Teaching Guide

Safe at Last
SAFE AT LAST

Teaching Guide
WRITTEN BY

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Preface

I have agonized, debated, and prayed for months about the need for writing and producing this videotape. The number of children who are physically and/or emotionally abused and neglected due to family violence certainly and clearly shows the need for prevention and intervention material for young children on this subject. Giving children the opportunity to recognize that they well may be victims of violence and how to report it may prevent further abuse and begin intervention to deal with the trauma early in their lives.

What then is my dilemma? Research shows that our shrinking economy drastically impacts the social services we are able to provide nationwide to victims of abuse. In most instances, our public health programs and children's protective services have vastly increased caseloads but are chronically understaffed and underfunded. This means that services are provided only to those most in need and/or in crisis. This is a band-aid approach to a major problem in our society and has no long-term impact on the problems of child abuse and neglect. Would we be encouraging children to report abuse but then not be able to give them the necessary help? Would we be hurting children more than helping them?

I came to the conclusion that this might be true in some cases. We are never going to have enough money to deal with all the victims. However, to sit back and do nothing is also a form of child abuse in my opinion. I firmly believe that PREVENTION IS THE KEY. The children of today are the parents of tomorrow.

My story line portrays the father as the batterer. However, I do not want to give the impression that fathers are the only ones who inflict physical and emotional abuse on their children. In fact, mothers usually are in the highest category of physical abusers of children.

I am not a psychologist or a sociologist; I am an elementary educator. My earnest prayer is that this videotape can be used as both a prevention and intervention tool in society's effort to break the cycle of violence within the family and give children everywhere the opportunity to be SAFE AT LAST!
Penelope sat at the kitchen table looking at a family photo album.

According to a report entitled, "Study Findings: Study of National Incidence and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect 1988" by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, more than 1 million children nationwide experienced demonstrable harm as a result of maltreatment in 1986. According to the same report, more than 1 million children nationwide experienced abuse or neglect, if children "threatened
"Mother, how old were you when this picture was taken?"

For far too long, the issue of family violence has brought to mind domestic arguments which often lead to spouse battering but "one that really wasn't anyone else's business."

However, when we read the shocking FBI statistics that say, "A wife is beaten every 30 seconds or 2,880 women are beaten everyday, or 1,051,200 each year," we must realize that there are also thousands of children in these homes who are witnessing and/or experiencing this violence daily. Child abuse is everyone's business and we must all do our part to combat it!
Mother Mouse, who was preparing Penelope's favorite dinner, looked over Penelope's shoulder and said, "I was about ten years old."

William A. Stacey and Anson Shupl state in their book, The Family Secret, "If woman battering and child abuse were diagnosed as medical diseases, then our nation's public health officials would not hesitate to claim we are currently experiencing an epidemic."
Family violence may also be directed toward the children in the family. Often, a husband who abuses his wife will also abuse his children. In some cases, the abused wife/mother will take out her frustrations on her children and abuse them. In fact, mothers rank at the top of the list of physical abusers of children. So it should not be surprising, then, that children who are abused often, in turn, abuse their brothers and sisters.

"You look so sad and lonely, Mother, as though you didn't have a friend in the whole world."
We as educators, physicians, nurses, social workers, etc., often see children with bruises, burns, and welts. These youngsters are very reluctant to share any information as to the origin of their injuries. Many times, the children will minimize and change their stories each time they are questioned about them. Most children are afraid, ashamed, and feel guilty; and above all, don’t trust anyone enough to share the awful truth about their abuse.

Many children develop their own coping system. The seeds of fear, guilt, and shame they feel from the violence and abuse they experience in their early lives are often buried deep within. Later in life, triggered by a rain of stress, these seeds sprout a bumper crop of emotional problems.
"You see, Penelope, that was the fourth school I had been to during that year. I was always the 'new girl.' I didn't have any friends."

Eliana Gil, Ph.D., in her book, Outgrowing the Pain, says: "Children who grow up being put down, held back, beaten, taken advantage of, ignored, misused, or maltreated find it hard to trust and expect little from others except pain. They protect themselves by staying isolated and may frequently feel that as long as they don't have to relate to anyone else, they will manage."
"Why not, Mother? I like to have lots of friends."

