

SPREADING AWARENESS ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE – AN ARPAN ENDEAVOUR

“Every sentient being has the right to live with dignity. Preventing child sexual abuse is protecting that dignity and healing the victims is bringing that dignity back.”

- Pooja Taparia, Founder - Director, Arpan

Every child is vulnerable to abuse, be it physical, verbal, emotional or sexual.

Statistics show EVERY SECOND child is sexually abused!

- More than 53% children report facing one or more forms of sexual abuse
- 50% of sexual offenders are known to the victim or are in positions of trust (family member, close relative, friend or neighbour).
- Onset of abuse is from 5 years of age.
- Boys are equally at risk as girls.

Source: National Study on Child Abuse in April 2007, Ministry of Women and Child Development

Most children quietly suffer, and don't talk about Sexual Abuse,
But we need to TALK about it,
so that WE can PREVENT IT and CURE IT.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is ANY ACT directed at a child by an adult or older person for the sexual gratification of the adult or older person.

It includes:



- Exposure to sexual activity or pornography
- Sexual touch or fondle
- Sexually explicit talk or hint
- Rape or attempted rape

Child Sexual Abuse affects the child negatively, causing:

- Shame, guilt & anger
- Fear, shock and confusion
- Constant illnesses
- Future exploitative relationships
- Social withdrawal
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour

Aware Parents, Caretakers and Children Can Help Prevent Child Sexual Abuse.

One of the important ways for prevention is to teach children about Touches. Just like we teach our children safety rules about crossing the road, we should also teach them about *Safe and Unsafe Touch*.

SAFE TOUCH	UNSAFE TOUCH
Anything that makes us feel good and leaves us happy and comfortable 	Anything that makes us feel bad, confused and leaves us uneasy, excited or uncomfortable 
Holding hands with friends, sharing meals, warm hug from loving parents	Touches involving our special parts that are private to us, touches that are told to be kept secret

Emphasise that they must say “NO” to any action/touch that causes discomfort or unease to them. If the child is feeling uneasy about anybody giving them a hug, don’t pressurise them to do so. Respect the child’s liking/disliking to touch and hugs.

Most importantly you must teach them

RULES FOR PERSONAL SAFETY

RULE NO. 1

- It is NEVER all right for someone to TOUCH, LOOK or TALK about one’s private body parts except to keep them clean and healthy.

It is never alright for someone older or bigger to ask the child to TOUCH, LOOK or TALK about their private body parts.

RULE NO. 2

- If someone tries to break this rule, say “NO” and RUN AWAY.

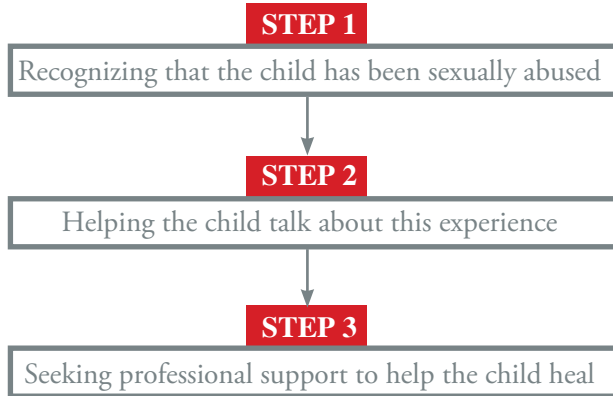
RULE NO. 3

- TELL someone you trust and KEEP TELLING until you get the help you need.

Give this information in an age appropriate manner.

Aware Parents and Caretakers Can Better Help A Sexually Abused Child.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, our children become victims of sexual abuse. We need to help our children through this by the following:



>> **Step 1:** *Recognizing that the child has been sexually abused.*

Recognizing an abusive situation is a skill for both parents and caretakers. Most children don't report abuse, so parents and caretakers need to understand abuse based on children's behavioural changes. No 'one' behaviour alone determines that a child has been sexually abused; it could be a combination of many, such as:

- Drop in academic performance
- Repeated urinary infections
- Unexplained pain or swelling in genital area
- Eating disorders, anxiety, depression
- Social withdrawal, hostility or aggression
- Suicide attempts
- Passive or overly pleasing behaviour
- Hints, indirect comments about the abuse
- Use of abusive sexual language
- Sexualized behaviour
- Sexual activity at an early age

Important: These behavioural changes MAY be indicative of sexual abuse, but are NOT necessarily a result of sexual abuse, there could be other factors as well.

>> Step 2: *Helping the child talk about abuse*

Rule # 1: Remember that the child is not at fault.

Rule # 2: Make sure the child understands Rule # 1.

Always keep the above rules in mind whilst talking to the child. However before encouraging the child to talk, it is important to first understand why they don't talk about sexual abuse themselves, and what enables them to talk about it sometimes later.

