

Parents' CheckList

For the Prevention of Child Abuse



CHILD ADVOCACY
PUBLICATIONS

by Elizabeth D. Drake and Anne E. Gilroy

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Printed in the United States of America
US Copyright TX 1-954-253

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**CHILD ADVOCACY
PUBLICATIONS**

6825 NW 18th Drive • Gainesville, FL 32653
352-372-2534 • 352-376-8130 fax

www.childadvocacypub.com



Hey Mom, Hey Dad!

Being a parent is a hard job.

Dirty diapers. Noise. Crying. Not enough money. Decisions. Responsibility.

Sometimes it seems like too much to handle.

Sometimes you just want to run away.

All parents are pushed to the limit at times.

Stress builds and families get into trouble.

Children are hurt. Neglected. Ignored. Abused.

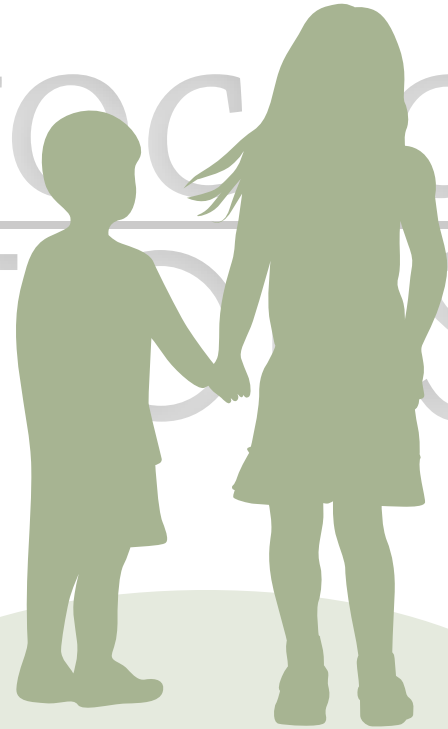
Nine out of ten abused children are hurt by their own parents.

Parents who are trying to do a good job raising a family.

Parents who want the best for their kids.

Parents like you.

- ✓ But child abuse doesn't have to happen.
Child abuse can be prevented. By parents.
By parents willing to learn why abuse happens.
By parents who care... by you!



Being Parents

We had our first lessons about how to be parents when we were only children.
The adults who raised us showed us how to be parents.
Most of us take care of our kids much the same way our family took care of us.
We use the rules, traditions, and even the same words our family used.

What was it like when you were growing up?

How did your parents treat you? How did they talk to you?

Listen to what you say to your children. What words do you use? What do you do?

Think about all the ways you talk and act just like someone in your own family.

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We often follow the examples our families set without even thinking about it.
Sometimes this is just fine.
But sometimes child abuse is part of what we learned.
Our grandparents' ways, good and bad, were passed to our parents.

Then to us.

And unless we learn new skills, we treat our kids the same way.



But a pattern of unhappy parenting can be ended.
You can get rid of the bad habits passed on to your parents and to you.
You can keep the good habits and learn more.
You can end a cycle of child abuse.

Try to remember what it felt like to be a child.
Then think about what kind of parent you would like to be.
You can decide what to change and you can try new ideas.
You can become the best parent possible.

But remember, no parent is perfect.
We all know the feeling of making mistakes.
We all say and do things we wish we could do over.

Make a promise to become a better parent.
If you break the promise, make it again and start over.

✓ **Start with this book.**

Read it and keep it and read it again.
Find new ideas to try.
Use this Check List to build new parenting skills



Stress

Crying. Wet pants. Spills. Noise. *Stress*.

Lots of normal things kids do can trigger your anger.

Not eating. Touching everything. Wetting the bed. Sleep problems. Making a mess.

These are problems that come and go in all kids.

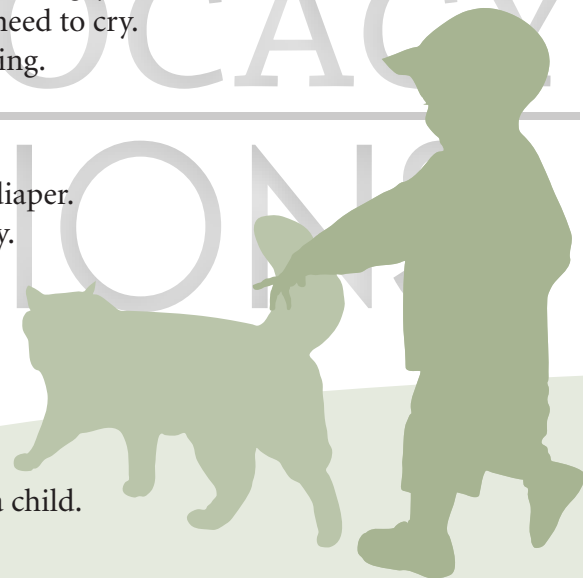
Crying is the first normal thing that newborns do — yet it can make parents angry.

