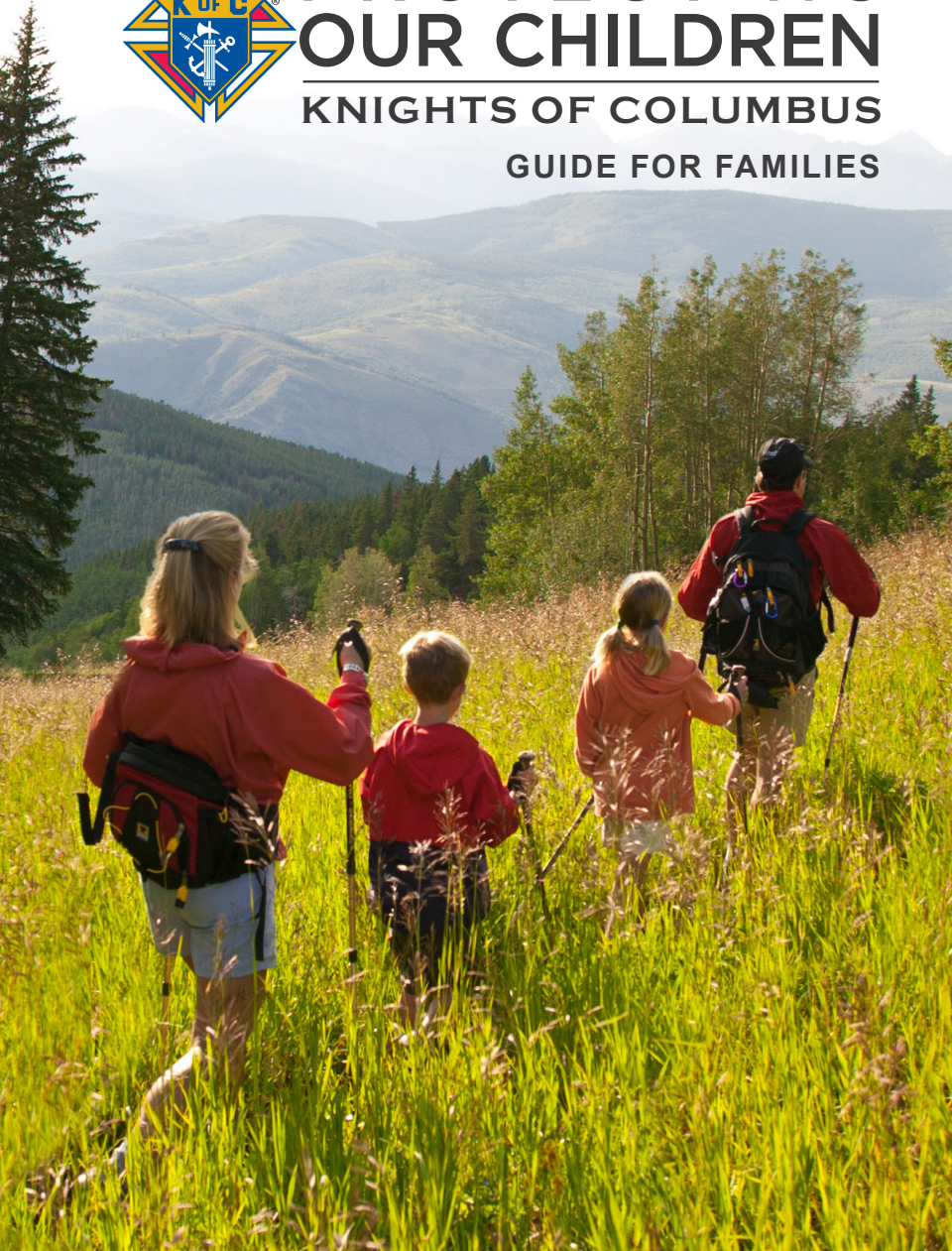




# PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



# Report Suspected Abuse

## Local and State Agencies

1-800-394-3366

[childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov)

## National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-4-A-Child

[childhelp.org](http://childhelp.org)

## National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-4673

[rainn.org](http://rainn.org)

## Support Resources

### Cyber Tipline

1-800-THE-LOST

[cybertipline.org](http://cybertipline.org)

### Crisis Text Line

Text **START** to **741741** from anywhere in the USA.  
Serves anyone, in any type of crisis,  
providing access to free, 24/7 support and information.


