

Keeping Kids Safer

A guidebook for parents and caregivers
to help keep children safer from abuse



PUBL270-12



Acknowledgements

Keeping Kids Safer has been adapted from the project ***No Excuse for Abuse!***, which was developed by the Safer Streets Trust now known as the Young New Zealanders' Foundation, with funds donated by the New Zealand community.

Police would especially like to acknowledge the work of Sandy Mills, the author of the original text. They would also like to thank all those who were involved in the consultation and trials of the material.

The materials were adapted for use by Police Youth Education Service.

Keeping Kids Safer

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Printed by Blue Star

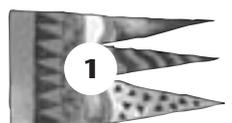
ISBN 978-0-477-10357-2

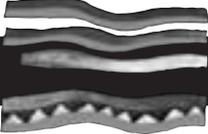
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First published 2002

Republished 2012

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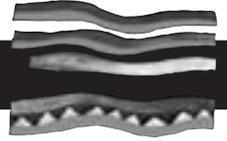




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Introduction



Keeping Kids Safer is a guide book for parents and caregivers that will help them keep their children safe from abuse and violence. It is part of the child abuse family violence prevention programme ***Keeping Ourselves Safe*** used by many schools.

Parents have good reason to be concerned about New Zealand's poor record of protecting children from abuse. In the year ending 30 June 2011, Child, Youth and Family received around 150,000 reports of concern. This number more than doubled in five years, and speaks volumes about people's increased awareness of child abuse, and willingness to report their concerns.

Of the 150,000 reports, nearly 58,000 required follow-up work from social workers, with around 22,000 cases resulting in a substantiated finding of abuse.

Abuse can happen to any child. It is not bound by race, gender, wealth, location or family composition.

Keeping Kids Safer is a guide book to help parents and caregivers keep their children safe from all forms of abuse. It provides information about abuse, suggestions as to how you can help your children avoid abuse, what you should do if you think your child has been abused and where you can find further information and help.

It is also important that you support the teaching of ***Keeping Ourselves Safe*** at your child's school. This means talking to the teachers about teaching it in an ongoing way. For example, many schools teach it every second year. It also means going to the parent meetings that are held and making sure that you help your child with any home tasks that are set. Talk to your child about what they learnt at school and reinforce these messages at home.

No one has the right to make abuse and neglect the way of life for any children. Reading this guide book will be one step you can take towards preventing it.

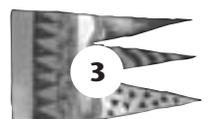
A New Zealand Perspective

Nobody really knows exactly how much child abuse, such as sexual or physical abuse or neglect, goes on in the community because a lot of it is hidden and not reported. Research suggests that about one in four girls experience some form of sexual abuse by age 16. We also know that boys are regularly abused as well. While most abusers are men, statistics show that women can also be abusers.

It is important that child abuse is reported so that it can be properly dealt with. To assist with this, Police have established Child Protection Teams and work alongside Child, Youth and Family.

Abuse and neglect need to be treated seriously because their effects can be seriously harmful and may last a lifetime. It is very important that suspected abuse is reported so that it can be stopped, the offender brought to justice and the healing process started for the child or young person.

As one response to abuse in the 1980s, the New Zealand Police decided that schools would be a good place to provide ***Keeping Ourselves Safe*** programmes for primary, intermediate and secondary schools.



Parents sometimes may not have the information they need to help children to stay safe and/or they may be reluctant to discuss personal safety issues with their children for fear of causing distress. Schools are places where children can be educated about abuse safely, with teachers who know them well and who are trained to handle disclosures that may arise. It is important that this work is done in partnership with parents, carers and other adults who interact with children.

Note: In this booklet the term 'children' refers to a son or daughter of any age. Parents reading the material could have children of any age from babies to 18 year olds. In legal terms, a child is under 14 years of age and a young person is over 14 years and younger than 17 years.

About **Keeping Ourselves Safe**

- **Keeping Ourselves Safe** is a personal safety programme which aims to provide children and young people with the skills to cope with situations that might involve abuse.
- The programme was developed by Police and Education, in consultation with a wide range of community groups.
- **Keeping Ourselves Safe** is for very young children in early childhood centres and students at primary, intermediate and secondary schools. Different programmes have been prepared for different age groups so that at each level of their schooling children and young people learn new skills to keep themselves safer with other people. The programmes are:

Knowing What to Do	Ages 5-7	School Years 0-3
Getting Help	Ages 8-10	School Years 4-6
Standing up for Myself	Ages 11-12	School Years 7-8
Building Resiliency	Ages 13-17	School Years 9-13

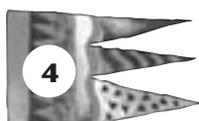
Your local Police Education Officer (PEO) introduces **Keeping Ourselves Safe** to your school and helps teachers prepare for teaching. PEOs provide all the teaching materials the centre or school needs. Your child's teacher then delivers the programme. The PEO will attend the parent meeting and may be invited to participate in some learning experiences or lessons. The teacher is the person most likely to notice a child or young person who needs help. However, children may disclose abuse to the PEO, if they feel this person will be able to do something to help.

