

## PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BY ASHWINI M. V. ([https://youtu.be/RCbaFALY0\\_g](https://youtu.be/RCbaFALY0_g))

Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse in which an adult or an older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. It is also called as child molestation.

There are two types of child sexual abuse :

1. Contact form or touching abuse – It includes touching a child's genitals , making a child touch someone else's genitals , playing sexual games , and / or putting objects or body parts inside the vulva or vagina, in the mouth or in the anus of a child for sexual pleasure.
2. Non contact form or non touching abuse – It includes showing pornography to a child ,exposing a person's genitals to a child , prostituting or trafficking a child, photographing a child in a sexual pose , encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts either in person or on a video , and / or watching a child undress or use the bathroom.

Levels of prevention of child sexual abuse:

Child abuse is a significant adverse childhood experience and public health problem. It can be prevented at three levels.

1. Primary level of prevention – At this level no incidence of child sexual abuse has happened. But to prevent it from happening we are supposed to work with each and everyone; children, parents, teachers and all the people of the community. They are to be impowere with the knowledge to identify the potential threat and prevent from happening.
2. Secondary level of prevention – It aims to reduce potential short term harm that can result from sexual violence by improving how people respond to survivors, ensuring access to services and raising awareness of the community. There are some children who are more vulnerable to child abuse. It could be a child with certain mental or intellectual disability or some physical disabilities or the child can be neglected by parents because of addictions or any other reasons. To protect these vulnerable children from getting abuse efforts are to be made at secondary level. This also aims to provide treatment and support to those at risk of sexually offending before any involvement with the legal system.
3. Tertiary level of prevention – At this level child sexual abuse is already happened . Now we are going to prevent it happening any further.

Categories of child sexual abusers:

They can be catergized in as many as 16 ways. Here we will consider one way which categorizes abusers in two categories:

1. Opportunistic abusers – These abusers abuse the child if they get an opportunity with favourable conditions. They my not abuse another child. These people are esay to get caught. They don't plan their actions. Its more like a sloppy mistake or momentarily laps.
2. Preferential abusers – These abusers create opportunity for themselves to abuse the child. They will plan the course of action by tracking the child , trick the child, establish trust with the child, isolating him and then abusing the child by keeping the secrecy. These actions are called grooming the child.

Stages of grooming (proposed by Michael Weher):

Grooming doesn't happen overnight. Its a process undergoing several stages.

1. Targeting the victim – Abuser will first target the child who is easy to get by doing the background check of the parents and the child and their relationship. Usually they select vulnerable children who are unpopular, having family problems, who spend a lot of time alone or unsupervised, who lack confidence and self esteem, have physical or intellectual disabilities or are

already abuse survivors.

2. Gaining the victim's trust – Abuser will gain the trust by being kind to the child, by offering gifts, giving attention and build a rapport with the child. Simultaneously training them to keep the relationship secret.

3. Filling a need ( emotional / financial ) - Abusers will provide emotional support to the child going through tough time at school or at home. Statistically abusers are actually good listeners. The victim child may actually believe that the abuser can only fulfill the needs. Sometimes the need can be financial due to poverty and the abuser help them with money.

4. Isolating the child – At this stage the abuser will isolate the child from the primary care giver or the parents by conditioning the mind of the child against his or her family. This separates the child emotionally from the parents. The abuser stands between the child and the care givers. As a result the child may become reluctant to meet or speak to friends or family.

5. Desensitizing and sexualizing the relationship – At this stage emotional support ends and actual sexual abuse starts gradually. Victim may in fact think that this is normal and it brings benefits with it. It will take time to them to realize that they are in fact nothing but the victims.

6. Maintaining control – Now as the child is emotionally separated from the parents and sexually abused, the abuser gains full control on the child. The abuser uses the 'consequences trick', making threats to harm either the victim or their near and dear ones. They might even start emotional blackmailing or giving guilt trip to maintain the control over the victim. This may lead to child trafficking for prostitution or slavery.

Possible warning signs of child sexual abuse:

These are the possible signs. If someone notices then instead of jumping to the conclusion, have a soft caring talk with the child about it, understand the situation and take the steps accordingly.

- Perceives oneself or the body as disgusting or dirty. This can be seen by excessive washing of body.
- Becoming excessively secretive (selective mutism). This is the sudden change in a talkative child. The child becomes all silent and keeps to himself. It should be of concern.
- Seems to become unsociable / withdrawn or too enmeshed. Child can get clingy due to the fear of left alone and caught by an abuser or the child can get totally withdrawn.
- Unexplained bruises on the body. They can be scratch marks or pinch marks or even cigarette marks.
- Possessive regarding their belongings as money or gifts are kept in them.
- Regressing to younger behaviour. For example suddenly starts bed wetting after years of no such incidence.
- Unaccountable fear about certain places or people.
- Frequent complaints of stomachaches or headaches.
- Feeling threatened by physical contact or closeness.
- Child becomes parentified or overly concerned for siblings
- Sudden school difficulties reflecting on report card.
- Unprovoked cruelty to animals.
- Unusual premature understanding of sex.
- Outbursts of anger. Child displays his anger that he / she has on the abuser.

Safety guide model:

It was developed by MUKTA foundation. If a child experiences any of the following clues, he / she should inform three trusted adults.

Secret caution – If any adult asks to keep the meeting secret or meeting places as a secret, reach out to a trusted adult.

Abusive touch caution – First teach the children about the word abuse and then make them aware about abusive touch. That is good touch or bad touch.

Fear caution – If an adult is creating fear in the mind of a child , seek help of the adults.

Electronic device caution – If an adult is showing inappropriate videos on any electronic device or if the adult is videographing or taking photographs of the child inappropriately ; the child should reach three adults.

Trap caution ( emotional / physical ) - Abuser can do a favour to a child and the emotionally trap him and take advantage. Abuser can also use physical trap like pulling the child, hugging the child too tight.

Your intuition caution – Ask child to talk about the intuitive fears towards certain people or situations. This can be useful sometimes.

Gift caution – Children should be aware about inappropriate and unnecessary expensive gifts from people.

Undress caution – If somebody undresses in front of the child or asks the child to undress in front of them, ask the child to inform the adults.

Isolation caution – Isolation that is separation is a grooming technique. Beware of it.

Dirty talk caution – Sexually explicit talking or talking about the private body parts is a warning sign.

Eyes caution – Beware of the adults looking lustfully at the child while undressing or bathing.

Also share the helpline number with the children in case of an unfortunate event. It is 1098 in India.