*\*Support resources do not fulfill mandatory reporting requirements.*

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# Protecting Our Children: Overview

## A FAMILY'S RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ABUSE (27 MINUTES)



In this film, Jeff and Judy offer a deeply personal - and practical - account of how their family addressed their son's abuse by a close family friend. They share the importance of faith and family in dealing with this life-changing event. Their hope is that all who hear their story will then be better equipped with critical knowledge and specific steps needed to protect the children in their lives. The family is joined by Dr. Monica Applewhite, a leading expert in child abuse response and prevention, who presents parents with the scope and scale of the risks families face today from sexual abuse and the practical ways parents and others can reduce those risks.


## PROCESS OF DISCLOSURE (5 MINUTES)



Disclosure of sexual abuse is not a single event but a dialogue or series of conversations or messages from a child over time. Having a strong, trusting relationship with a parent or other adult is often critical to a child making a successful outcry of abuse. In this vignette, Jeff and his son talk about their relationship prior to the disclosure of the abuse.

## FORENSIC INTERVIEW (3 MINUTES)

After abuse is reported, forensic interviews are vital to the prosecution of child sexual abuse offenders. They are conducted by specifically trained therapists to obtain a full, unbiased, and unhindered story from the victim. In this vignette, Jeff, Judy, and their son, describe the positive impact of the forensic interview. In the United States, Child Advocacy Centers are special community organizations designed to guide families and victims of abuse through the legal and healing process. Identify resources in your area that provide Forensic Interview services to victims of child sexual abuse.



**“A basic responsibility of every family - especially the Christian family - is to protect their children.”**

**- CARL A. ANDERSON, Supreme Knight**



### **RESPONDING TO BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS (13 MINUTES)**

In this short film, Dr. Monica Applewhite describes how to watch for boundary violations and offers appropriate words to say, right in the moment, when faced with potentially inappropriate behaviors. Better protect your children from the threat of sexual abuse by utilizing one or more of the following three key strategies: Block Access, Polite Confrontation, Impolite Confrontation.



### **HOW TO REPORT (6 MINUTES)**

When sexual abuse is disclosed or suspected, there may be a legal obligation to report to authorities. In this vignette, Jeff and Judy discuss the process they went through after their son made an outcry of abuse. Laws and procedures will vary by state and country. Check your local resources for the best approach to reporting abuse.



### **PROTECTING YOUR MARRIAGE(10 MINUTES)**

When a child suffers sexual abuse, the whole family feels the strain. In this vignette, Jeff and Judy talk about the many areas of support they used to help protect their marriage and family. They discuss how their faith and their faith community rallied around them and their children, how they sought professional support from therapists, and how this experience has strengthened their relationship, their family, and their faith.

# Our Family's Story

1980

Jeff's mother and Sally\* are best friends; Sally is married to Frank\*.

1991

Jeff and Judy are married.

1992

Jeff's mother passes; Jeff, Judy, and Sally become very close.

1994

Jeff's and Sally's families begin celebrating major holidays together.

Sally is named godmother to Jeff and Judy's oldest child.

1996

Jeff and Judy name Sally and Frank as their children's guardians in the event that Jeff and Judy pass.

2005

"Aunt" Sally and "Uncle" Frank move to the same city as Jeff and Judy. The families share biweekly meals, and celebrate birthdays and holidays together.

2013

Frank begins abuse of Jeff and Judy's 9-year-old son.

2014

February: Son discloses abuse to Jeff; Jeff and Judy report abuse to authorities.

2014

May: Frank is indicted by Grand Jury.

2017

May: Frank admits guilt, is convicted, and sentenced.

\*Names have been changed to protect the family of the perpetrator.