Your child's school will advise you when **Keeping Ourselves Safe** is to be taught. Parents are an important part of **Keeping Ourselves Safe**. You will be invited to a meeting at the school before teaching starts. This will be a chance to find out more and to get your questions answered. The teacher will tell you ways that you can reinforce messages at home and talk to your child about what they are learning. At the end of the programme you will be asked to give feedback on what you thought about **Keeping Ourselves Safe**. This will help the Police to keep making improvements to the programme.

Links between **Keeping Ourselves Safe** and **Keeping Kids Safer**

Keeping Kids Safer is the parent component of **Keeping Ourselves Safe**. The **Keeping Kids Safer** booklet is given to parents and caregivers of children in School Years 0-3 who are doing **Keeping Ourselves Safe** for the first time. If you have older children you can request copies from your local Police Education Officer. Alternatively you could access the booklet on the website www.police.govt.nz/service/yes

The Police Youth Education Service recommends that parents and caregivers read **Keeping Kids Safer** carefully and work through the activities with family and friends.



Doing More

More abuse prevention activities that you can do with your child are available from the Young New Zealanders' Foundation. You can access these on the web site: www.youngnz.org.nz. Alternatively you can purchase a CD directly from the Foundation.

Young New Zealanders' Foundation, PO Box 27 250, Wellington 6141
Email: info@youngnz.org.nz Telephone: 0800 22 77 32

Important Note: Abuse is a difficult subject for many people to talk about. It is especially hard for those who have been victims of abuse in the past. If this applies to you, it may be helpful for you to talk about your abuse with a trusted person or counsellor, or to seek help from one of the agencies listed on page 19.

What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is defined in Section 2 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 as the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.

Child abuse has generally been classified into the following categories. It should be noted, however, that in any one case it may be quite likely that more than one type of abuse is involved. Sometimes children will show the impact of abuse in different ways.

- **Emotional abuse:** The child's emotional and physical development may be restricted because of the way they are treated by adults. Examples include persistent verbal abuse, denigration, active rejection, put downs, or lack of love and support. It can sometimes be difficult to see the immediate effect of emotional abuse.

- **Neglect:** Neglect is the failure to provide a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs or to protect a child from harm or potential harm. Neglect can occur as an isolated incident, a series of incidents or it can be a continuous state.

- **Physical abuse:** This is generally non-accidental injury to the child or young person.. Examples include bruising, burning, scalding, breaking bones, biting, or hitting with objects such as electric jug cords.

- **Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse is any act where an adult or a more powerful person uses a child or young person for a sexual purpose. This may be consensual or not, and can happen within or outside the family. Most sexual abuse is done by someone the child knows and trusts.

- **Family violence:** Family violence covers a broad range of controlling behaviours, commonly of a physical, sexual, and/or psychological nature that typically involves fear, intimidation and emotional deprivation. It occurs within a variety of close interpersonal relationships, such as between partners, parents and children, siblings, and in other relationships where significant others are not part of the physical household but are part of the family and/or are fulfilling the function of family.

Even witnessing family violence can be very distressing for children and cause them harm.

Opinions about Child Abuse

Challenging some commonly-held opinions on child abuse or neglect

The following statements are for you to think about and to decide if you agree with them or not. You could discuss them with family, friends or other groups that you meet with.

Put a mark somewhere along the line between **Strongly Agree** and **Strongly Disagree**, to show what you think about the statement.

1. *Abuse only happens in poor or criminal families.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**
2. *It is reasonable to punish bad behaviour by using a stick to spank a child hard to teach him or her a lesson.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**
3. *Your children will be safe if you tell them never to go anywhere with strangers.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**
4. *It is important to teach children to use the correct terms for genitals.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**
5. *It is reasonable to leave children as young as 11 years old on their own, or to use them as babysitters.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**
6. *Children almost always tell the truth about abuse.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**
7. *Sexual abuse is the most damaging form of abuse.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**
8. *What goes on in our house is nobody else's business.*
Strongly Agree _____ **Strongly Disagree**

Factors Which Shape Opinions

After completing the previous section above, you may like to consider some of the following ideas as you discuss your opinions about child abuse with your family, friends or other groups you belong to.

1. *Abuse only happens in poor or criminal families.*
Child abuse and neglect occur in all cultures, races, and socio-economic groups. No sector of the community is protected from abuse.
2. *It is reasonable to punish bad behaviour by using a stick to spank a child hard to teach him or her a lesson.*
Parents or carers can use reasonable force to prevent or minimise harm to the child or another person, or to prevent the child from engaging in criminal offences or in offensive or disruptive behaviour. The law also allows the everyday tasks that require parents to use reasonable force when interacting with their children (for

example when changing nappies or securing a child in a car seat).

However section 59(2) of the Crimes Act 1961 says that force cannot be used to correct or punish a child.

