



Honor Thy Children

Archdiocese of Louisville continuing education for the awareness and prevention of child abuse

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ABUSE

Prevention starts with understanding



If you have a history of child abuse, having your own children can trigger strong memories and feelings that you may have repressed. This may happen when a child is born, or at later ages when you remember specific abuse to you. You may be shocked and overwhelmed by your anger, and feel like you can't control it. But you can learn new ways to manage your emotions and break your old patterns.

Remember, you are the most important person in your child's world. It's worth the effort to make a change, and you don't have to go it alone. Help and support are available. Here are some tips for changing your reaction.

- **Learn what is age ap-**

propriate and what is not. Having realistic expectations of what children can handle at certain ages will help you avoid frustration and anger at normal child behavior. For example, newborns are not going to sleep through the night without a peep, and toddlers are not going to be able to sit quietly for extended periods of time.

- **Develop new parenting skills.** While learning to control your emotions is critical, you also need a game plan of what you are going to do instead. Start by learning appropriate discipline techniques and how to set clear boundaries for your children. Parenting classes, books, and seminars are a way to get this information. You can also turn to other parents for tips and advice.

- **Take care of yourself.** If you are not getting enough rest and support or you're feeling overwhelmed, you are much more likely to succumb to

anger. Sleep deprivation, common in parents of young children, adds to moodiness and irritability—exactly what you are trying to avoid.

- **Get professional help.** Breaking the cycle of abuse can be very difficult if the patterns are strongly entrenched. If you can't seem to stop yourself no matter how hard you try, it's time to get help, be it therapy, parenting classes, or other interventions. Your children will thank you for it.

- **Learn how you can get your emotions under control.** The first step to getting your emotions under control is realizing that they are there. If you were abused as a child, you may have an especially difficult time getting in touch with your range of emotions. You may have had to deny or repress them as a child, and now they spill out without your control.

Archdiocese of Louisville

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If you need support or someone to talk to:

- © Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana:
800.CHILDREN/
800.422.4453
www.pcaky.org
www.pcaain.org
- © Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline
800.4.A.CHILD
800.422.4453
www.childhelp.org

Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Unexplained pain, itching, redness or bleeding in the genital area
- Increased nightmares or bedwetting
- Withdrawn behavior
- Angry outbursts/mood swings
- Loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing
- Sudden/unexplained avoidance of certain people or places
- Sexual knowledge, language or behavior that is unusual for the child's age.

HONOR THY CHILDREN TRAINING

Those employed or volunteering with youth must undergo a background check every 5 years as well as attend the "Honor Thy Children Training" that addresses child abuse, how to recognize it and how to report it. See your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator if you have not sat-

isfied either of these requirements. The "Honor Thy Children" training is a one time requirement and is normally completed within 30 days of beginning service. Each training session lasts 2 hours. The background check MUST be completed BEFORE any service/employment begins.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT ABUSE

Experience has taught us that actions by adults can be more effective than expecting kids to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Still, we know that children also need accurate, age-appropriate information about child sexual abuse and confidence that adults they know will support them.

Clear communication is a cornerstone of effective prevention. Make sure other adults and older children understand the expectations kids will have of them and how their cooperation will help keep kids safe.

Use concrete examples

Remember that in as many as 90% of situations where a child is sexually harmed, the child (and often their family) knows the adult, youth or child who is acting in a sexually inappropriate way. When talking with kids about child sexual abuse, use examples and situations that make that reality clear. (For example, "What if you are at a friend's house and her older brother asks you to play a game that makes you feel weird or uncomfortable or involves something like touching or taking off your clothes?" "Sometimes relatives, like grandparents or uncles or cousins, don't understand the rules and touch kids in ways they're not supposed to. If that ever happens, be

sure to tell Mom or Dad or another adult you trust so that we can help that person learn the rules.")

Model healthy boundaries

Sometimes we unintentionally confuse kids by insisting they hug Grandma even when they don't want to, or by saying, "Do whatever the babysitter tells you to do." Help your children practice setting healthy boundaries. When children tell us they don't want to hug and kiss everyone at a family gathering, support them by helping them find another way to show respect to family members (such as shaking hands, high fives, saying goodbye). Model saying "no" and assure your children that their "no" will be respected. If others disrespect or ignore your child's limits, it's your job to explain your family rules and insist on your child's rights to set boundaries.

Involve other adults

Children need to know that there are other adults in whom they can confide. Sometimes children are afraid that they will "get in trouble" if they tell their parents about something that happened. This fear can be reinforced by the person who is harming them. Help your children to realize that there are other adults who can help them if they don't want to talk to Mom or

UPCOMING TRAININGS

A current list of trainings is always available at www.archlou.org/safe
All trainings are at 6:30p unless otherwise indicated

1.11.16
St. Gabriel

1.18.16
St. Paul

2.1.16
St. Margaret Mary

3.15.16
Holy Trinity-Louisville

More trainings are being scheduled for both February and March and will be posted once confirmed.

Be sure to check archlou.org/safe for a complete list. Dates are subject to change and of course weather delays also effect training dates

Dad or if Mom or Dad is doing something that concerns them. Ask "If you don't feel comfortable talking to me about something, who else can you talk to?" or "What if something happens at school, church, the park, who could you talk to?"