Before 2013, we considered ourselves vigilant, thoughtful, and protective parents. We limited access to our kids by those we didn't know well, and we surrounded our family with intimate, loving friendships that were built over many years through both church and family. We learned later that we were both ignorant and naive, thinking that strangers were the greatest risks to our kids, and that our entire family and the family of the perpetrator had been groomed for years. The depth of our closeness with the perpetrator's family gave him the opportunity to abuse our child and blinded us as parents. This caused us to overlook numerous red-flag behaviors that were being exhibited by the perpetrator on an increasingly regular basis. It also blinded us to numerous signs that our son was experiencing abuse.

We believe God has compelled our family to share its story to educate parents and guardians and to create more informed protectors of our children and at-risk populations. We pray that abused and victimized persons will have the courage and strength to speak up to their protectors and that their protectors will provide a safe and healing environment, as well as the opportunity for justice. Lastly, we pray that all people in the position of protector will grow in wisdom, knowledge, and strength, and that God will grant them eyes that see, ears that hear, and a heart of compassion.

As protectors, we need wisdom and knowledge to identify red-flag behaviors. We need courage and strength to prevent abuse and interrupt observed grooming and/or abusive behaviors. We especially need to recognize signs exhibited by a child experiencing abuse, to hear their outcry when they reach out for help, and to step in and protect them by reporting this crime to the authorities.

We are aware of how difficult watching our story may be, especially for parents of young children, but the knowledge and awareness gained will hopefully replace any fears with the confidence and purpose needed to protect your children and all at-risk populations from the crime of abuse.

When we shared our story with a close friend of ours whom we had known for years, he disclosed to us for the first time that he had also been abused as a child. His description of the crime of child abuse was burned into my mind permanently! "It is the greatest sin being perpetrated that no one is talking about!" It is our overarching goal to shine God's light in these dark places and, in doing so, put this information on every person's mind and lips, and to make the perpetrator's world impossible to navigate.

Please share in our mission by sharing our family's story, "Protecting Our Children," with everyone you know.

– Jeff and Judy

# Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity between a child and an adult or an older child and a younger child.

## WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE

*Any sexually related behavior between an adult and a child, or an older child and a younger child, is abuse.*

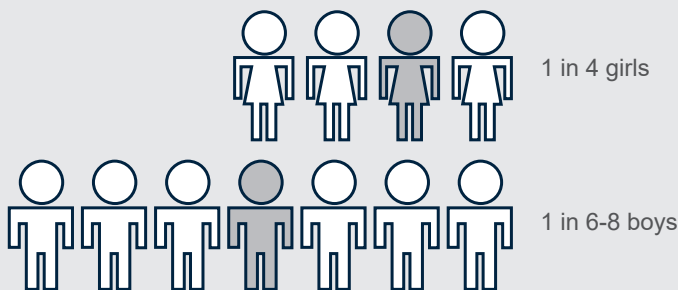


## Sexual Abuse may include:

- Exposing a child to an adult's privates
- Touching a child's privates
- Having a child touch an adult's privates
- Exposing a child to explicit material
- Talking graphically about sexuality

**Sexual abuse is extremely common.** 1:4 girls and 1:6-8 boys have experienced sexual abuse before they are 18 years old. 95% of abuse is perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts.

## CHILD VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE



**Often children don't tell.** Approximately 30% of girls, and 40% of boys, never reveal abuse. See "Process of Disclosure" vignette.



**Children may or may not show outward signs of abuse.** But when they do, here is what you may see:

### WARNING SIGNS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

- Regressive behavior
- Bed wetting
- Thumb sucking
- Fearfulness
- Hesitation to be around a certain adult

### WARNING SIGNS IN TEENS

- Self-harm behaviors
- Excessive anger or depression
- High risk sexual behavior
- Eating disorders
- Alcohol and drug use



**Closeness and trust with your child are key building blocks for prevention and disclosure.**

When your child confides problems or concerns or brings you into their circle of trust, show you want to be there by accepting them, listening to them, and devoting your time to their interests.

Sharing information about sexual abuse with your child is part of prevention. But preparing your child to protect him or herself should not be the cornerstone of your plan until the child is a teen. It is important to pay attention to who is in your child's life, and to intervene when there are boundary violations.

