



# **SAVE YOUR CHILDREN FROM CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE!**

**- PARENT'S GUIDE TO PROTECT THEIR  
LITTLE ONES**

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# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

**Dear Parents,**

The first step towards protecting your child is to be aware of the possible danger of child sexual abuse and being receptive to any signals from your child. I appreciate your initiative as a parent to show your concern to know more and to prevent child sexual abuse in your environment. The objectives of this manual are:

1. Firstly, to break the myths about child sexual abuse.
2. Secondly, to educate you about non-touch abuse.
3. Thirdly, to highlight the long lasting trauma of untreated abuse.
4. The manual also guides you how to prevent abuse and what to do in case of abuse.
5. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 [POCSO 2012], a very noble initiative by the government to protect children is a must read for all parents. Important features of the same are also added in this manual.

I humbly request you to read this and use it to help your children and also educate as many families as possible. Let's work together for this noble cause.

Best wishes and Warm Regards

**-Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal**

(Holistic Wellness Practitioner)

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## **BEING AWARE AS A PARENT:**

The reality is, when it comes to sexual abuse, your children are not automatically as safe as you'd like them to be. You may build around them a fortress of protection, but you have to build within them a defense every bit as strong as the defense without. And the danger lies not at the hands of strangers, but in the hands of those we are often too quick to trust.

Have you ever seen someone playing with a child and felt uncomfortable? Maybe you thought, "I'm just over-reacting," or, "She/he doesn't really mean that." Don't ignore such comments or behaviors, learn to talk about them or ask more questions about what you have seen.

Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child by an adult or adolescent. These acts can include sexual touching (e.g., touching a person's penis or vagina, oral sex, or intercourse) and sexual behaviors that do not include touching (e.g., peeping, flashing, or showing pornography to a child.) Sometimes an older child may sexually abuse a younger one. The child is forced to keep the sexual abuse a secret and initially feels trapped and helpless.

These feelings of helplessness and the child's fear that no one will believe the disclosure of abuse lead to accommodative behaviour. If the child does disclose, failure of family and professionals to protect and support the child adequately, augment the child's distress and may lead to retraction of the disclosure.

Try to look beyond touch. There are many **non-touch behaviours** which are considered **as child sexual abuse**. These are:

- Making uncomfortable phone calls or remarks to a child.
- Sending unacceptable adult mobile text messages or emails to a child.
- Forcing a child to watch an uncomfortable act or movie.
- Persistently intruding on a child's privacy.
- By teasing a child or causing the child to have uncomfortable feelings about their body or certain clothes.
- By calling a child by inappropriate names.
- By making a child see pornography.

The signs that an adult is using their relationship with a child for sexual reasons may not be obvious. But you may feel uncomfortable about the way they play with the child, or seem always to be favouring them and creating reasons for them to be alone. There may be **cause for concern about the behaviour of an adult** or young person if they:

- Refuse to allow a child sufficient privacy or to make their own decisions on personal matters.

- Insist on physical affection such as kissing, hugging or wrestling even when the child clearly does not want it.
- Are overly interested in the sexual development of a child or teenager.
- Insist on time alone with a child with no interruptions.
- Spend most of their spare time with children and have little interest in spending time with people their own age.
- Regularly offer to baby-sit children for free or take children on overnight outings alone.
- Buy children expensive gifts or give them money for no apparent reason.
- Frequently walk in on children/teenagers in the bathroom.
- Treat a particular child as a favourite, making them feel 'special' compared with others in the family.
- Pick on a particular child.



### Take sensible precautions with who has access to your children

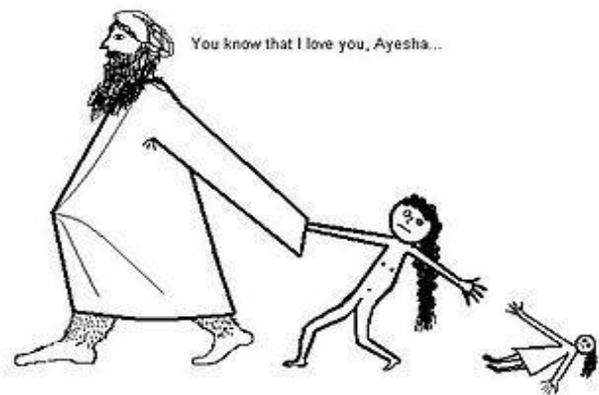
- Be aware of who is paying attention to your children and who their friends are.
- Don't ignore any unease you feel about people showing interest in your child.

And the most important responsibility as a parent is to *always listen to your child*.