Holidays can be an emotional time for many. If you suspect issues of abuse or have a general question, don't hesitate to reach out to our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org

CHRISTMAS BREAK MEANS MORE COMPUTER TIME

Christmas break (for some) means an increase in unsupervised time, this includes time on the computer. With increased time on the computer the risk of abuse via cyber bullying also goes up. If your child is targeted by cyber bullies, it's important not to respond to any messages or posts written about them, no matter how hurtful or untrue. Responding will only make the situation worse and provoking a reaction from you is exactly what the cyber bullies want, so don't give them the satisfaction.

It's also very important that the child not seek revenge on a cyber bully by becoming a cyber bully themselves. Again, it will only make the problem worse and could result in serious legal consequences for you or them. If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online.

Instead, respond to cyber bullying by:

- **Saving the evidence of the cyber bullying**, keep abusive text messages or a screenshot of a webpage, for example, and then report them to a trusted adult, such as a family member, teacher, or school counselor. If you don't report incidents, the cyber bully will often become more aggressive.

- **Reporting threats of harm** and inappropriate sexual messages to the police. In many cases, the cyber bully's actions can be prosecuted by law.

- **Being relentless.** Cyber bullying is rarely limited to one or two incidents. It's far more likely to be a sustained attack on you over a period of time. So, like the cyber bully, you may have to be relentless and keep reporting each and every

bullying incident until it stops.

There is no reason for you to ever put up with cyber bullying.

- **Preventing communication from the cyber bully**, by blocking their email address, cell phone number, and deleting them from social media contacts. Report their activities to their internet service provider (ISP) or to any social media or other web sites they use to target you. The cyber bully's actions may constitute a violation of the website's terms of service or, depending on the laws in your area, may even warrant criminal charges.

There are ways to prevent cyber bullying before it even starts. Now may be a good time to talk to your children.

To stay safe with technology, teach your kids to:

- Refuse to pass along cyber bullying messages.

- Tell their friends to stop cyber bullying.

- Block communication with cyber bullies; delete messages without reading them.

- Never post or share their personal information online (including full name, address, telephone number, school name, parents' names, credit card number, or Social Security number) or their friends' personal information.

- Never share their Internet passwords with anyone, except you.

- Talk to you about their life online.

- Not put anything online that they wouldn't want their classmates to see, even in email.

- Not send messages when they're angry or upset.

Always be as polite online as they are in person.

Regardless of how much your child resents it, you can only protect him or her by monitoring what they do online.

- Keep the computer in a busy area of your house so you can easily monitor its use, rather than allowing your child use a laptop or tablet in his or her bedroom, for example.

- Limit data access to your child's smart phone if he or she uses it to surf the web. Some wireless providers allow you to turn off text messaging services during certain hours.

- Set up filters on your child's computer. Tracking software can block inappropriate web content and help you check up on your child's online activities.

- Insist on knowing your child's passwords and learn the common acronyms kids use online and in text messages.

- Know who your child communicates with online. Go over your child's address book and instant messenger "buddy list" with them. Ask who each person is and how your child knows them.

Encourage your child to tell you or another trusted adult if they receive threatening messages, while reassuring them that doing so will not result in their loss of computer or cell phone privileges.

If you are able to identify the cyber bully, you could contact his or her parents or notify your child's school (after break) if the cyberbully is also a student there. Many schools have established protocols for handling cyberbullying but check with your child first as he or she may prefer to resolve the problem privately.

Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment

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No child or adult should ever experience abuse by anyone, especially a church minister. We all have the right to be treated with dignity and to expect our church to reflect the goodness of God in all of its dealings.

We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. Please let us know if you need further assistance or information by calling or emailing our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org or the Chancery at 502/585-3291.

We must heed God's call to care for the most vulnerable among us and to continue our efforts toward wholeness and health in dealing with sexual abuse.

WHEN A BABY WON'T STOP CRYING

Over the holiday break, some parents are at home with a newborn who aren't always used to being there. Adjusting to a new arrival who won't stop crying can be an adjustment. Here are some helpful tips when soothing a crying child

Recognize your limits. Pay attention to internal warning signs when you are feeling overwhelmed. The sooner you spot your personal limits, the easier it is to plan ahead—for extra help, a break, an excursion outside, or a quick pep



talk from a friend or loved one. The small things you do to prepare will help you get in the best frame of mind to care for your baby.

Remember that time is on your side. For most babies, crying peaks at six weeks and then gradually eases off. There is an end to the crying on the horizon! You may have to put in a little extra work right now and be very patient, but things *will* get better.

Reach out for support. If you can, enlist help during the fussiest times of the day. Say yes when people offer to help with housework,

meals, or babysitting. Find a group of moms to talk to and get out of the house when you can. Knowing you have some help on the way can make a big difference.

You don't have to be perfect. Parenting is not about perfection. It would be impossible to be fully present and attentive to an infant, especially a crying infant, 24 hours a day. Experts estimate that meeting your infant's needs at least *one third of the time* is enough to support healthy bonding and secure attachment. Don't worry about getting it exactly right all of the time. Instead, try to relax and enjoy the times when your baby isn't crying.