# Talking with CHILDREN about Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse, especially of small children, is a difficult subject to consider. Parents—and other caring adults—have a hard time even thinking about their little ones experiencing abuse. But sadly, one out of four girls and one out of six to eight boys experience sexual abuse before age 18. In our sacred vocation as parents, God calls us to provide our children with love, guidance, nurturing, and protection. Our children look to us to protect them and help them grow into the wonderful people God created them to be.

## How to teach your child about sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is when someone older or more powerful involves a child or adolescent in sexual activity. Teaching children what they need to know about sexual abuse really can't happen all at once. It takes time and it works best if you use a "building block" approach to teaching your child. If your child is already past the stages in this book, don't try to teach everything at once. Just take it a step at a time. Take time to plan

## People Who Sexually Abuse Children Count on Children Not Knowing About Their Bodies or Appropriate Boundaries

when and where you want to talk with your child. Read through all of this information regardless of your child's current age. It is intended to help you determine when your child is ready to learn different aspects of how to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

Determine your child's readiness to learn similar lessons. Build information about personal safety into all the other parts of learning for your child. Don't be afraid;

if you are calm and reasonable, your child will be too. If you approach this the way you would any other danger, like crossing the street, your child is unlikely to be scared. To reinforce the concepts, you'll want to bring up the topic many times, just as you do any other safety lesson. People who sexually abuse children count on children not knowing about their bodies or about what is allowed. They test the child's sense of personal boundaries and ability to react if a boundary is crossed. Remember, even though you may have talked with your child, most children are not able to protect themselves completely. Protection is still the responsibility of parents and adults.

# Boundaries

There are three types of boundaries: Physical, Emotional, and Behavioral. In wholesome relationships, these boundaries are not crossed, but in grooming relationships, they are.

## **Physical Boundaries are meant to protect your body.**

### **Physical Boundary Violations may include:**

- Touching too much or in ways that most adults would not touch a child
- Long hugs, or always demanding a hug
- Kissing a child that is not his or her own child
- Giving shoulder, back, or foot massages
- Tickling a child
- Holding an older child on the lap
- Touching or putting a hand on a child's legs
- Wrestling or horseplay

## **Emotional Boundaries are meant to protect your feelings.**

### **Emotional Boundary Violations may include:**

- Being possessive of children or teens
- Being controlling of children or teens
- Putting demands on a child for time, attention, or to meet the needs of the adult
- Talking to or treating a child like a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Being emotionally volatile with a child
- May occur with one child or a group of children

## **Behavioral Boundaries are meant to protect your actions.**

### **Behavioral Boundary Violations include:**

- Preferring time alone with a child or children
- Playing pranks on a child that are hurtful or scary
- Allowing the child to do things the parents wouldn't allow
- Breaking the rules of an organization for a child
- Using crude or inappropriate language with a child
- Getting the child to keep a secret for the adult
- Encouraging a child to participate in illegal behavior
- Giving a child cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
- Exposing a child to pornography

# What to Teach Your Child

## Step 1. Teach the names of body parts

Your child will need to know the names of body parts. Most experts agree that children should learn the anatomically correct names for their body parts. When your child is ready to learn the names of all body

### When Your Child is Ready to Start Learning Safety Rules, It is Time to Teach

### Rules About All Body Parts

parts. Just knowing that it is okay to talk about the more personal areas of the body is a big step for children.

parts, such as elbows and knees, don't leave out breasts, vagina, penis, and buttocks. Use natural opportunities like bath time to talk with your child about his or her body and to learn the names of body

## Step 2. Teach rules about body parts

Your child needs to know the rules about various body parts, including the genitals, breasts, and buttocks. When your child is ready to start learning safety rules, such as not touching a hot stove, it is time to teach rules about all body parts. Respecting and loving our bodies means that there are rules about how we treat our bodies. Rules are normal for children. It is something they understand and know how to apply.

Teaching about rules makes things less scary and helps you avoid talking about aspects of sexual abuse that young children are not able to understand.