Sometimes you can comfort a crying baby. Other times they just seem to need to cry.

Watch an infant who is crying hard and you can see how much he is working.

He is getting strong enough to lift his head — strong enough to roll over.

- ✓ See if a crying baby needs help. Check on him. Feed him. Change his diaper. If the baby doesn't need help and the crying makes you angry, get away. Put the baby safely in the crib. Leave the room. Calm yourself down.
- ✓ Never spank a baby for crying. Don't hit, slap or shake an infant. Watch how other parents comfort their babies. Try different ideas.
- ✓ As your baby gets older, learn what to expect. Maybe she's too young to hold a cup without spilling. Or to find her shoes all by herself. Don't expect grown-up skills from a child.



✓ Potty training may take months. And accidents will happen. Doctors say that most kids can't stay dry until age 2 1/2 or so. Don't punish children for potty accidents. Instead, praise them for trying their best.

✓ Let your kids learn by trying. Let them make mistakes and try again. Don't get angry and punish them for not being good at something new.

✓ Be clear and fair about rules. Make sure a child knows what you want him to do.

Remember, kids will follow your example.

Be smart about the lesson you want a child to learn.

Don't bite a child to teach him not to bite. Don't hit a child to teach him not to hit.

✓ Instead of spanking, try some new ways to teach your kids to behave. Use "Time Out." When a child breaks a rule, make it clear what she did wrong. Give her a few minutes of Time Out to sit alone and think about it. Set the kitchen timer. After the time is up, talk with her about how she should act next time.

✓ Try using punishment that isn't physical. Send a child to bed. Turn off the TV. Have him give up a treat or dessert.

✓ Lots of times kids only get attention when they are breaking the rules. "Catch" a kid being good! Tell her you are proud. Give her a hug!



Neglect

Pretend you are a one-year-old. It must be like visiting another planet!

Everything is strange and new. You want to touch and try it all.

You don't know when there is danger.

You don't know what is safe to eat or touch. You need a guide.

Kids need guides.

They don't know when there is danger unless you show them.

They need their parents' help to get safely through each day.

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Neglect means children are not getting the care and protection they need.

At every age, kids need care and supervision from parents — 24 hours a day.

Many parents think this is the hardest part of being a parent.

And more kids are reported for neglect than any other kind of abuse.

- ✓ Watch out for your kids so they stay away from things that are not safe...
Electric outlets. Hot stoves. Traffic.
Explain what can happen and why they should be careful.
- ✓ Move medicine so kids can't climb and reach it. Even aspirin can kill!
- ✓ Lock up guns. Lock up poisons like liquor, gas, bug spray, bleach and cleansers.



- ✓ Do not leave children under age 2 alone in a bathroom.
And turn your water heater down to 125° to prevent burns.
- ✓ Keep kids healthy. Wash hands, faces, and bottoms each day. Brush their teeth.
Clean all cuts or scrapes with soap and water. Go to the doctor or clinic if they are hurt or sick.
- ✓ Change your baby's diaper often. Diaper rash can be serious — treat it with the right medicine.
Take your baby for all his checkups. Ask the nurse or doctor any questions you have.
- ✓ Don't leave small children alone or in the care of other kids.
Don't leave kids under age 9 alone in the house after school.
Make sure older kids left at home know how to call you — and how to call for help if they need it.
- ✓ Be in charge of what your kids eat! Feed them 3 meals of good food each day.
Feed them rice and beans, milk, meat, peanut butter. Give them fruits, vegetables and juice.
- ✓ Taking care of your children is a hard job. And it's harder if you feel all alone.
Share the child care chores in your family. Make friends with other parents.
Trade baby-sitting. And trade ideas.

*Sometimes parents can't provide the right care because they are in trouble themselves...
depression, drug abuse, alcohol abuse.*

If an adult in your family is in this kind of trouble, the kids may not be safe.

Your family needs help. Protect your family by finding help.



Emotional Abuse

“Stupid! You never do anything right!”

Words can be painful.

Name calling, put downs, humiliation in front of others...

These are words that make a child feel worthless. Ugly. Not loved.

Parents may not know how damaging their words can be.

They may think harsh words will help their children behave.

But the pain of a parent's mean words can last forever.

Parents hurt their children without lifting a hand.

Can you remember a time when someone you loved hurt you with words?