Section 59(4) of the Crimes Act 1961 confirms that Police have the discretion not to prosecute complaints of child assaults when the force used against the child is considered so inconsequential that there is no public interest in a prosecution. However, using any article (including a stick) as a weapon is most likely to lead to prosecution.

3. *Your children will be safe if you tell them never to go anywhere with strangers.*

Research shows that most children are abused by people they know and trust. These can be family members, close family friends, or members of groups or clubs that children belong to. This can lead to denial on the part of parents and caregivers when a child reports abuse. The old idea of 'stranger danger' is not helpful. Also, children may have to ask someone they don't know for help.

The chances of your child being harmed by a stranger are very remote.

4. *It is important to teach children to use the correct terms for genitals.*

It is important to use correct terms for the genitals, such as penis, vagina and vulva, just as correct names are used for other parts of the bodies. Calling these parts by pet names, not referring to them at all, or telling children it is 'dirty' to talk about them, can make children think about genitals in a negative way, and make them reluctant to tell others. If they ever need to report abuse, or tell a doctor where they are sore, it is important that they can use the correct words.

5. *It is reasonable to leave children as young as 11 on their own or use them as babysitters.*

In New Zealand it is illegal to leave a child under 14 years without reasonable supervision or care (Section 10B Summary Offences Act 1981). The question of whether the lack of supervision is reasonable or not, is considered on a case by case basis. It asks the question, "Having regard to all the circumstances, was the period of time that the child was left unsupervised reasonable?"

If you have to leave your children alone for some reason, you must think carefully about the following things to help you decide if the child has reasonable supervision and care:

- the age and ability of the child you leave in charge
- if there is someone older nearby who can be called to assist
- how long you will be gone
- the time of day you will be away
- if you have made a plan for how the child can contact you or another adult, and the child is able to do this
- any risks in the home.

6. *Children almost always tell the truth about abuse.*

Believe what children tell you, it is usually true. Children can only describe events within their own experience. Explicit descriptions of sexual or physical abuse will very rarely have come from books, television or from overhearing conversations (Unsinger et al 1993¹).

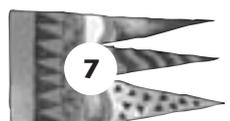
7. *Sexual abuse is the most damaging form of abuse.*

All child abuse is damaging. Children rarely forget. Survivors of child abuse can experience distress and suffering which may last a lifetime.

8. *What goes on in our house is nobody else's business.*

If there is abuse in your home or in the home of a friend or relative, you may need help from someone outside your home, such as an external agency. See a list of agencies that may be of assistance on page 19. We all need to take action to get help and prevent abuse.

1 Unsinger, P.C. et al, 1993. *Child Abuse-Everybody's Problem*. Police Headquarters, Wellington.



How Do You See It?

Below are some statements for you to discuss with your spouse, partner or any other adult at home. If you can, discuss them with other adults who come to your home and interact with your children. This way the messages you are giving your child about abuse and neglect will be reaffirmed.

Answer the following statements by circling either **T** (TRUE) or **F** (FALSE).

1. *Teaching a child abuse prevention programme to young children is going to frighten them.* **T/F**
2. *Children with disabilities are more likely to be sexually abused than other children.* **T/F**
3. *Neglect is nowhere near as serious as sexual abuse.* **T/F**
4. *Personal safety education programmes can significantly help reduce the incidence of child abuse.* **T/F**
5. *A school should have a child abuse prevention policy available for parents to look at.* **T/F**
6. *The majority of people who abuse children have a major mental illness.* **T/F**
7. *Boys are at less risk of sexual abuse than girls.* **T/F**
8. *In New Zealand, some traders in Internet child pornography are teenagers.* **T/F**
9. *When sexual abuse is committed by a young person, it is less damaging than when perpetrated by an adult.* **T/F**

Answers

1. *Teaching a child abuse prevention programme to children is going to frighten them.* **FALSE**

Often this is just the perception of the parents and caregivers, not the children. Child abuse prevention education should be covered in a matter of fact way. We teach children about water safety, safety on the roads, sun safety and so we should teach them about safety with other people. This is done in a positive way, in a safe supportive class or centre environment.

2. *Children with disabilities are more likely to be sexually abused than other children* **TRUE**

Children with disabilities are up to seven times more likely to suffer sexual abuse than non-disabled children..

3. *Neglect is nowhere near as serious as sexual abuse.* **FALSE**

Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. It is also the most ignored and under-reported. Its effects can be as damaging as any other form of abuse, if not fatal.

4. *Personal safety education programmes can help reduce the incidence of child abuse.* **TRUE**

Programmes like **Keeping Ourselves Safe** teach children to tell a parent, carer, or other adult about abuse. Studies show that children who have completed the **Keeping Ourselves Safe** programme are much more likely to make suggestions for keeping themselves safe than children not involved in such a programme (for example, saying no or walking away or changing the subject).