### Rules for Body Parts

- Rules about our eyes are that we cannot poke them with things or poke other people's eyes with things.
- A rule about our skin is that we keep it clean by taking baths.
- Rules about our feet are that we protect our feet with shoes when we're outside and we do not stomp on other people's feet.
- Rules about our genitals are that we don't touch them in front of other people and we don't touch other people's genitals.
- Another rule about our genitals is that we don't let anyone else touch our genitals, except during a medical examination by a doctor and when our parents are present.

To reinforce your rules, follow them yourself. You can model a response for your child. If your child grabs or touches you inappropriately, gently remind your child, “Remember that is my breast and it is private, so please do not touch it.”

Knowing that a rule has been broken is usually easier for child to discuss than dealing with something that the child believes is terribly wrong and sinful. Especially for a younger child. How an abused child understands what happened will depend on the explanation he or she is given. Most

of the time, children who suffer abuse feel responsible; that is one reason why they don’t tell. Addressing abuse in terms of ‘breaking the rules’ may also encourage the child to report because the idea of telling someone about ‘rule breaking’ behaviors may be less frightening to the child.

### **Step 3. Teach what to do if someone breaks the rules**

Children need to know what to do if someone breaks the rules about their bodies or their boundaries. When your child is ready to learn about how to stay out of general danger, like not crossing the street alone, you can teach what to do when someone breaks the rules about his or her body. It would be wonderful if we could count on kids to tell us when someone touches them inappropriately, but research shows they often don’t tell. Because we know this, it is essential to provide children with some additional communication skills. To instill these skills, occasionally ask your child questions like “Has anyone touched your genitals?” or “Has anyone tried to get you to do something you didn’t like, or knew you weren’t supposed to do?” This accomplishes two things. First, it lets your child know that whether someone has been inappropriate is information you would like to have, increasing the likelihood that he or she will share it with you. Second, if there is ever a time that you are concerned about this type of behavior toward your child, he or she will be comfortable answering these types of questions because you have made them part of your parental routine. If children are asked to keep secrets, do something they aren’t supposed to do, or scared by others, they need to have the skills and comfort to talk about it immediately with someone they trust.

## **If Your Child Reports Boundary Violations**

Talk with your child more about the situation. Then you have some options:

1. Observe the situation yourself.
2. Interrupt the inappropriate behavior (See Responding to Boundary Violations short film).
3. Remove your child from the situation.
4. If it’s an organized program, talk to the people in charge.

# Pornography

Exposure to pornography may be a trauma in a child's life.

Although the average age of a child's first exposure to online pornography is 11 years old, children as young as 4 or 5 years of age may be exposed. Pornography can have an effect on the child's mental health and is often used by perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation in the grooming process. The perpetrator's grooming and abuse led to Jeff and Judy's son's curiosity and ultimate exposure to porn.

Regardless of the child's age at the time of exposure, how a parent responds may have a lasting impact on the child's ability to trust their parents in the future with difficult conversations. The overwhelming presence and easy access to

**“A warm and communicative parent-child relationship is the most important factor [in reducing porn use among children].”**

**- Dr. Patricia M. Greenfield**

pornography in today's society means that exposure is more likely and at younger ages. Parents should educate themselves on what pornography is, its effects, how to reduce the risk of exposure, and how to best respond once exposure has occurred. Then they should have ongoing age appropriate conversations with their children about the risks of pornography and how to avoid it.

For information on how parents can prevent and address their child's exposure to online pornography, refer to the resources below.

**Help your children learn how to reject pornography.**

[protectyoungminds.org](http://protectyoungminds.org)

**Learn how to encourage the appropriate use of technology.**

[cleanheartonline.com](http://cleanheartonline.com)

**Help those you love live free from pornography.**

[covenanteyes.com](http://covenanteyes.com)

**Learn more about the effects of pornography.**

[pornharmresearch.com](http://pornharmresearch.com)

**57% of teens, 13-17-year-olds, sought out porn monthly.**



*The Porn Phenomenon: The Impact of Pornography in the Digital Age, Barna Group (2016)*