Children who are frequently and suddenly uprooted have to leave their familiar surroundings and security; e.g., their rooms, home, friends, and school. Many times this is also compounded by violence and rejection in the home. These children are forced to cope with overwhelming problems that would most likely throw any "well adjusted" adult into a complete tailspin. Yet, this happens to young children all the time.

How true is the statement by Florence Littauer in her book, Lives on the Mend, "Victimization comes when you haven't asked for it and you don't deserve it, but it falls on you anyway."
"Well, every time I made new friends, we would move again and I would miss them so much. So I decided it was better not to make friends again. Besides, I was embarrassed to have friends over."

Suppression of feelings can repress and depress a child. Abused children feel they are to blame for the discord in the family.

We must assure children that they are not responsible or to blame for their parents' problems. Often, they are the objects of the violence but not the cause.
"I never knew if my dad would get angry at me and spoil everything. I didn't want anyone to know about all the fighting that was going on at our house."

Normal pressures of the day can be overwhelming to all of us at times. If alcoholism or drug abuse is involved, coping with the everyday problems of a parent becomes more difficult. The reaction to even minor infractions is often quick and brutal. At other times, the family and its needs are simply ignored. In either case, real physical or psychological damage is done to the children involved.
"Why did you and grandma and grandpa keep moving from place to place?"

Spouse battering and child abuse are usually thought of as two distinct and different forms of abuse. However, whenever children are involved in the spouse-battering situations, they always become victims and need protection, refuge, support, and encouragement.
"My dad got fired from his job so often. So we would move from town to town so my dad could find a new job. This went on for years."

Unemployment of the parents, particularly the father, brings undue stress on the family. Often parents take their feelings of frustration out on family members during the loss of a job and income.
"You see, Penelope, my dad would stop and drink with his friends after work."

The precise role of alcohol in family violence has not been determined by definitive national studies but many smaller studies have been done and the relationship is clearly there.

Dr. Richard Gelles, a sociologist at the University of Rhode Island, found that drinking played a part in 47 percent of the cases of spouse abuse that he studied.

Maria Roy states in her book, Children in the Crossfire, that primary substance abuse accounts for approximately 51 percent of the abusive population.
"When he drank, he would change from being a kind, gentle man to a very scary, mean person. We never knew what to expect."

It is known that alcohol can have tragic consequences within the family. The use of alcohol lowers the inhibitions and lessens self control, causing one to give way to feelings of anger and frustration against one's spouse or children.

Several theories have suggested that alcohol is used as an excuse for violence because, when drunk, a person can deny responsibility for his or her actions.

Alcohol abuse among women in America is a growing problem and one of the prime causes seems to be abuse. Many women, when faced with the emotional and physical trauma of abuse (the frustration, shame and fear) turn to alcohol.
"My dad didn't know how to control his anger. Sometimes, he would come home and yell and scream at my mother and me."

The verbal abuse that usually accompanies physical abuse cuts even deeper than welts and scars. For people, especially children, to be told on a daily basis how stupid they are, that they are to blame for the family fights and arguments, and that it would be better for everyone if they had never been born, causes wounds so deep that they need professional counseling and guidance to heal.
"Sometimes he would hit and kick us and threaten to do terrible things to us."

Forcing a child to live in a violent home is a form of child abuse. Boys who grow up in violent homes learn that violence is acceptable social behavior; girls grow up learning to be victims.
"Other times, he would come home and just say things that would make us feel awful. My dad told us it was all our fault that he was angry; that we were rotten, stupid, and worthless, and that he hated us."

When we hear the terms "family violence" or "battered child," we automatically think of physical abuse. Hidden under these terms, there may also be these forms of abuse: verbal, emotional, sexual, and neglect.

When the person who loves you, such as a mother, father, or husband, uses words as weapons or sexually molests you, no physical scars are visible but the hidden scars are far more damaging to the victim's self-image.

Often parents use the exact same words that their parents used on them as children, even though they vowed never to use this type of behavior with their children. Adults tend to parent as they were parented.
"We felt so bad. I know now that if someone tells you something often enough, pretty soon you start to believe it."