5. *A school should have a policy on handling child abuse available for parents to look at.* **TRUE**

Your school is required to have a policy on reporting and dealing with child abuse. On request, this policy should be available for you to examine and discuss with staff members. Do not hesitate to ask. Your school will value your enquiry.

6. *The majority of people who abuse children have a major mental illness.* **FALSE**

The majority of people who abuse children do not have a major mental illness.

7. *Boys are at less risk of sexual abuse than girls.* **FALSE**

Girls and boys of all ages are sexually abused. Boys are as vulnerable to sexual abuse as are girls. Victims can sometimes be very young children such as toddlers or even babies.

8. *In New Zealand, some traders in Internet child pornography are teenagers.* **TRUE**

It is true that some traders are teenagers. However, in recent years this number has dropped off, and most people caught trading child pornography on the Internet are males in their 20s to 50s.

9. *When sexual abuse is committed by a young person, it is less damaging than when perpetrated by an adult.* **FALSE**

Sexual abuse can be as violent, humiliating and damaging for a child when the abuser is an older brother or sister, peer or friend, as it is when an adult is the abuser.

Straight Talking



What kinds of children get abused?

All children are at risk of abuse. Some children with other vulnerabilities, for example disabilities, may be more at risk. Child abusers come from all walks of life, and so do their victims. This is why it is so important for all parents and caregivers to talk to their children about abuse. Children who have taken part in a child abuse prevention programme at school, and who have talked about abuse and ways of keeping safe with their parents or caregivers, are more likely to prevent abuse and to tell someone about abuse which is happening to them now or which has occurred in the past.



How are children affected by abuse?

There are obvious physical effects on children as a result of abuse. Severe cases of neglect, or physical and sexual abuse can all result in physical effects on the body. These can lead to serious and ongoing health problems. Less obvious may be the psychological effects that abuse can have on the child.

Children's self-esteem is undoubtedly affected. Abused children often have a negative image of themselves and have little or no sense of self-worth. Children who are abused often blame themselves and this self-blame is encouraged by the abusers as it helps to ensure that the victims don't tell anyone about the abuse. Abused children often lose trust in adults and feel powerless.

Child abuse can lead to sadness, anger, feelings of isolation, problems with trusting people, difficulties in building or maintaining safe and healthy relationships and, at times, highly self-destructive behaviour. There is a possible link between child abuse and adolescent depression, drug abuse, alcoholism and suicide.

Abused children can find it difficult to concentrate at school. They are often anxious, depressed, hostile, or may behave inappropriately in a number of ways, including sexually.

The teenage years are often a time of crises for abused children. They may become violent, abusive, uncommunicative and generally aggressive towards others, especially adults who they see as having power over them.

Signs and symptoms of abuse are not easy to identify and a child may appear outwardly happy and contented. However, it is important for parents and carers to continue talking and listening to their children. Continue to discuss ways to keep safe with other people with your children and give them ongoing opportunities to tell you if things are not ok.



Who abuses children?

Child abuse occurs in all groups in society and is carried out by both men and women. People who abuse children cover a wide age range from elderly people to people only a few years older than the abused child. Children may suffer from taunts, bullying and sexual teasing inflicted by their peers.

The image of the 'dirty old man in a rain coat' as the typical child abuser is an outdated and even dangerous myth. An emphasis on this 'stranger danger' approach to preventing child abuse is not appropriate because the majority of child abusers are known to the child. That is not to say that you shouldn't discuss with your child what they should do if they are approached by someone they don't know, but 'stranger danger' should not be the emphasis of discussions that you have with your child about abuse.

There are a number of very good reasons for moving away from the 'stranger danger' approach. There may be times when your child needs to approach adults whom they don't know for help,

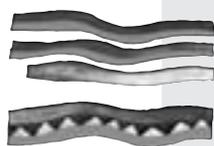
for example if they are hurt or lost. There is also a risk that they will not be able to recognise abuse from someone they know and trust, if they have only been taught about it in the context of someone they don't know. It is far better to give children practice in identifying situations that could be dangerous and to talk about things they could do to stay safe.

Recognising Abuse



How do you know if a child is being abused or neglected?

Hopefully your child will never be abused. However it is important that adults are aware of possible signs and symptoms. These might be observed in other children you interact with, such as neighbour's children or your children's friends. We all have a duty to act on suspicions. Sometimes it is hard to see the signs of child abuse. The major problem with identifying child abuse is that many of the commonly discussed signs and symptoms can be linked to issues completely unrelated to child abuse. For example:



- injuries can be caused through rough play or genuine accidents
- developmental delays can be caused through illness or differences in rates of development
- some sexual play is normal for children at various stages of their development.

It is important to take note of changes in a child's behaviour or personality, especially if there is no explanation for these changes. Abused children often seem to have unexplained sadness, crankiness and irritability. They may also start bed-wetting again, or change in the way they react to other people. An unexplained deterioration in a child's schoolwork, for example, should be cause for further investigation.