# Talking with TEENS about Sexual Abuse

Talking with teens about sexual abuse starts with forming and maintaining strong, consistent communication with your teen. But for many parents, transitioning from being a nurturing caregiver for

## To Protect Teens from Sexual Abuse, Start with Strong, Open Communication

young children to being a nurturing confidante for a teen can be rough. It is very common for parents to feel confused about how much information to share with teens, where to draw the line with teens about what they share, and how to guide behavior through communication without treating the teen like a young child. At times,

parents may underestimate just how valuable a trusted advisor they can be to a teen or a young adult and fail to recognize how important their role still is in the decision-making of their teen. To protect teens from sexual abuse, start with strong, open communication.

### Part 1. Strong Communication

#### 1. Don't let other people convince you that having teen-aged children will inevitably be a negative experience.



Just like people who speak negatively about having children in the first place, naysayers against teens will not hesitate to paint a bleak picture of the challenges we face as our children become young adults. Remember that parent expectations have an enormous impact on outcomes for children, and that doesn't end when they turn

13. Teens need to know that we believe in them, expect the best for them, and love them.

#### 2. Start listening carefully, communicating, and giving your full attention to your child before he or she is a teen.

Starting too late is a common problem. It's much easier to establish strong patterns of communication when children are young than to "break in" once they begin to be more focused on peer relationships.

While children are young, begin asking plenty of questions about how they spend their time when they are away from you. When you pick up your child from school or an activity, find out who was there,

## **Learn About Your Teen's Interests and Perspectives and Find a Safe Place to Spend Time Together**

what they talked about, what was the most fun activity, what they ate, and if anything surprising happened. Children become accustomed to sharing information about themselves and enjoy the experience of having your full attention while they tell their stories. As time

goes on and your children get older, they are more likely to continue sharing information if talking with you has become a habit and you already share interests and ideas.

### **3. Shift your communication patterns as children get older.**

It should come as no surprise that teens do not always take kindly to friendly advice and direction. Even though it's painful for many parents to have helpful suggestions rebuffed, when young people figure things out for themselves, it can actually be a positive part of adolescent development. After all, we are striving to raise healthy, independent adults, not just grown-up children!

#### **Shift Communication Patterns for Teens**

- Ask a teen what he or she is planning to do to address a problem before offering advice or suggestions.
- Wait to be asked before offering guidance.

Shift your communication patterns to show respect and confidence in your teen's abilities to make good choices. Although every child is different, if a young person is going to be prepared to make decisions by the time he or she is 18 years old and has the legal authority to operate independently, our role in the process of decision-making should decrease incrementally over time.



#### 4. If you didn't start when your teen was young, it's not impossible to build something new. It just takes time.

An honest conversation about your desire to change things is a good place to start. One possibility is to find out your teen's favorite TV show, online personality, music, books or other interests. Without

#### Be in the Moment, and Share Some of Your Teen's World

judging, ask what draws your teen to the interest and ask your teen to share it with you. Then start from episode one, listen to music or the podcast. Be in the moment, and share some of his or her world. Remember, this is getting to know your teen, NOT a "teaching moment", so relax the parenting role enough to learn about your teen's interests and perspectives and find a safe place to spend time together.

to know your teen, NOT a "teaching moment", so relax the parenting role enough to learn about your teen's interests and perspectives and find a safe place to spend time together.

#### 5. If you want your teen to share information with you, you have to be willing to share too.



By the time children become teens, they have learned that information sharing is a reciprocal process and a matter of trust. Think about it: would we really want our children to share all their information with another person who reveals nothing of themselves?

Normally we would say that mutual sharing is the

healthier path, so it's up to us as parents to trust teens with more honest disclosure about our joys and challenges than we did when they were younger children. Does this mean they need to know all there is to know or that they should

hear about every wrong decision we ever made or every problem that we face? No. It doesn't. Teens still need security, and they are not there to be our support system. Chances are that a 15-year-old in a family that is dealing with serious challenges is already aware of the nature and gravity of those challenges. Open communication will likely be more reassuring than secrecy.