**Believe the Child, Until you Prove, Without a Doubt, Otherwise.  
THE FIRST TIME THEY TELL YOU MAY BE THE ONLY TIME!!!!**

### TIPS TO PREVENT CHILDREN FROM BECOMING VICTIMS:

- Establish firm guidelines around the use of technology. Keep interactions as public as possible and model safe behavior. This applies to websites, email, instant messaging, social networking, and cell phones.
- Being a parent, you shouldn't consider porn as being isolated from sexuality. You need to address your child's moral feelings towards sex and porn as a part of that.
- Encourage open discussions about sex and pornography.
- Teach children the proper names of body parts, including their genitals.
- Teach children the difference between



touch that is okay and touch that is not.

- Explain the difference between a secret and surprise. Secrets can lead to unsafe situations whereas surprises are revealed within a short period of time.
- Acknowledge and respect a child's right to privacy when requested. Let them know it is okay to say 'no' when they are uncomfortable.
- Encourage children to tell someone they trust if they feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused about someone's behavior towards them.

## **EMPOWERING YOUR CHILDREN**

- Please, speak openly with your children about their bodies. They must know that their bodies are sacred, and their bodies are their own; no one else has a right to touch them without permission. They must know that certain parts of their bodies are private; they must know what is and what is not appropriate to show and do in public, in private, and with others; they must know how to respect the bodies of other people.
- Raise your children with virtues such as purity, joy, dignity, self- and other-respect, self-possession, self-restraint and self-control. Please help your children recognize when others do not act in right, true, pure and honoring ways. Teach them how to say no. Teach them when to say yes. Guide them to trust their instinct, their conscience, their values, and their heart.
- Please, guide your children in right and wrong; make sure they know the difference between wrong they commit, and a wrong act committed against them. There is much shame connected with abuse. Make sure they know what abuse is, and that if abuse happens to them, it is not their fault.
- Be certain they know how to avoid abuse, how to escape abuse, what to do to stop abuse, and if they can't stop it, what to do after abuse takes place. Make sure they know whom to tell. Make sure they can always tell you.
- The abuser may also manipulate and groom. Whether it's twisting your teen's mind to think she's being loved, or grooming her so that she feels she must care for him in some way, or any other form of manipulation, the perpetrator may be sneaky, and the child may be genuinely duped. Teach your children to recognize these things before they take place. Teach your children so well, that an abuser's lies and manipulations will have the opposite of the intended effect.
- Children must have the ability to recognize abusers and abusive behaviors. They must know that evil exists in the world. They need to be told that sexual abuse is most often caused by somebody a child knows and trusts. Be brave enough to emphasize that it can happen at the hand of someone they love.
- Be the safe person to whom your child will turn in a crisis such as sexual abuse. Practice listening. Invest in their hearts on a daily basis. Stay so connected in relationship that he or she will tell you anything, even when it's hard. Prove to them that you will always receive anything they say without judgment and with honest love. It's your relationship with your child that's most important, of course. On this, many things will rise and fall.

## WARNING SIGNS TO LOOK FOR IN CHILDREN

### What to watch out for in children:

- Acting out in an inappropriate sexual way with toys or objects.
- Nightmares, sleeping problems.
- Aches or illnesses with no identifiable cause.
- Becoming withdrawn or very clingy.
- Becoming unusually secretive.
- Sudden unexplained personality changes, mood swings and seeming insecure.
- Regressing to younger behaviours, e.g. bedwetting.
- Unaccountable fear of particular places or people.
- Outburst of anger.
- Changes in eating habits.
- New adult words for body parts and no obvious source.
- Thinks of self or body as repulsive, dirty or bad.
- Talk of a new, older friend and unexplained money or gifts.
- Self-harm (cutting, burning or other harmful activities).
- Physical signs, such as, unexplained soreness or bruises around genitals or mouth.
- Running away.
- Not wanting to be alone with a particular child or young person.
- Wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training.
- Resists removing clothes when appropriate times (bath, bed, toileting, diapering).



Any one sign doesn't mean that a child was or is being sexually abused, but the presence of several suggests that you should begin to ask questions and consider seeking help.

## MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE:

MYTH	FACT
Only men/boys abuse children.	<b>Women also abuse girls and boys.</b>
Children get abused because of the way they dress.	<b>Sexual abuse does not depend on the way children or a dress.</b>
Children have to obey others and cannot say NO even if others behavior makes them uncomfortable. This is Eastern culture.	<b>Any child who is not comfortable with a touch or show of love has the right to say NO.</b>
Children can get over it and forget it with time	<b>Sexual abuse mostly has long lasting impact on individual's personal and professional life.</b>
If child is not saying no to abuse then it is not abuse.	<b>Children cannot consent to sexual activity with adults/children/adolescents.</b>
After sexual abuse happens nothing can be done.	<b>There is a lot that can be done: counselors, legal system, teachers, trusted adults &amp; family members, NGOs etc.</b>
Girls are victims of sexual abuse and not boys.	<b>Boys are also abused. They are also less likely to disclose about the abuse than females.</b>



## **SET CLEAR FAMILY BOUNDARIES**

- Talk about and set clear family boundaries with family members and with other adults who spend time around or supervise the children (e.g., if a child does not want to hug or kiss someone hello or goodbye then he or she can shake hands instead).
- If a child is not comfortable with a particular adult or older child then you or some other adult must let that person know (e.g., tell him or her that you don't want your child to sit on his/her lap).
- As a child matures, boundaries within the home may need to change as well (e.g., knock on the door before entering the room of an adolescent).
- Be aware of and limit sexual messages received through the media.
- Supervise and monitor children's play.

## **HANDLING TEENS**

Teens of today are the experimenting lot. This tendency leads them to turn in to sexual abusers – It is very common for teenagers and adolescents to sexually abuse younger siblings, juniors in school/ neighbourhood, and or indulge in pornography with an objective “ to learn “ about sex and sexuality. Simple strategies to prevent grooming adolescent abusers :

- Healthy psychoeducation on gender, sex and sexuality by a responsible caring adult – parent or teacher will help in preventing them from developing as abusers.
- Honestly answering all “ uncomfortable questions” posed by the adolescent
- Refraining from categorizing acts as “right and wrong” and instead guiding them to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate / acceptable and unacceptable / healthy and unhealthy acts will satiate their curiosity .
- Training them to be a crusader in their own right against this social evil.
- Encouraging them to stand up against bullying and any form of abuse in school by reporting to higher authorities rather than taking law in their own hands.
- Teaching them to respect every human being irrespective of gender/ caste/ any other discriminations.
- Avoid moral policing .
- Strictly refrain from emotional threats.
- Channelising their energies in creative activities and enable them to experience self discovery / self evolution.

Do not hesitate to seek professional help of mental health professionals or life coaches for yourself and your teen in this regard

## HANDLING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- If you find out or suspect that your child has been sexually abused, it takes toll on you as a parent. It's important to find a way to manage your feelings, so you can focus on creating a safe environment for your child that is free from harm, judgment, and blame. It is imperative that when your child discloses to you, you continue to repeat the following messages through both your words and your actions:

- I love you.
- What happened is not your fault.
- I will do everything I can to keep you safe.

- Responding to the needs of a child who has been sexually abused may involve the whole family and will likely have an impact on all family relationships.
- Mental health professionals (for example, counselors, therapists, or social workers) can help you and your family to cope with reactions, thoughts, and feelings about the abuse.
- It is important to seek a behavioral health professional with a background in child development, child trauma, and sexual abuse. Before agreeing to work with a particular provider, ask questions about the person's background, experience, and approach to treating children.
- Do not hesitate to seek legal help if the situation demands.



## ***“EMPOWERING CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS FROM ABUSE – INSIGHT INTO POCSO ACT”***

### **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012**

- The Act defines:
  - What is child sexual abuse.
  - The **role of others such as police, media** and others.
  - Protection of **child's/adolescent's rights, state of mind and identity.**
  - **Child/adolescent friendly ways** for helping children/adolescents.
  - The **punishment** to be given to the abusers.

- **Punishment when:**
  - Sexual abuse occurs (touch, non-touch, revealing or showing body parts, actions/words, photo/video, threatening, trying to abuse).
  - If someone reveals the identity of a child.
  - If child is under 16, accused is guilty until proved as innocent.
  - False information about abuse is spread to embarrass or question the dignity/respect of a person or a child.
  - More severe punishment if the child/adolescent is injured severely (physical or emotional) or if someone who is supposed to protect child/adolescent has abused.
  - If the person to whom the child/adolescent tells about abuse does not inform within 6 months.
- Process of investigation is also friendly and not frightening:
  - **Support team** is there to help the child during the investigation and makes **child protection plan**.
  - Statement of child/adolescent has to be taken by **women officer at home/safe place, without uniform and in the absence of abuser**.
  - Child/adolescent **cannot be detained at night for statement**.
  - **Medical examination in presence of whom child/adolescent trusts** and in the **presence of a women officer** as well.
  - It provides for the Special Court to determine the amount of **compensation to be paid to a child**, so that this money can then be used for the child's medical treatment and counseling.
  - Special court has been made such that **court has to take the decision within one year** of the case registration.

“Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as though who are.”

*- Benjamin Franklin*



**Compilation Credits:**  
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**Ms. Mahalakshmi, Director Sahayam**

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