Because most victims only give hints about the abuse, it is important to try to listen to a child and think about what they might be trying to tell you. They will probably choose the most inconvenient time, such as when you are busy getting the dinner. The common response of victims to parents or caregivers who ask their children why they did not tell them is, *"I did try and tell you, but you didn't listen"*.

Look for knowledge and behaviours, especially sexual, which seem too grown up for the age of the child. This may be an indicator of abuse.

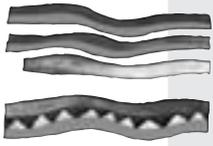
Some children tell through their drawings. If you have concerns, you can question a child about the meaning of parts of their drawings, but avoid analysing too much and never criticise a child who draws a sexual picture. For example, *"That's an interesting colour/shape, tell me about it. Who is the person in the picture?"* is an appropriate way to phrase such a question.

Often, physical abuse is kept hidden, so observe any reluctance to undress or change into more revealing clothes. Consider carefully a child or adult's explanation of the injuries to see how realistic, natural and spontaneous this is.

There are, however, some indicators of child abuse that are worth investigating if no other explanation satisfies you. Remember that all indicators of child abuse may also have harmless and non-sinister explanations.

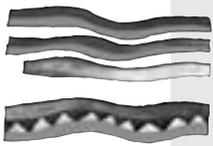
Some indicators of possible physical abuse:

- Many bruises at different stages of healing
- Bruising on an infant who is not yet mobile



- Black eyes, with bruising around the eyes rather than on the cheek
- Grasp marks caused by pressure from fingers and thumbs
- Bite-marks
- Marks from specific objects, for example, cords, rulers, or broom handles and shapes of objects on the skin, for example, irons or pokers
- Injuries to the mouth in young babies
- Burns and scalds
- Multiple fractures and head injuries
- Rib fractures in young children
- Bald patches with haemorrhages beneath the scalp (a sign of hair pulling)
- Cigarette burns

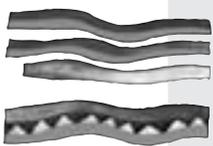
Some indicators of possible neglect:



- Accidental injuries caused through lack of supervision appropriate for the child's age
- A child describing lack of supervision or care (appropriate to their age)
- An adult failing to respond properly to a child's injury or ongoing illness
- A malnourished child

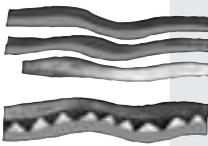
Some indicators of possible emotional abuse:

Children are emotionally abused when they are consistently rejected by someone, they are not given care or affection, and when they are exposed to constant negative attitudes. Children also suffer from emotional harm whenever they are physically or sexually abused or neglected, because of the damage to their emotional development. It is difficult to separate the symptoms of emotional abuse from the symptoms caused by other types of abuse.



- Lack of interest in and ongoing rejection of, a child by a parent or caregiver
- Lack of any show of care and affection by the parent or caregiver
- Consistently negative attitudes to, and negative interactions with, a child by a parent or caregiver
- Parents or caregivers are uncaring, very detached, or physically or emotionally remote
- For no obvious medical reason the child fails to thrive
- Growth is stunted
- The child appears to be going backwards in their development
- The child is extremely immature or displays inappropriate social behaviour (and has no mental disability). For example, lack of social responsiveness, fixed stare, rocking movement.
- The child shows apathy and/or depression and/or extreme and age-inappropriate aggression.

Some indicators of possible sexual abuse:

- 
- The child has a sexually transmitted disease
 - The child has bruises, cuts, and/or bleeding to the genital and/or anal area
 - The child tells of sexual abuse
 - The child has pain or discomfort in the genital area
 - The child has a discharge or infection in the anal or genital area
 - The child has repeated urinary infections
 - The child has knowledge of sex inappropriate to their age, or sexual play that is advanced beyond their years
 - The child is unusually aware of, or anxious about, touching
 - The child shows fear of or avoids a particular adult
 - The child has trouble sleeping or has other sleep disorders
 - The child talks with another child about abuse
 - The child has abrupt changes in behaviour or personality
 - The child is unusually worried about toileting or changing clothes
 - The child suddenly doesn't want to see someone who they previously enjoyed being with
 - The child gives vague hints, such as, "Is it ok to tell a secret?" or "Uncle wears funny underpants."

Please do not panic. However, if in doubt... consult a professional listed on page 19.

Talking to Your Child



How can you talk to your children in ways that won't damage their feelings of self-worth?

Things we say to children stay with them. Research shows that everything we see and hear, including every spoken word, is stored in our brain, so we need to think carefully about the ways that we speak to children. Things that we say in the heat of the moment aren't quickly forgotten by children and can have a cumulative effect on their wellbeing.

"You are such a pain." If someone said this to you, you would probably feel put-down or hurt. If someone twice your size said this to you with a frown and in a loud serious voice, you would probably feel threatened, if not very scared. If they constantly say things like this to you it changes the way you view yourself as a person.

One of the best things you can do for your child is to let them know that they are understood. Try to reflect a child's feelings without criticism, and show you understand these feelings.