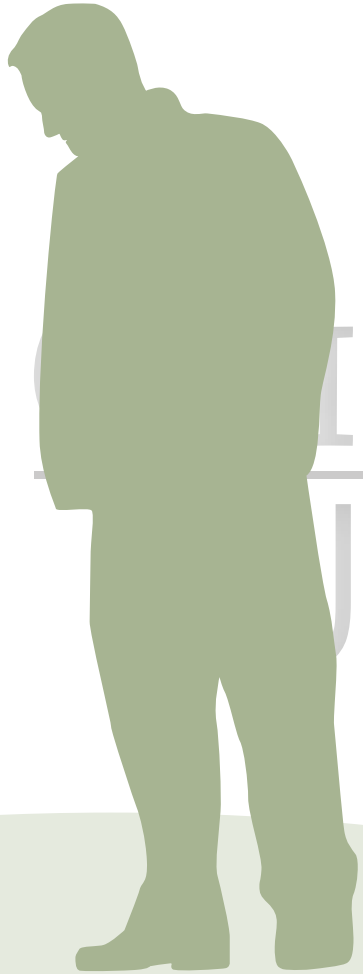
The sound of those words might last for years...

Build your child up with kind, proud words.

Use words to make him feel smart and good about himself.

What he hears from you now he will believe the rest of his life.





- ✓ Say “I love you” often. Give kids hugs. Smile!
- ✓ Praise your kids. “Good job!”
Tell them why you are proud of them.
- ✓ Give your young child easy jobs he can do well. Let him be a winner.
Help make him proud of himself.
- ✓ Don’t tease your child. It’s not a game to confuse or frighten a child.
Don’t make fun of the way a child looks.
- ✓ Stick up for your kids. Don’t let others tease or make fun of them.
Report any teacher or coach who uses humiliation to try to teach
children a lesson.
- ✓ Let your kids know they are important to you. Say, “You’re terrific.
I like you!”

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Physical Abuse

Parents have many worries.

Jobs, money, work, the family.

Stress and anger can build up.

A child's behavior may seem like the last straw.

Parents lose control and strike out at their kids.

Physical abuse can happen when parents are punishing a child.

Parents say, "I didn't mean to hurt him. I only wanted to teach him a lesson."

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But small children are easily injured by large adults.

Children and babies can suffer broken bones, brain damage or even death when parents use force to hit or shake them.

Kids are injured by angry parents. Don't let rage control your actions.

If your anger makes you afraid you are going to hurt your children, get help now!

You can learn better ways than hitting to discipline your children.

If you cause injury to your child, you are breaking the law.

Never use any object to hit a child. No boards, belts, sticks or switches.

Never hit or slap a child's face or head.

- ✓ Make a promise to get away from your kids if you feel too much anger. Leave the room. Get far enough away so you don't hurt your children.
- ✓ Call a friend or relative. Talk about your anger.
- ✓ Anger can make you want to hit and yell. Work it off! Walk it off. Take deep breaths. Count to 100.
- ✓ Take time for yourself. Feeling "stuck" with your kids can cause stress. Use day care or a baby-sitter to get a break. Swap baby-sitting with a friend.
- ✓ "Babyproof" your house. Fix it so you don't have to say "No" all day. Put away things you don't want your child to touch. Lock cupboards.
- ✓ Talk with other parents from your church, neighborhood or playground. Find out how they solve family problems.

✓ **Never hit or shake a baby.**

Babies are too young to be punished for any reason.
And hitting or shaking a baby never ends the crying.

Shaken Baby Syndrome happens when a young child's brain is injured from shaking. Babies can be blinded, brain damaged or even killed by shaking. If a child dies from Shaken Baby Syndrome, the adult can be prosecuted for murder.



Sexual Abuse

One out of 5 girls and one out of 10 boys is sexually abused.

Not by a stranger. By an adult they know and trust...

By a parent, a relative, a baby-sitter or neighbor, a teacher or leader.

Sexual abuse is not only rape.

Anytime an adult or older teen uses a child in a sexual way, it is abuse.

It may be sexual touching or kissing. It may be gentle or painful.

Clothes may be on or off. But it is all sexual abuse.

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Sexual abuse is never a child's fault, no matter what the adult made the child think.

Children are too young to give permission to adults for any sexual activity.

An adult who uses kids this way is committing a crime.

- ✓ Teach your kids not to keep bad secrets from you.
An adult can get away with abuse only if a child keeps the secret.
- ✓ Teach your kids not to let anyone touch their private parts.
Tell your kids to say "No" and run away from sexual touches.
- ✓ Don't make your child hug and kiss friends or relatives if they don't want to.
It teaches them they have to kiss and hug if an adult says so.
Let kids make the choice about touching others and being touched.



