

Signs of emotional abuse:

- * Physical problems resulting from stress
- * Poor performance at school
- * Low self-esteem

Behaviour:

- * Depressed
- * Excessively passive or aggressive
- * Sleep problems
- * Slow development

Neglect

Neglect is the failure, intentional or unintentional, of a parent or guardian to provide food, shelter, clothing, health care and education for a child.

Signs of neglect:

- * Unkempt appearance
- * Lack of medical or dental care
- * Developmental delays

Behaviour:

- * Begs for food
- * Steals
- * Shows lack of interest
- * Appears dull, tired and listless
- * Constant fatigue

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in any sexual practices with an adult or older child.

It includes fondling of private parts, making suggestions of a sexual nature, penetration (anal, oral or vaginal). It also includes exposure to indecent pictures, film, literature or behaviour.

A child who is being sexually abused may become withdrawn, depressed, sometimes suicidal, self-destructive, obsessed with private parts and fearful.

Signs of sexual abuse:

- ◆ Precocious sexual behaviour
- ◆ Unexplained bleeding or discharge from genital or anal areas
- ◆ Stress related disorders
- ◆ Infections in the mouth or throat
- ◆ Sexually transmitted diseases
- ◆ Loss of appetite
- ◆ Unexplained vomiting or gagging
- ◆ Nightmares
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Withdrawal
- ◆ Low self esteem
- ◆ Problems at school

A child who reports that he/she is being abused should be:

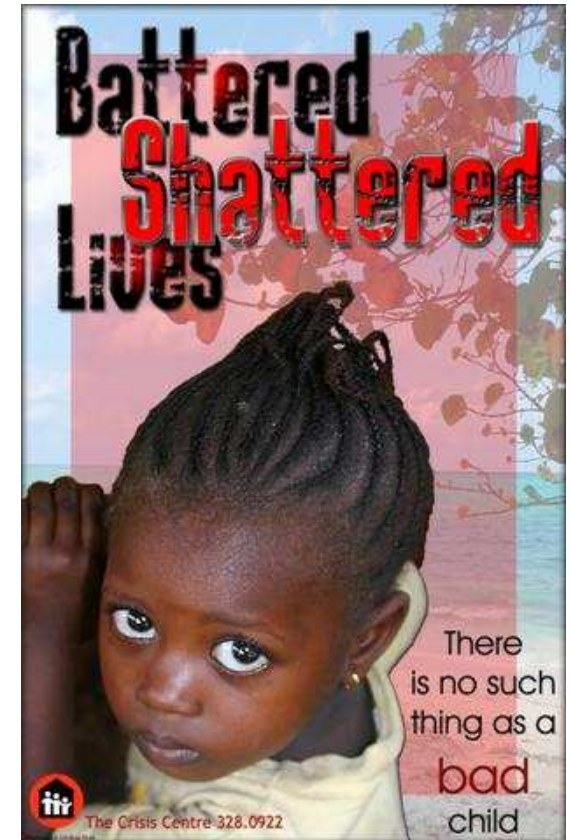
- * believed...children rarely make up stories of abuse
- * reassured that he/she is not at fault
- * given a promise that he/she will be protected from further abuse
- * taken to the doctor

When someone is sexually abused by a family member, or somebody close to the family, it is called "incest".

This form of sexual abuse is particularly traumatic because it breaks the trust a child has placed in someone who is normally caring and nurturing.

Sometimes parents, and especially mothers, do not want to believe that their child has been molested, particularly when it is someone, sometimes the breadwinner, who lives in the same house or nearby.

NEVER blame your child. Sexual abuse is **never** the child's fault.



The Crisis Centre

24-Hour Hotline:

328-0922

Fax: 328-7824

Family Violence Unit

**Ministry of Health and
Social Development**

322-4999

email: bahamascrisiscentre@yahoo.com
www.bahamascrisiscentre.org

There is no such thing as a bad child

Many children who are exhibiting violent or inappropriate behaviour are acting out behaviours they have experienced or witnessed in the home, at school or in the community. No child is born bad. Some learn bad behaviour. Some are victims of abuse.

Children need love. No one should bring a child into the world and then take no responsibility for giving love and nurture. When a child, from an early age, sees parents fighting, drug taking, inappropriate sexual behaviour, and criminal activity, it is difficult for a child to recognize right from wrong. When a child is abused, that child may shut down the ability to feel. With their feelings numbed by their experiences, the child may progress into destructive and anti-social behaviour.

The disturbed young child often grows into a disturbed and angry adolescent and an even angrier adult.

It is only when the child begins to demonstrate antisocial behaviour that the problem is recognized. Before that happens the child is just called a "bad child".

What is often missing in the life of a child who is exhibiting antisocial behaviour, is **love**.

Love is protecting children from abuse of all kinds, nurturing and disciplining without being abusive, feeding and ensuring the child has adequate clothing, nutritional meals and a good education. Demonstrating healthy life styles and moral values teaches a child the difference between right and wrong.

It is no use cursing in front of the child, gossiping about the neighbours, or fighting someone to resolve a conflict and then punishing the child for similar behaviour. Parents and guardians must be positive and loving role models for their children.

All forms of abuse hurt!

Children need to be loved. They have a right to live a life free from fear, pain and abuse.

Those who have been abused may experience:

- * Depression
- * Feelings of isolation
- * Low self-esteem
- * Self destructive behaviour
- * Guilt
- * Shame

Many of these feelings can continue into adulthood and may cause long term emotional problems and difficulty in forming trusting relationships.

There are several forms of child abuse:

- ◆ Physical abuse
- ◆ Emotional abuse and Neglect
- ◆ Sexual Abuse

**If you have, or someone you know,
has been the victim of child
abuse, please contact**

The Crisis Centre on 328-0922

or

**Child Protective Services on
322-2POD, 326-1451
326-0526 or 326-5560**



Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the intentional physical injury or pattern of injuries caused by a parent, guardian or caregiver.

Signs of physical abuse:

- * Unexplained bruises or welts
- * Burns
- * Unexplained lumps and bumps
- * Cigarette burns
- * Dental or oral injuries
- * Fractures to limbs
- * Head injuries
- * Cuts

A child who is being physically abused may:

- * Be afraid and timid
- * Scared to go home
- * Resist physical contact
- * Be violent towards others
- * Be too eager to please
- * Be depressed
- * Have low self-esteem
- * Be absent from school regularly

Parents and caregivers are being asked to find more appropriate ways to discipline their children.

Taking away privileges or giving time out is more effective than beating or flogging and is safer for the child's emotional and physical health.

Emotional abuse and Neglect

Emotional abuse is the repeated rejection and humiliation of a child, constant negative communication, withholding love and affection and the ultimate destruction of the child's self-esteem.