

Stop The Abuse

The U. S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect estimates that 2000 children under the age of 18 are killed by parents and caretakers each year. Annually, more children under the age of four die from abuse and neglect than from falls, choking on food, drowning, fires, or motor vehicle accidents. More than 18,000 children suffer permanent disabilities from abuse or neglect every year. Child abuse is a pattern of mistreatment, abusive behavior, sexual abuse, or extreme neglect by a parent or another adult in authority.

There are several types of abuse, and many times children suffer from more than one type. These categories are:

- | **Physical abuse:** deliberate acts of violence that injure or even kill a child. Signs of physical abuse may be unexplained bruises, broken bones, or burn marks on a child.
- | **Sexual Abuse:** when adults use children for sexual gratification or expose them to sexual activities.
- | **Emotional Abuse:** the repeated verbal abuse of a child in the form of shouting, threats, and degrading or humiliating criticism.
- | **Physical neglect:** the parent or guardian fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision or medical care to a child.
- | **Emotional neglect:** the parent or caretaker fails to meet a child's basic needs for affection and comfort. Some examples include behaving in a cold, distant and unaffectionate way toward a child, allowing the child to witness chronic or severe spousal abuse, allowing a child to use alcohol or drugs, encouraging a child to engage in delinquent behavior, and not enrolling a child in school or allowing a child to skip school often.

Children who are victims of ongoing abuse often withdraw or become numb. They may try to look normal, but seem zombie-like wandering through life not knowing what it feels like to be alive. They may become indifferent to pain, lack empathy, and fail to read or acknowledge their own feelings. Abuse shatters a child's natural sense of invincibility and basic trust. After many years of abuse, a child may come to believe they cannot trust anyone. The psychological effects of abuse and neglect can last a lifetime and may include a lowered sense of self-worth, an inability to relate to peers, reduced attention span and learning disorders. In severe cases, abuse may result in psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety, dissociative identity disorder, and an increased risk of suicide. Behavior problems often develop after abuse, including violence and juvenile crime.

If you suspect a child is being abused, call your local child protective services agency or your Employee Assistance Program for assistance. If you are a survivor of past child abuse, are abusing or feel you may abuse a child call your Employee Assistance Program for help. Remember, you are not alone in this.