- ✓ Believe a child who tells you about a sexual assault.
Tell her you know it's not her fault. Promise to get help and then do it.
It is important for your child to know you are taking charge and acting to protect her.
- ✓ Your children may try to tell you about sexual abuse by giving only hints.
They may tell you about "games" they don't like. Or that someone "bothers" them. Find out more.
- ✓ Be careful of any adult who wants to have your child as a "special friend" and who tries to spend time alone with him. Make sure you know where your child is and what he is doing. Ask questions.
- ✓ See a doctor if your child has any pain or itch on his or her bottom.

Protect the child, not the abuser. Report sexual abuse!

It is against the law to keep sexual abuse a secret. Call a child protection agency or the police.

Don't be afraid you will cause trouble. The offender is the one causing the trouble.

If sexual abuse is happening in your family, it must be stopped.

A family cannot handle this problem alone. You need help.

Report what is happening. When you make a report, you can ask that your name not be used.

Tender Loving Care

When you were a child, did you know you were loved?
Did you wonder? It's the little things you can do each day that let your children know they are loved and valued.

- ✓ Say "I love you" often.
- ✓ Hold your baby for his bottle. Look into his eyes. Talk to your baby.
- ✓ Talk with your children. Talk about people, colors, food, animals, feelings. Answer kids' questions. Read together. Watch TV *together*.
- ✓ Have fun! Playing together is an important part of taking care of your kids.
- ✓ Go to their school and meet the teacher. Take your kids to church with you.
- ✓ Let your kids work with you. Show them how you do things.
- ✓ Tuck your children in at night.
Put them to bed at a regular time each night.
Send them to sleep knowing they are safe and loved.



Child Abuse Laws

Child abuse laws are written to protect children. If you or someone you know is being investigated for child abuse, keep these things in mind...

Reports are made by people who are worried, usually not by troublemakers. People report abuse because they think a child needs help.

Children are not automatically taken away because a report has been made. Sometimes parents are so angry and upset that their children are not safe at home. A judge may decide that another home is safer for awhile.

The children may stay with relatives or in a foster home for a time.

Investigators are not “for” the child and “against” the parents. Their job is to help the whole family and to be sure that children are safe.

- ✓ Please make a report if you think a child is being abused.
Neglected. Sexually abused. Emotionally abused. Physically abused.

Remember this — children are hardly ever abused only once.
Sometimes people who are worried about a child say, “I can’t prove anything.” It’s not up to you to have to prove it. That’s the job of investigators. A report of suspected child abuse makes it possible for a family to get help.



Getting Help

We all need help sometimes to be good parents. Getting help means learning new ways to teach kids to behave. It means making friends. It means knowing what to expect as a parent.

✓ Make a plan

Tell the people who gave you this book you want to learn more.

Look for parenting groups and programs you might enjoy.

Try some of them out to find one you like.

Find out if there is a Family Resource Center near you.

Ask your health department nurse. Or ask a school counselor.

Look for a day care center or Head Start that has classes for parents.

✓ Call and ask for ideas

Look in the phone book for Information and Referral.

Call a child protection agency or the United Way.

Look in the phone book for a Parents' Helpline or Hotline. Ask about any programs for parents.

Call 909-621-6184 and ask for a local chapter of Parents Anonymous.

✓ Call for help

You can call ChildHelp USA at 1-800-422-4453 (toll-free) anytime day or night.

Counselors will help you and answer any questions you have.



Other Resources from Child Care Publications

Una Lista de Ideas Para Los Padres Para La Prevencion del Abuso Infantil The Spanish version of the very popular *Parents' Check List*. Illustrated, 6" x 9", 18 page booklet. Elementary Spanish reading level.

Foundations of a Family Series

3 beautiful keepsake resources for parents, illustrated by children's book artist, Sharon McGinley-Nally:

The Promise Card A full-color, unfolding, 6" x 9" card that is both a beautiful keepsake and a powerful resource to welcome a newborn. Easy text. Includes an envelope.

The Nurturing Cards A set of 7 colorful, 5" x 7" cards to help parents understand and meet the emotional needs of babies. Easy text.

The Growing Cards A set of 6 full-color 5" x 7" cards that teach parents about the emotional growth and development of their toddler. Easy text.

Resources for Sexually Abused Children

Getting Together Guides female, school-age victims of incest and sexual abuse through the crisis of the report and intervention. Photo illustrated, 6" x 9", 24 page booklet.

Working Together Addresses issues of male victimization and intervention for sexually abused, school-age boys and their families. Photo illustrated, 6" x 9", 24 page booklet.

The Working Handbook A professional's guide to interviewing male sexual abuse victims. By Thomas Roane, M.A. Soft-cover textbook.

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