

Child Sexual Abuse

...If you want your child to tell
you that something happened...

BELIEVE IT.



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS EPIDEMIC

Official Federal Government statistics tell us that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 10 boys in Nigeria experience sexual violence before the age of 18 years.

Childhood sexual abuse is a major issue in our society which affects boys, girls, men and women from every tribe, culture, gender, socioeconomic, and religious background with far reaching implications for both survivor and society. It can happen to anyone.

The abusers also come in all shapes and sizes and from any part of the society. They are often people who the child knows, loves, trusts, and who have regular, legal and easy access to the children.

A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual acts by an adult or older youth that has power over them. Child Sexual Abuse exists in many forms including touching and non-touching activities (pornography, communicating in a sexual manner, exposure of sexual parts);

Touching activities may include:

- *Fondling of genitals or breast*
- *Oral, vaginal or anal intercourse*
- *Penetration can be by genitals, fingers or object.*

The abuser may use physical abuse, bribery,

threats, tricks or take advantage of a younger child's lack of knowledge. When these acts occur within a family, the sexual abuse is called incest.

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY

- Teach your children which body parts are private (parts covered by a bathing suit) and the proper names of those parts.
- Give your children permission to say "no" to any unwanted or confusing touch
- Help your children decide whom they can tell if someone touches them in a bad or confusing way. For example, Mummy, Daddy, School Teacher, Sunday School Teacher could be this "safe" person.
- Teach your children that they have the right to trust their own feelings and to ask questions when they are uncomfortable.

WHAT IF?

Play 'what if' games with your children to help them know what to do in a variety of situations. After each question ask "what will you do"? "Whom will you tell"?

What if:

- *Someone was following you after school?*
- *Your friend's older brother always touched you when you did not want him to?*
- *An aunt was kissing you and you didn't like it?*
- *You saw a man with his zipper pulled down and his penis (or whatever name the child uses) sticking out?*

GOOD, BAD & CONFUSING TOUCHES

Make a list with your child of good, bad and confusing touches:



- *Good touches are those touches that make us feel happy, safe and loved (hugging, holding hands)*
- *Bad touches are those touches that hurt us, they feel like an ouch (hitting, biting, pushing).*
- *Confusing touches don't necessarily hurt and sometimes can feel good (pinching, kissing someone you don't want to kiss, tickling until it hurts, forced or tricked touching of private body parts).*

IF YOUR CHILD TELLS YOU THAT SOMETHING HAPPENED – LISTEN AND BELIEVE THEM

Disclosure occurs when a child tells another person that he or she has been sexually abused. This is a very difficult and traumatic thing for a child to do and it takes some children weeks, months or years to make a disclosure. Global statistics have revealed that:

1. Girls are more likely to disclose than boys.
2. School aged children tend to tell a caregiver.
3. Adolescents are more likely to tell friends.
4. Very young people often accidentally reveal abuse because they don't have much understanding of what occurred or the words to explain.
5. Children are often very reluctant to talk about being sexually abused because of:
 - *Fear that the abuser may hurt them or hurt their families*
 - *Fear that they will not be believed or will be blamed and get in to trouble*
 - *Fear that their parents will be angry and get upset.*
 - *Fear that their disclosure will disrupt the family if the abuser is a family member or friend.*
 - *Fear that they will be taken away and separated from their families.*

I BELIEVE YOU...

What to do:

If the child has taken a bold step to disclose sexual abuse, the child has taken a huge risk in telling you. Give attention, compassion and belief.

1. Offer support. Listen calmly and gently. If you overreact, the child is likely to feel more ashamed and shut down.
2. Say **“I believe you”**
3. Don't rush to get the whole story. Ask open ended questions like **“What happened next?”; “It's ok to tell me more”; “You can tell me whatever you want”**.
4. Reassure the child. Say **“Whatever happened is not your fault”; This takes a lot of courage and I am proud of you for telling me”; “It's my job to protect you”**.
5. Don't promise the child that the information will be kept confidential
6. Get help immediately. Phone our FREE Child Helpline **(08008008001)** or report to the nearest Police with a Family Support Unit or the Child Protection Department of your State.

