

CHILD ABUSE

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Expressions India

WHAT TO DO?

I asked you for help, and you told me you would
if I told you the things, he did to me.
You asked me to trust you, and you made me
repeat them to fourteen different strangers

I asked you for help and you gave me
a doctor with cold hands
Just like my father.

I asked you for protection
and you gave me a social worker.
Do you know what it is like?
To have more social workers than friends?
I asked you for help
and you forced my mother to choose between us.
She chose him, of course.
She was scared, she had a lot to lose.
I had a lot to lose too.
The difference is, you never told me how much.
I asked you to put an end to the... abuse
You put an end to my whole family.
You took away my nights of hell
and gave me days of hell instead.
You have changed my private nightmare
Into a very public one.

—A fourteen-year-old girl



Introduction and Background

Defining Child Abuse

As defined by WHO (1999), “Child Abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power”.

Child abuse is a universal and alarming problem. Increased attention and efficient protection skills and preventive measures are necessary at family, social, national and international levels. After being a closed room affair for decades, child abuse is being more and more denounced and becoming a public and political topic.

Types of Child Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse of a child is the inflicting of physical injury upon a child. It may include burning, hitting, punching, kicking, beating, or otherwise harming the child.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society.

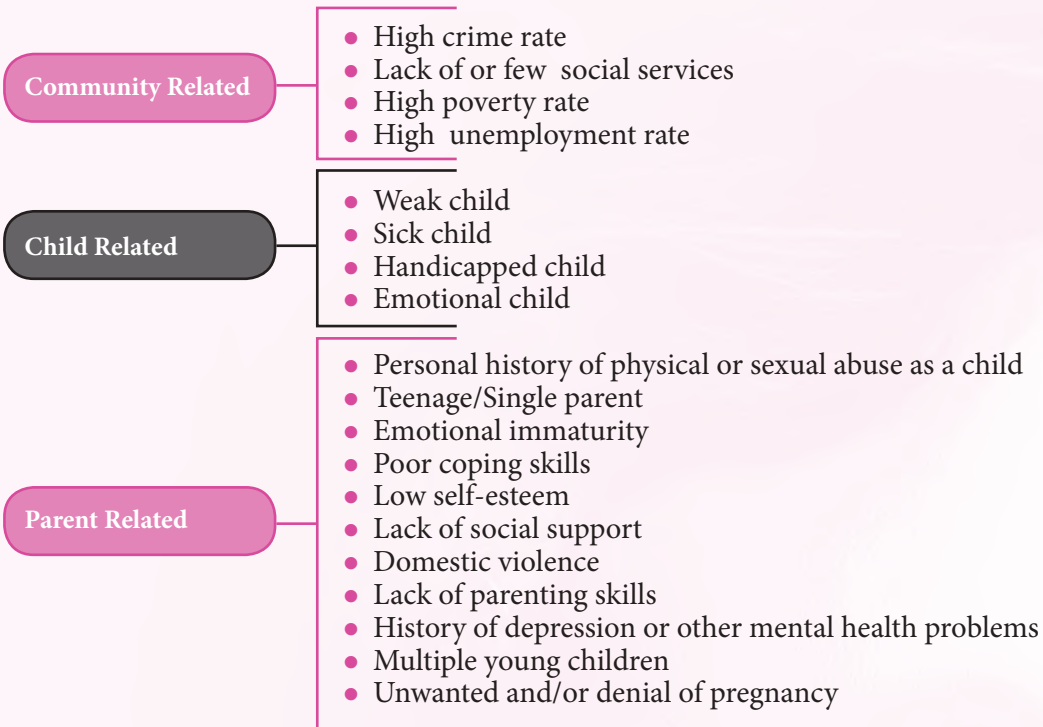
Neglect and Negligent Treatment

Neglect is the failure to provide for the child’s basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational or emotional. It may also include abandonment.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse, is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment. It includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate supportive environment, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies and in the context of the society in which the child dwells.

Risk Factors for Child Abuse



Child abuse is a ruthless combination of sexual abuse, of emotional abuse and of physical abuse. The child victim of abuse may show a cluster of physical, behavioural and emotional changes listed below:

Physical Signs	Behavioural Changes	Emotional Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bite marks Unusual bruises Lacerations Burns High incidence of accidents or frequent injuries like swellings on face and extremities Discoloration of skin Sleep, speech disorders Complaints of pain upon movement or contact Bedwetting Recurrent abdominal pain Constant throat and urinary infections Irritation in throat and in anal and genital areas Sexually transmitted diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoids physical contact with others Avoids certain adults Wears clothing to purposely conceal injury, i.e. long sleeves Gives inconsistent versions about occurrence of injuries, burns, etc. Often late or absent from school Comes early to school, seems reluctant to go home afterwards, negative statements about self Lack of concentration in school Compulsions, obsessions, phobias, hysterical reactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprehensive when other children cry Depression, anxiety Seems frightened by parents Has difficulty getting along with others Deep sense of isolation Little respect for others Overly compliant, shy, passive, withdrawn, gives in readily Plays aggressively, often hurting peers

Role of Teachers and Counsellors

- ❑ To assess the psychological, social, physical and medical impact of abuse on the child and its family
- ❑ To consider the current and rehabilitation needs of that child
- ❑ To understand that it is best to listen to the child and consider the child's needs prior to taking any precipitate action

Response of Teachers and Counsellors

- ❑ Communicate your understanding to the child by taking seriously what the child is saying
- ❑ Assure the child that they did the right thing by telling you.
- ❑ Tell the child that they are not to blame for sexual abuse.
- ❑ Encourage the child to participate in games to remove feeling of isolation.
- ❑ Do not make false promises to the child.
- ❑ Never imply that the child should forgive and forget the abuser in order to heal.
- ❑ Protect the child and reassure them that you will promptly take steps to see that the abuse stops.
- ❑ Don't hesitate in reporting such matters to the police.
- ❑ Consult with the family physician immediately.
- ❑ Take the child for psychiatric evaluation.

Consequences of Child Abuse

Every child is vulnerable, dependent, innocent and needy, be it a boy or girl. So when they are sexually abused, there is almost simultaneously, violation of physical, emotional and mental state forcing the child to struggle through the survival cycle.



A vicious cycle sets in as the child feels shameful each time he/she recalls the abuse. The child experiences a sense of helplessness/powerlessness. The child with his/her feelings all locked up, grows up physically and displaces some of the sleeper effects of child abuse, which then have long-term consequences.

Preventive Measures Parents and Teachers Can Take

- ❑ Remember that child abuse is a crime in which the fact is known only to the abuser and abused, where the abuser enjoys the advantage of age, relationship and prestige.
- ❑ Establish a free atmosphere at home that encourages children to disclose anything and everything.
- ❑ In simple language, initiate the child's understanding of his/her own body and explain child abuse to the child without misleading him.
- ❑ Teach the child the difference between 'good touch' and 'bad touch'.
- ❑ Do not force the child to hug and kiss others, if he/she is uncomfortable.
- ❑ Teach them not to go near strangers or being friendly with them, even if they offer gifts or chocolates.
- ❑ Be familiar with your child's friends and daily activities.
- ❑ Initiate an understanding in the neighbourhood children to keep an eye on one another.
- ❑ Have faith in all what your child tells you and be alert to small changes in his/her behaviour.
- ❑ Be observant of any child/adult paying unusual attention or affection to your child.
- ❑ Equip your child with emergency telephone numbers.