

# The Power of One Person ...

## You have the Power to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect

*When asked what one can do to prevent child abuse and neglect, the most common answer is "Me, what can I do?" As an individual, as a member of your community ...you have the power to make a huge difference!*

*You can stop a child from being victimized or neglected by:*

### Understand the problem

Child abuse and neglect affect children of all ages, races, and incomes. Over 3 million children are victimized each year and those are only the ones that are reported. The actual number is three times greater.

### Understand the various forms

Child Abuse are physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse, neglect and abandonment, and death.

### Understand the causes

Most parents are loving and nurturing and wouldn't think of hurting or neglecting their children. Yet some parents were themselves abused or neglected and they continue the cycle. Very young or inexperienced parents will likely not know how to take care of their babies or what they can reasonably expect from children at different stages of development. Extraordinary circumstances that stress families can be poverty, divorce, sickness, disability ...which can play a part in child abuse and neglect. Parents who abuse alcohol or other drugs are more likely to abuse or neglect their children.

### Support programs that support families

Parent education, community centers, respite care services, and substance abuse treatment programs help to protect children by addressing circumstances that place families at risk for child abuse and neglect. Donate your time or money, if you can.

### Report suspected abuse and neglect

Some states require everyone to report suspected abuse or neglect; others specify members of certain professions, such as educators and doctors. Regardless of whether you are mandated by law to report child abuse and neglect, doing so could save a child—and a family. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call the police, your state child abuse hotline or your local child welfare agency.

### Spread the word

Help educate others in your community about child abuse and neglect. Distribute brochures at your local public library, recreation or community center, government center, church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other faith institutions, grocery stores, and other public places.

### Strengthen your community

Know your neighbors' names and the names of their children, and make sure they know yours. Give stressed parents a break by offering to watch their children. Volunteer. If you like interacting with children, great, but you do not have to volunteer directly with kids to contribute to prevention. All activities that strengthen communities, such as service to civic clubs and participation on boards and committees, ultimately contribute to the well being of children.

### Be ready in an emergency

Everyone has witnessed the screaming-child-in-the-supermarket scenario. Most parents take the typical tantrum in stride. But what if you witness a scene—in the supermarket or anywhere else—where you believe a child is being, or is about to be, physically or verbally abused? Responding in these circumstances technically moves beyond prevention to intervention, and intervention is best handled by professionals. Still, if you find yourself in a situation where you believe a child is being or will be abused at that moment; you can help the situation by calmly approach the parent and offering the following:

Ask if you can help in any way — Can you carry some packages? Play with an older child so the baby can be fed or changed? Call someone on your cell phone? If you see a child alone in a public place—for example, unattended in a grocery cart—stay with the child until the parent returns.

### Please take a few moments to remind children you know that

- Violence affects all of us whether we are directly involved or witnesses.
- No one ever deserves to be abused.
- Children are never to blame for the abuse and violence that are inflicted upon them.
- Children should always telling a trusted adult about the abuse

### Reach Out To Kids And Parents In Your Community

Supporting kids and parents in your family and in your community helps to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Be a good neighbor. Offer to baby-sit. Donate your children's used clothing, furniture, and toys for use by another family. Be kind and supportive, particularly to new parents and children.

### Recognize Some Of The Warning Signs That A Child Might Be Abused Or Neglected

- Nervousness around adults
- Aggression toward adults or other children
- Inability to stay awake or to concentrate for extended periods
- Sudden, dramatic changes in personality or activities
- Acting out sexually or showing interest in sex that is not appropriate for his or her age
- Frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries
- Low self-esteem
- Poor hygiene

### Finally—and most important

If you are a parent—remember that prevention is a positive thing, and it begins at home. Take time to re-evaluate your parenting skills. Be honest with yourself—are you yelling at your children a lot or hitting them? Do you enjoy being a parent at least most of the time? If you could benefit from some help with parenting, seek it. Getting help when you need it is an essential part of being a good parent. Talk to a trusted professional; take a parenting class, read a book about child development.

# You are the Power of One Person!