#### Information Sharing is a Reciprocal Process and a Matter of Trust

## 6. Develop your knowledge about the teen brain.

You will be glad you did because suddenly your teen's feelings and behaviors start to make sense! Teens naturally evaluate risk differently than children and adults. Once you understand the traits that are developmentally appropriate and know the reasons your teen is so different from five years ago, you may find yourself embracing your new young person in a completely different way. Being less judgmental can help a great deal with communication. Once you've learned about the teen brain, try sharing it with your teen so that he or she can develop a greater understanding of the impulses, changing worldview, and cognitive processes of the teen years.

Above all, don't give up on your teen, even if he or she acts as though you are not needed. Teens need support, stability, and someone who cares for them – that means staying involved!

## Part 2. Talk about Healthy Relationships

The second building block for talking with teens about sexual abuse is helping teens recognize both healthy and unhealthy friendships and dating relationships. Along with strong family relationships, positive patterns in friendships and early dating relationships are important building blocks for healthy relationships in adulthood. When we establish supportive, healthy interactions with both male and female friends, we are laying the groundwork for how we expect to be treated and how we expect to treat others.



### HINT:

Sometimes it's better to provide the information on healthy and unhealthy relationships and let teens decide which relationships are healthy and which ones may be unhealthy.

Even when a young person recognizes that he or she has become involved in an unhealthy or controlling friendship, it is sometimes easy for them to believe that it is not important to deal with the problem. The trouble is that unhealthy friendships during childhood or adolescence can set patterns that have implications for future friendships, dating relationships, and long-term commitments.

One option is to encourage the friend to change. Sometimes that works. However, when it does not, it is important to realize that, by accepting the unhealthy pattern, we are not doing the friend any favors. In fact, when we stay in an unhealthy relationship, we are actually encouraging our friend to continue his or her own negative pattern or behavior.

# Healthy vs. Unhealthy

## What are Signs of HEALTHY Relationships?

- We both like each other similarly.
- We share common interests and experiences together.
- My friend has other friends.
- My friend welcomes new friends to spend time with us.
- My friend treats other people with dignity and respect.
- I can count on my friend keep his or her word.
- My friend stands up for me.
- My friend is there for me in good times and bad.
- My friend encourages me to do the right thing.
- My friend tells the truth.
- My friend has my best interests at heart.

*Truly healthy relationships have most, if not all, of the characteristics listed above. If your friendship does not have these qualities, check the section below for characteristics of unhealthy relationships.*

## What are Signs of UNHEALTHY Relationships?

- My friend sometimes tries to hurt me emotionally.
- My friend makes unrealistic demands on my time.
- My friend tries to control me.
- I spend time worrying about this person or my relationship.
- My friend tells me who to spend time with.
- It seems like my friend takes more than he or she gives.
- My friend has threatened me or tried to intimidate me.
- When my friend gives me a gift, he or she expects something in return.
- My friend sometimes talks behind my back.
- My friend wants me to do things that will get me in trouble.
- I feel guilty or afraid when I spend time with my friend.

*If you checked two boxes, the relationship has the potential to be unhealthy. If you checked three or more boxes, the relationship has characteristics of a destructive, controlling, or unhealthy relationship.*

### Part 3. Talk about Dangers

Both online and in real life, teens face dangers from adults and other young people who could harm them through manipulation, blackmail, or physical assault. Developmentally, however, they may be inclined more toward solving their own problems than they were as young children. In most ways, this is a healthy and positive stage of development, but it can also be very frightening for parents to know that their teen may be dealing with dangerous problems and not seeking help from adults.

