

## If a child discloses abuse to you...

- Listen and take what the child is saying seriously
- Let the child know you believe them.
- Reassure them that that telling you was the right thing to do.
- Remain calm in the presence of the child while they disclose the abuse. The showing of your emotions to a child while they are telling you what happened can stop the telling of their story. Once you are away from them, allowing yourself the time to express those emotions.
- Do not condemn the abuser. 95% of the time children know their abuser. They most likely have a close relationship with them and even love them. Therefore, we suggest condemning the action, not the person, so that the child is not questioning themselves about why they liked or loved this person. Abusers are manipulative and often children feel as if they are to blame for what occurred, especially if it was someone they thought they could trust.
- Do not make unrealistic promises to the child. Also do not try and predict the outcome of any criminal investigation or court proceeding. Saying to the child, "We are going to find them and lock them up forever" is unrealistic. The child may think he/she has done something wrong if for example an abuser was not prosecuted.
- Inform the child of what will happen next with realistic and age-appropriate information.
- After listening to the disclosure, do not confront the abuser. Rather act on what the child has told you by telling the appropriate authorities e.g. the police.
- Make sure the abuser has no future access to the child.
- Discuss what you have heard with a trained counsellor to determine what support your child may require as well as what support you may require.
- Make sure the child receives support and love.
- Tell the child that sexual abuse is never their fault and they did nothing wrong.....over and over again.

Children who have been sexually abused may react to being traumatized in various ways. Some become withdrawn, while others have outbursts of emotion and behavioural reactions.

Listen, believe and be patient.