- *"It looks as though you are very angry."*
- *"It sounds like you had a wonderful day."*
- *"It seems you are annoyed at your friend."*
- *"You think your teacher treated you unfairly."*

Just like adults, when children feel that they have been understood, hurt and distress start to disappear and more positive communication will begin. Adults need to try and accept and understand children's views of themselves and their feelings. If an adult tries to disagree with children's perceptions of themselves or their feelings, they may choose not to share their feelings anymore.

For example, a child who says that he/she is no good at sports probably doesn't want you to agree or disagree. It may be that the child just wants to have their concerns understood. An adult could respond to this child's statement by simply stating that *"sports are hard for a lot of people."*

Another suggestion: don't give children advice, sympathy, or criticism when they are angry or very upset. Positive communication with children is difficult when they are experiencing strong emotions. These feelings do not go away just because someone tells them to. *"Stop crying, it's not that bad"* will rarely stop someone from feeling upset. Strong emotions lose their strength when someone feels that their emotions have been accepted and understood. *"It must have hurt you to make you cry."*



How can you express disappointment, criticism or give feedback to your child?

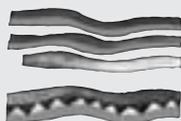
Ensure that it is the behaviour of the child that you are criticising, not the personality of the child. Compare *"You are a selfish boy. Share the toys with your brother."* with *"I would like you to share the toys with your brother because there are enough for both of you."* Children also appreciate praise for their accomplishments, achievements, and efforts, as we all do. *"I like the way you are sharing those toys with your brother"* compared with *"You're a good boy for playing with your brother."* Be very specific with your praise and with your criticism.



Is it ok to be angry at your child's behaviour?

Of course! Everyone needs to express their feelings, including anger. Your child needs to know your limits, but parents and caregivers need to have strategies to deal with anger before it arises. Problems occur when someone 'explodes'. When this happens, people say and do things they would not normally do, especially to children. Try to identify what is making you angry and convey this to your child. Instead of *"You are so naughty. I told you to tidy your room and you haven't bothered. You're so lazy."* help your child understand how their actions have made you feel. *"I feel very angry that your room is still untidy. I feel that you've ignored me because I asked you to tidy your room."* It is not bad to be angry at your child, but positive messages should be communicated more often than negative ones. Time out, a cooling down period for you and your child, is also a good option.

Almost every child is loved, but many children are not told this and so they do not know it. When children know that they are loved and understood, their feelings of self-worth, confidence, and self-esteem may be increased.



Remember: ***Abuse is never the victim's fault.
Nobody deserves to be abused.
Abuse must be reported.
There is no excuse for abuse.***

Keeping Safe in Cyberspace



How can you keep kids safer in cyberspace?

The online environment offers everyone incredible opportunities for communication, gaining knowledge, entertainment and socialising. But it can also expose us to new challenges and risks.

Parents, carers and young people are concerned about the part that cyberspace can play in bullying, harassment and abuse.

Online challenges include:

- exposure to inappropriate or illegal material
- giving out personal information which may place themselves, or their family, at risk of fraud, burglary or other crimes
- younger children copying older siblings involved in inappropriate activities
- cyberbullying and harassment
- contact from people who mean to harm children/young people.

To keep your children safer online, you need to educate them to use technologies safely and responsibly, and create an open relationship so that they turn to you first if anything disturbing occurs.

Parents and caregivers should take an ongoing interest and be familiar with children's online activities. Today's technologies allow access to the internet from a variety of sources such as mobile phones, gaming consoles and iTouch, and from a variety of locations. Young people are not limited to a single point of access like the home computer. So while filtering and good supervision is useful for young children, as they head towards adolescence, curiosity, experimentation and determination make technological solutions far less reliable.

Start engaging with your child as soon as they begin to use technology. NetSafe has resources for young children at www.hectorsworld.com and further information on their website www.netsafe.org.nz. Talk with your children about how they currently use the internet and other technology, and together negotiate clear guidelines.

Remember that strictly controlling a child's internet use at home won't keep them safe at a friend's house or on their gaming console. Children will be reluctant to discuss concerns with you if they believe their technology might be removed should something untoward occur. Let them know up front that you are there to support them and help find solutions, not to take away their access to peers and their social group.

Computer security is also important in keeping children safer online. You can check out the 'Netbasics' at www.netbasics.org.nz to find out more.

There are a number of websites for children to explore that have been assessed as safe sites. Check sites out like those listed on the Young New Zealanders' Foundation website www.youngnz.org.nz or your school's website.

