



## “Child Abuse” Does it hurt?

All abuse is harmful to the child even if the abuse seems minor or insignificant to the outsider.

Children who have been harmed by adults may have:

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS (feel unloved, worthless, find it hard to trust others);  
PHYSICAL PROBLEMS (sustain injuries that won't get better eg. brain damage);  
ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS (act violently towards others.).

It is never O.K. to hurt others.

## What can I do?

Some things you can do are:

- ❖ Stop, take time out, water the garden, go for a walk.
- ❖ Don't be afraid - ask for help - there are lots of people who will understand your problems and who are able to help.
- ❖ Get some childcare, Check out local supports - women's/men's groups, neighbourhood houses, parents' groups.

- ❖ Get to know your neighbours.
- ❖ Talk to someone you trust.
- ❖ Contact a local service agency.

## What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is anything which individuals, institutions or processes do, or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospects of a safe and happy development into adulthood.

PHYSICAL ABUSE - bruising, burning, shaking, beating.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE - depriving a child of love warmth, and attention, yelling or belting, 'picking on' a child.

NEGLECT - failure to provide basic necessities of life - adequate diet, medical care, clothing.

SEXUAL ABUSE - incest, rape, fondling, 'flashing' and other sexual activity.

# Why does it happen?

Parents with no supports and under a lot of stress can 'take it out' on kids. Here are some triggers:

**I SOLATION** - when there is no one to help with the heavy demands of children, problems seem worse.

**STRESS** - financial, job, medical problems, a family member with a physical or intellectual disability, lack of communication between parents etc.

**UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS** - parents expect children to be little adults and don't know about child development.

**LACK OF PARENTING SKILLS** - parents don't know how to discipline kids. They have no 'models' of successful families.

**POOR CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES** - many abusive adults were badly treated as children.

**DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS** - these limit ability to care for children properly.

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**IMMATURITY** - sometimes very young insecure parents can't understand a child's behaviour and needs.

**Every parent has the potential to hurt a child at sometime.**

**Child abuse affects the whole community, not just the child and family involved.**

Everyone is hurt when abuse occurs:

The child being abused is hurting

The parent doing it is hurting

If help is not received, the community will suffer in the long term.