When children are called names and told they are dumb and how much they are hated, they feel worthless and crippled emotionally. They will carry the scars of their childhood into their adult lives. Most parents who abuse their children were abused as children. Our goal must be to break the cycle early in the lives of children. Through education, perhaps we can prevent family violence from occurring generation after generation.
"That's what we did. We started to believe it was our fault, so we kept everything a secret."

Victims of abuse as well as the perpetrators are guilty of perpetuating the secrecy of family violence. Often, the victims do not think of abuse as a crime but as something they deserve.
"Many nights, my mother and I slept in the car or hid in the cornfield behind our house until my dad would fall asleep."

Children often suffer emotional disturbances as a result of physical abuse. These might include unreasonable fear, feelings of helplessness, worthlessness, and the inability to trust others.
"I was scared all the time, too. Sometimes I was so scared that I was afraid to go to sleep."

Fear is a constant companion for family members in an abusive situation. Many of the adult victims whom I interviewed said that although alcohol played an important role in triggering abuse, the thing they feared most was the unpredictability. Any event could trigger abuse at any time.
"I thought my dad would hurt my mother while I was asleep. Many nights I cried and cried until I finally fell asleep."

AWAIC, INC. (Abused Women's Aid In Crisis, Inc.) has found that many children dread going to sleep because of the constant fear of their fathers returning home at night drunk and violent and ready to beat up their mothers.
The Children’s Division of the American Humane Association states that a child who is always tired and tends to fall asleep in class is either not well, his or her parents are neglecting to regulate his or her routines, or he/she is simply unable to get to bed and to sleep because of family quarrels.

Cynthia Crosson Tower of the National Education Association, lists the following as School Performance Abnormalities (1984):

- Learning problems that cannot be diagnosed when I.Q. and medical tests indicate no abnormalities, but the child still cannot meet normal expectations. The answer may well be problems in the home, which may be abuse or neglect. Particular attention should be given to the child whose attention wanders, who becomes self-absorbed, and who can completely “turn off.”
- Cheating, lying, stealing. This may be related to too high expectations at home.
- Low achievement. In order to learn, children must convert aggressive energy into learning. Children who are either overly aggressive or lacking in energy may have little or no energy for learning.
"I suppose my teacher probably thought I was just being lazy."

Teachers are obligated by law to report suspected child abuse. It is crucial that teachers are given necessary and proper training to identify the various forms of abuse. This can and should be done through college and university courses as well as in-service training.

The Children's Division of the American Humane Association has identified and published a list of indicators of child abuse. This list will help teachers, school administrators, nurses and counselors identify and report the abuse. This list can be found at the end of this teaching guide.
"Why didn't you tell your teacher?"

A teacher, counselor, or some other school employee may be the only loving, understanding, and responsible adult in some children's lives.

We, as educators, need to be aware that many of the children in our classrooms are victims. Early intervention and treatment for children from abusive homes are important to prevent revictimization. For many, the scars will never fade unless we help them. Perhaps we can help prevent: school drop-outs, substance abuse, runaways, suicide attempts, and gang-related activities.
"I was afraid to tell because my dad said, 'I'll beat you so you won't be able to sit down for a week if you ever say a word to anybody.'

Dale Evans Rogers in her book, Hear the Children Crying, states that child abusers have an ancient and overworked excuse or explanation for their abuse: "He's my kid; I have a perfect right to discipline him when he needs it."

However, when discipline is administered by an enraged or out-of-control parent, without regard for the child's physical or emotional welfare, it becomes child abuse and should become a concern for everyone who is aware of it.
"What goes on in this house is nobody's business."

The secrecy that surrounds family violence contributes to the abuser's feeling of power and dominance. It also permits the abuser to keep up the facade to the community of being a fine, upstanding citizen.

This veil of secrecy covering family violence and child abuse must be lifted. The general public must be made aware and informed and encouraged to bring about the necessary ways and means to help families who are caught up in the cycle of violence.

The Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence in 1984 made the following recommendations for victim assistance:

- Family life centers
- Batterers' programs
- Drop-in crisis centers
- Crisis nurseries
- Respite day-care centers
- In-home services
- Shelters
- Safe home networks

Helping victims of family violence is a community responsibility. Local government agencies, community service groups, the business sector, and volunteers should all play a key role in meeting the needs of the victims.
"Did grandpa hit and kick you too, Mother?"

