

Child Abuse Prevention

Child abuse isn't limited to the horrors of broken bones and painful bruises. In addition to physical abuse, children can be abused *emotionally or sexually*. When their basic needs are not met, they can be *neglected*, the fourth type of child abuse.

There are ways to prevent child abuse from happening, especially since it is usually inflicted by someone a child knows and trust. Here are some simple steps you can take to protect your child:

Love. Become the best parent you can be. When parenting overwhelms you, take a break or get help. Never take out your anger on your child. Give your child your full attention when you are together, and your closeness will grow.

Supervise. Don't leave young children alone. Keep a close eye on your child when you are out together.

Know. Find out all about a babysitter or any other caregiver with whom you entrust your child. Occasionally return early or make an unannounced visit to observe.

Make friends. Establish a network with other families. Get to know your neighbors. Watch out for each other.

Teach. Show your child how to use the Internet safely. Explain what is safe to do online and what is not safe. Consider it a warning sign if your child is secretive about online activities.

Keep in mind that child abuse crosses all racial, economic, and cultural lines. But by providing an environment that is loving, predictable, and structures; you are reducing the possibility of your child's being a victim of abuse.

Being a parent is wonderful, but there are times when frustration, anger, and our own problems can make raising children extremely difficult. Here are some ways to manage your emotions and break patterns which are unhealthy:

- Learn what is age appropriate for your child. Realistic expectations of what a child can do at a certain age will help you avoid frustration and anger. For example, a two year old can sit still for only a short while, so don't expect more.
- Take care of yourself. Get enough rest. Being short on sleep leads to moodiness and irritability which are likely to impact your parenting. Ask for support from family and friends if needed.

- Learn more about how to parent. Parenting classes, books seminar, support groups within your faith community – these all can be part of your ongoing education as a parent.
- If you suspect you have crossed the line with a child, seek help immediately so it doesn't happen again. Once you seek help, healing can begin.

There are many area resources for help. Some of them are:

Washington County DSS, Child Protective Services 240-420-2222

Washington County DSS, Purchase of Care (Day Care) 240-420-2270

Washington County Family Center – 301-790-4002

YMCA of Hagerstown – 301-739-3990

April is Child Prevention Month

Prayer: Thank you God, for this child of mine. Help me become a better parent. Strengthen me, and guide me to provide for my child the care that is needed. Amen.

For more information visit:

www.childabuseprevention.org

www.americanhumane.org

www.parentingteens.about.com