Digital citizenship - NetSafe's Learn: Guide: Protect:

- The NetSafe website www.mylgp.org.nz is designed for educators and can be equally useful for parents. It contains resources and information on developing good digital citizens. NetSafe suggest the following basic safety rules for young people, which will vary according to the age and abilities of individual children:
- Protect your personal information online. Keep your full name, phone number and address private and use a nickname while online.
- Think about what your nickname and profile say about you, and who else may see it. If you can't show it to your grandma, it shouldn't be online.
- People can copy, digitally change and misuse photos or anything you post online, send on a mobile, in an email and so on. Think before you post your own (or others') material.
- If something online makes you feel uncomfortable, stop what you are doing and get some help. Talk to a parent, caregiver or an adult you trust, or call NetSafe on 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723).
- If you receive threatening or worrying messages, save them but don't reply. Talk to someone else, or call NetSafe to talk through your options.
- People online can lie about themselves and their motives. Talk to an adult before agreeing to go and meet someone you've only met online.
- An online 'friendship' is different to an offline friendship – keep an eye out for things that give you the creeps or make you feel uncomfortable. Is someone pushing you for photos? Do they want to meet and don't want you to tell anyone? Do they want you to keep your friendship a secret? These are just some signs that the friendship might not be safe. Call NetSafe or talk to someone you trust if this happens.
- Ask if it is OK to give out details or information about other people (for example, photos of friends) before you do it. Be respectful of others' privacy.

For further information about keeping children and young people safer online, take a look at the NetSafe website www.netsafe.org.nz.

Reporting cybercrime

- For matters about illegal pornography, including confidential advice, contact the Department of Internal Affairs - Censorship Compliance, phone: 04 495 9383, email: censorship@dia.govt.nz or visit its website: www.censorship.dia.govt.nz
- To report online incidents which may break New Zealand law or breach legislation, go to The Orb ('online reporting button') www.theorb.org.nz.
- You may want to contact the New Zealand Police, who have specially trained child protection teams to investigate abuse and who administer the **Keeping Ourselves Safe** child abuse prevention programme for schools. Contact your nearest police station to find out more about these.

Dealing With Abuse



What should I do if a child tells me about abuse?

- Believe your child and accept what they tell you. Say *"Thank you for telling me. I believe you."*
- Show your love, concern and support. *"I love you very much. I'm here if you want me to listen."*
- Keep any feelings you might have, such as anger, fear, guilt or disgust, to yourself. Children will notice your reactions to what they tell you. If you get angry, children might think you're angry with them and may not tell you again.
- Keep calm.
- Listen carefully to what is said but don't interrogate or question a child about what has happened. A person trained to deal with abuse can talk with your child at a later time. This will probably be very difficult, as you will want to find out as much as possible from your child. However, questioning from you could influence the outcome of any court proceedings at a later date. If you show shock, your child will withdraw and the truth may never be known.
- Reassure them that it is not their fault. Tell children that they are not to blame for what someone else has done to them. *"I am very sorry that this has happened to you. What happened was NOT your fault. That person should not have done that to you."*
- Tell them that you are pleased that they have told you and that you are very sorry about what has happened. Explain that this happens to a lot of children and praise them for telling you. *"You are very brave for telling me. I am very pleased that you have told me."*
- Assure them that you will do something to help.
- Seek help and advice for you and your child. Dealing with abuse is painful and you need to find someone that you can trust, someone who has heard these things before and will not judge you or your family.
- Report the abuse to either a member of a child protection team at your local police station or to Child, Youth and Family. You will find their telephone numbers in your phone book.

Reporting Abuse

If you believe that any baby, child or young person has been, or is likely to be harmed, ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived, you may report the matter to the Police or to Child, Youth and Family. A suspicion is enough because intuition and gut feelings are usually right. If you report you are protected by law from any action against you, if you are acting in good faith.

It is especially hard to report abuse if the abuser is someone that you know well, or a loved family member. This is often the case. This will give you feelings of doubt and of being disloyal. You may think about how telling will disrupt the family. But the most important consideration is always the safety and well-being of the child or young person. Think about what will happen to them if you don't report the abuse.

It is very important to report all suspicions of abuse. If they are not reported, then children will not be protected. In New Zealand the law requires promotion, by education and publicity, of the awareness of child abuse and its unacceptability.

Offering Help to a Family

If you are worried about a child, there are many organisations you can talk to or report abuse to. The following services are available in New Zealand.



Police: The police can be contacted at any police station. You might prefer to visit a police station and talk directly to staff. While any police officer should be able to help, you might want to ask to speak to a member of a child abuse team.

In New Zealand, the Police and Child, Youth and Family have agreements about working together when dealing with child abuse cases. Police are responsible for the criminal investigation of the alleged abuse, while Child, Youth and Family undertake the investigation and assessment to ensure the safety of the child, now and in the future. If your child needs to be medically examined, this will be arranged with specialist doctors experienced at working with children and young people. Your consent is required before your child may be examined. The child may also need to be interviewed by a trained interviewer.

If you report a case of abuse you can ask to be told how the case will be handled and how you will be kept informed.



Child, Youth and Family: If you're worried that a child is not safe or being well looked after, call Child, Youth and Family on 0508 FAMILY. Their social workers are trained to work out what kinds of problems a family might be having, and find the best ways to help keep their children safe. This might involve working with them directly, or putting them in touch with people in the community who can give practical support.



