If you suspect abuse but your child has not disclosed:

Tell your child that you are available to talk about any worries he or she may have. Emphasize that your child will not be in trouble for anything he or she tells you

Read a book together that teaches touching rules and invite your child to respond.

-Good book choices for preschoolers:

My Body Belongs To Me, available at Liberty House

It's My Body, by Lori Freeman

-For school age:

My Body is Private, by Linda Walvoord Girard

A Very Touching Book, by Jan Hindman.

Ask your child only neutral questions.

Neutral questions are questions such as “*Do you know anyone who has broken the touching rules?*”

Avoid asking leading or suggestive questions such as, “*Did your uncle touch you?*” and avoid engaging in repeated questioning, like saying, “*Who hurt you?*” over and over again.

You can set up counseling for your child.

It is important to let your child’s counselor know about your concerns.

Ways to Help Yourself:

Get support for yourself.

Liberty House can provide family support and referrals to other agencies to help both parents and children.

Stay consistent.

It is important that your and your child’s lives stay as normal or consistent as possible. The exceptions to this are any changes that need to be made to ensure your child’s safety.

Recognize the strength in your child.

Children are remarkably resilient. In fact, children often bounce back more quickly from adverse situations than do adults. If you can recognize the resilience in your child, can provide supportive resources such as counseling should your child need this, and can continue to keep your child safe, the long-term effects of the abuse are more likely to be greatly reduced.

Contact Liberty House with Questions.

The mission of Liberty House is to provide support to children and families when there are concerns of abuse. We offer families information about abuse, can help direct families to appropriate resources for themselves and their children, and may be able to schedule an evaluation of the child.

Helpful Websites:

State of Oregon Sex offender Inquiry System, <http://sexoffenders.oregon.gov/>

Oregon Abuse Advocates & Survivors in Service, <http://oaasisoregon.org/>

Oregon Youth Soccer Child Sexual Abuse Contact Information for Related Organizations, <http://www.oregonyouthsoccer.org/about/childsexualabusepreventionresourcealist.aspx>