**Teens are Often More Willing to Deal with the Demands of a Blackmailer Online Than They Are to Tell Their Parents That They Are in Danger**

#### Talking with Your Teen about Sexual Abuse and Other Dangers

- Be honest at all times about real dangers. This is not the time to hide your concerns. Whenever possible, share the original source of information so that the information is not only coming from you.
- Emphasize that, if teens have already made mistakes or done something they regret, they can still come to you and it won't change how you feel about them.
- Carefully consider whether you will impose negative consequences when your teen voluntarily discloses mistakes. Most serious mistakes come with their own natural consequences, and you don't want to accidentally punish your teen for being honest and trusting you.
- Never stop nurturing your teen even when you feel frustrated and angry. Nurturing during early teen years facilitates brain development, aids the maturation process, and helps limit the natural risk-taking behaviors of this developmental phase.
- Share resources teens can use themselves directly when they don't feel comfortable coming to you about suspected or known abuse. Two examples are the **Crisis Text Line** and the **CyberTipline** cited in the inside cover and on page 22 of this Viewer's Guide. *(Note that these are support resources and do not fulfill mandatory reporting requirements for suspected or known abuse.)*

# If Your Child Experiences Sexual Abuse

## What to do if your child discloses abuse

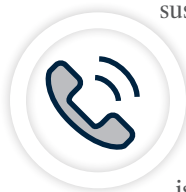
If your child discloses abuse, stay calm. Your child will decide how to feel based on your reaction. Listen to him or her carefully. Be sure your child knows it was not his or her fault and that you love your child very much. Don't ask "Why didn't you stop her?" or "Why didn't you tell me right away?" Those questions can make your child feel responsible. If your child seems okay, don't try to convince your child that he or she should be upset. Try not to criticize or threaten the person who committed the abuse. Although this is a natural response, it is likely that your child knows the person well and may even care very much for the person. Let your child know he or she is believed, that he or she is safe, and that it was the right thing to tell.

**Less Than 10% of Allegations are False**

When false allegations happen, they are typically due to a dispute that is occurring between adults.

## Report Suspected Abuse

Some professions are subject to mandatory reporting laws that require suspicions of abuse or neglect be reported to the police or to Child Protective Services. Even if you are not a mandatory reporter, we all have a moral duty to protect children. Call a child abuse hotline or the police to report any suspected or known abuse of a child. If the potential perpetrator is involved in an organization, it is also important to notify the organization so that it can take the appropriate steps to address the suspected abuse.



### Local and State Agencies

1-800-394-3366

[childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov)

### National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-4673

[rainn.org](http://rainn.org)

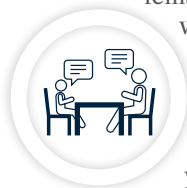
### National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-4-A-Child

[childhelp.org](http://childhelp.org)

## Counseling and Therapy

Children and teens may need counseling to help them heal from sexual abuse. Contact your local Catholic Charities for information, assistance, and referrals. You can also use Psychology Today's "Find a Therapist" website to identify a therapist in your area. Ask your child if he or she would be more comfortable working with a male or female therapist and then look for a person with experience working with sexual abuse survivors who are similar to your child. On the website, you can select "Christian" as a filter, or in an email to potential therapists, you can let them know that you are Roman Catholic and want to be sure that he or she is comfortable working within your faith framework. The therapist should be able to articulate his or her specific model of intervention and how it works with trauma. Try to talk with three or four therapists on the phone before you choose. The right person will often feel right at the beginning, but don't be afraid to change if the fit is not right for your child after one or two sessions.



### **Crisis Text Line**

Text **START** to **741741** from anywhere in the USA.

Serves anyone, in any type of crisis, providing access to free, 24/7 support and information.

### **Cyber Tipline**

**1-800-THE-LOST**

[cybertipline.org](http://cybertipline.org)

*Note that these are support resources and do not fulfill mandatory reporting requirements for suspected or known abuse.*

# Monica Applewhite

Dr. Monica Applewhite, Ph.D., is a leading practitioner in the field of abuse prevention. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Texas Christian University and a Master's of Science and Ph.D. in Clinical Social Work from the University of Texas, Arlington. Since 1992, she has worked with over 300 organizations to protect children, youths, and vulnerable adults. Monica is also the mother of a 20 year-old daughter and a 16 year-old son.



Dr. Applewhite's areas of expertise include screen and selection protocols, responding to survivors of abuse, female and juvenile sexual offenders, internal feedback systems, monitoring and supervision systems, policy development for the prevention of abuse, internal investigation protocols in organizations, risk management procedures for those with histories of sexual offending and current best practices to protect the vulnerable.

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