Doctors: You may decide to report the possibility of abuse to your doctor. Abuse may become evident while visiting your doctor. Your doctor is encouraged to report abuse but is not required to by law. However, many doctors are part of an organisation called Doctors For Sexual Abuse Care which is committed to encouraging doctors to deal with abuse in the most effective ways. Ask your doctor if they are a member.



School: If you report to your child's school, or if the abuse becomes evident at the school, then the case will be handled as set out in the school policy. You can ask to see this policy. There may be other people in the school community with whom you might want to discuss worries about abuse, for example a school nurse, CYF social worker or a guidance counsellor if your child is at secondary school. You can ask them to tell you how they deal with cases without telling them about your concerns. Be careful about breaching confidentiality by talking to too many people.



Social workers: Social workers at a government or other recognised agency can help. Look in the front of your phone book for the number of your nearest office. You can ask to speak to a social worker when you have made contact.

Remember, the best way to help stop abuse is to report it to the Police. If you decide not to do this, you should make sure that whoever you report to will pass any information about abuse on to them.

Remember: Throughout New Zealand, a number of support services are available to help and support families. Explore and keep a list of the local services available in your area. Among these would be Child, Youth and Family. Their telephone number is in the blue pages at the front of your telephone directory.

Getting Help Now!

All parents need a helping hand from time to time, but sometimes parents have more serious problems. If you have concerns about a family, sometimes all it takes is talking to the parents and offering your help. This can be hard, especially if you don't want to look like you're interfering, but it's ok to offer - it's even harder to ask for help, so don't wait to be asked!

There are helpful ways to get involved – by listening and being there for them, sharing the load and offering practical support, or putting them in touch with people who can help. The sooner you reach out, the sooner they can get help, and you might stop more serious problems happening down the track.

There are many local support services available throughout New Zealand to help and support families in your community. Explore and keep a list of the local services available in your area.

Key helping and support agencies include:

- Your local police station. Ask to speak with a child protection team detective or a youth aid officer. Their number is in the blue pages at the front of your telephone directory.
- Child, Youth and Family - 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459).
- Your own doctor, medical centre or local hospital.
- Barnardos - 0800 4 PARENT (0800 472 7368).
- Plunketline - 0800 933 922.
- Youthline - 0800 376 633.
- Relationship Services - 0800 RELATE (0800 735 283).
- Citizens Advice Bureau - 0800 367 222 or www.cab.org.nz
- Internet Safety - 0508 NETSAFE, freephone 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, www.netsafe.org.nz or email queries@netsafe.org.nz
- Mental Health Services - 0800 800 717 (24 hour helpline in Auckland). For your local number, check with your local hospital.
- Family Planning Association - 04 384 4349 (National Office).
- Child Matters - 07 838 3370. www.childmatters.org.nz/

Where Am I At?

The following scenarios test your reactions to situations of possible abuse or neglect. Think of two things that you could do in each situation to make sure your child is safe. You might like to discuss these with a friend or family member.

- Your child has unexplained bruises.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- Your child doesn't want to go to hockey practice and says that the coach is "creepy".
 - 1.
 - 2.

- A family friend shows special interest in your child and wants to spend time with him or her.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- Your child stays at a new friend's house and comes home the next day very upset and withdrawn.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- Your child doesn't want to go to stay with his or her grandparents.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- Your next-door neighbour's child rarely has lunch to take to school and has sores that are not healing.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- Your child tells you that a close family member has "been rude".
 - 1.
 - 2.

- Your spouse or another adult hits your child when either the adult or child is out of control.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- A convicted child abuser is released from prison into your neighbourhood.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- Your child tells you that when they were at a friend's house, they were shown rude pictures from the Internet.
 - 1.
 - 2.

My Undertaking



How can you help to keep your child safer from abuse?

The aim of this booklet is to help keep children safe from abuse. Below are some positive things you can do to help keep your child safe. Read each item and tick the **YES** box if you are already doing this, or intend to do this. Make a point of checking these items at regular intervals to remind yourself about what you intend to do.

ITEM	YES
1 I will tell my child what abuse is, and what he/she can do about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 I will praise my child on a regular basis for effort as well as success.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 I will use correct names for sexual body parts, example penis, vulva, vagina, breasts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 I will support my children and let them know they are loved.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 I will listen carefully when my child is talking to me and respond appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 I will find out what my child's school is doing to prevent child abuse.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 I will discuss the issues about abuse raised here with other people who interact with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 I will continue to talk about abuse with my children as they grow older and face new situations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 I will do my best to face personal issues about abuse, and seek help if necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 I will take appropriate action if I observe child abuse or neglect.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 I will check my children's use of cyberspace.	<input type="checkbox"/>

More Information

If you want more information about the **Keeping Ourselves Safe** programme contact your school.

Child, Youth and Family also have brochures available for parents entitled **Keeping Kids Safe** and **Everyday Families**. www.cyf.govt.nz.

Contact your local Child, Youth and Family office for a copy.