Why They Don't Talk

- “How do I say it? What words should I use?”
- “Mummy and Daddy won't believe me!”
- “I don't even know how to say what happened, I just feel weird about it”
- “Uncle didn't really mean to be bad to me or did he?”
- “My teacher might fail me if I tell Mummy”
- “I am scared, Uncle told me not to tell anyone, it's a secret.”

Why They Talk, Eventually

- Awareness and understanding of the abuse.
- Discussion with an understanding parent or other adult with whom they are comfortable.
- Inability to bear the abuse anymore.
- Physical illnesses following sexual abuse.
- Secure adult relationships that provide confidence to deal with prior trauma.
- Revelation during therapy for any other reason.
- Desire to prevent abuse of other children.

Create an understanding and open environment to help the child talk about the abuse.

**WHEN CHILDREN FINALLY DO TALK ABOUT ABUSE,
IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO HANDLE IT CAREFULLY.**

Rules in handling disclosure...

- Keep calm
- Believe the child
- Listen to the child
- Answer the child's questions honestly
- Respect the child's privacy by not telling other people
- Give positive messages: "I know you could not help it" or "I am proud of you for telling"
- Report the abuse
- Arrange a medical exam
- Get professional help

It is of utmost importance to keep open communication channels and have a good constant rapport with the child.

DON'T

- **Blame the child**
- **Panic or overreact**
- **Pressure the child to talk**
- **Confront offender in child's presence**
- **Make the child repeat the story**

Remember, disclosure is difficult for children. It may be days, months, years or even never, for a victim to be able to talk about sexual abuse.

Be patient and supportive.

>> **Step 3:** *Seeking professional support to help the child heal*

Sexually abused children often feel guilt, anger, sadness, shame and confusion.

Child sexual abuse is NOT the child's fault – but the child doesn't understand that.

Professional counselling helps the child:

- Realise that abuse is NOT his/her fault
- Get rid of the shame and guilt
- Feel accepted, safe and secure
- Rebuild their self esteem and confidence
- Minimise focus on the traumatic past, heal and move on
- Come to terms with the consequences about the abuser when reported and action is taken

The family also needs counselling to cope with the abuse situation and help the child heal.

Arpan can provide professional help and support in dealing with all stages of support for Child Sexual Abuse, ranging from counselling to legal steps.

Pushpa Venkatraman, Counsellor, Arpan, M.A. in Psychology has had more than 20 years of experience in the field of Child Sexual Exploitation. She has dealt with several cases of Child Sexual Abuse and has conducted numerous prevention and training programs on Child Sexual Abuse. She will be glad to guide you based on her experience.

Email: pushpa@arpan.org.in Phone: +91.98190.86444

“Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us everyday” - Sally Koch

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making little differences

ARPAN believes in making little differences.... And that belief begins with improving the lives of the little ones.

Arpan is a registered organisation focused on spreading awareness to prevent and heal Child Sexual Abuse.

Its activities include:

- **Awareness Talks** for parents, teachers, caretakers, NGO professionals
- **Teaching Children** Personal safety in schools
- **Counselling** for child victims, adult survivors, family members and abusers themselves.
- **Capability Building Workshops** for NGO and mental health professionals
- **Study Groups** for counsellors and psychiatrists.
- **Awareness campaigns** through theatre and other media
- **Activity Based Therapy** for child victims.
- **Support Network** of services ranging from psychotherapy to legal action.

For further information on Arpan and its activities, please visit www.arpan.org.in

Contact details:

Email: info@arpan.org.in **Phone:** +91.98190.51444

Registered Address: 10, Arun Building, 3rd floor,
34, Narayan Dabholkar Road, Mumbai 400 006 India

Understanding, Preventing and Coping with Child Sexual Abuse

A Short Recap

Child Sexual Abuse is ANY SEXUAL ACT directed at a child by an adult or older person for the sexual gratification of the adult or older person.

- Sexual Abuse affects children negatively, yet most children don't report it.
- Aware parents, caretakers and children can help prevent child sexual abuse.
- Teach children about Safe and Unsafe Touch and to say "NO" to Unsafe Touch.
- Teach children Personal Safety Rules "NO", RUN, TELL, KEEP TELLING.
- Aware parents and caretakers can better help a sexually abused child by
 - >> *Step1* Recognizing that the child has been sexually abused
 - >> *Step2* Helping the child talk about this experience
 - >> *Step3* Seeking professional support to help the child heal

It is very important to remember and remind the child that Sexual Abuse is NOT the child's fault.

Parents need to be compassionate, patient and encouraging.

"Fifty years from now it will not matter what kind of car you drove, what kind of house you lived in, how much you had in your bank account, or what your clothes looked like. But the world may be a little better because you were important in the life of a child." *Anonymous*

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For more information on Child Sexual Abuse visit www.arpan.org.in