Abused children often refuse to admit that abuse has occurred. Many youngsters simply do not realize they have been abused. For many, it's not abuse; it is a way of life to be beaten with belts, electrical cords, and coat hangers or to be knocked across the room. These children usually blame themselves and have been told many times they had it coming and deserved this punishment.

Children may suffer serious physical injuries that may be temporary. Unfortunately, often the injuries turn out to be permanent, such as impaired eyesight or hearing from blows to the head, scarring from burns, and internal injuries from kicks and blows to the abdomen. Family violence can even result in death.
"Yes, sometimes he would."

Judy Burks describes the "Battered Wife Syndrome" common in victims of child abuse in her book, Child Abuse and Personal Safety. "Survivors of child abuse often marry into a battering situation. They display an inability to trust, to grow, and to succeed. Women who were abused as children will often marry men who will abuse them as adults. Both are likely to become abusers of their own children. Under the stress of parenting, they tend to parent as they were parented. We are dealing with victims of victims and must intervene to stop the cycle."
"I would have to wear long-sleeved shirts and pants to cover up the bruises on my arms and legs."

There are some observable signs which may identify abused or neglected children although they are not absolute. Some of these indicators may be found in non-abusive situations. In practical terms, however, the following characteristics should trigger concern, especially when several are present.

Outward physical indicators (Cynthia Crosson Tower, National Education Association, 1984):

Extensive bruises, especially numerous bruises of different colors indicating various states of healing. Strange bruises are always possible even in normal activities. It is their frequency that arouses suspicions of abuse.

Ages of bruises can be approximately detected by the following colors:

- Immediate - few hours = red
- 6-12 hours = blue
- 12-24 hours = black-purple
- 4-6 days = green tint (dark)
- 5-10 days = pale green to yellow
"One time, I even had to stay home from school because I had a nasty bruise on my cheek."

Outward physical indicators by Cynthia Crosson Tower, continued:

- Burns of all types (although burns may be accidental), but especially glove-like burns, which indicate that the hand has been immersed in hot liquid; burns which are more intense in the middle and radiate from there, which could indicate hot liquid poured on the skin; cigarette burns; burns in the shape of an object such as a poker or an iron.
- Bruises in certain shapes; e.g., hand prints, hanger marks, etc.
- Frequent complaints of soreness or awkward movement as if caused by pain
- Marks that indicate hard blows from an object, such as an electrical cord or other whip-like objects that could make a burn around the body
- Bruises on multiple parts of the body indicating blows from different directions
- Unexplained abdominal swelling (may be caused by internal bleeding)
- Extreme sensitivity to pain
- Frequent bruises around the head or face
- Bald spot, indicative of severe hair pulling
"Didn't grandpa love you and grandma?"

Despite the violence and abuse, many family members love and care for each other. They keep hoping that things will get better. Many women still believe in the old fairy-tale ending, "and they lived happily ever after." But without help for both the abuser and the victims, the violence continues and as time goes on usually gets more severe and more frequent.
"I'm sure he did, Penelope. But my dad didn't know how to show us that he loved us."

Abusers may be afraid to seek help for their abusive actions, fearing that they might be arrested or that their children might be taken away from them. They may not realize that by not seeking help, the situation will continue and, in fact, become worse.
"I know now, my dad needed special help to learn how to control his anger and his drinking problem."

Many abusers might not know that they can get help to learn how to deal with their emotions, frustrations, and anger. Abusers hide their violent behavior by blaming their wives and children instead of being accountable for their own actions. This, of course, is denial.

Self-help groups are available, such as AA, Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous, Parents Anonymous. These groups help addicted and abusive parents and their children through support and counseling.

Family Stress Centers offer counseling on appropriate ways to deal with stress.

Hotlines provide telephone counseling and information on the various resources available in the community.
"Why didn't your mother call the police?"

Reporting family violence to authorities carries its own risks. All too often, the police minimize or ignore the problem and the victim is left alone to face the abuser. People continue to think of battering as a private affair. Often the mother and her children feel they have no alternative but to stay in the abusive situation since the abuser may be the breadwinner.
"I'm not sure. Maybe she was afraid to call the police because of what my dad would have done to her if she had called for help."

One of the recommendations made for the justice system by the Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence in 1984 was that family violence should be recognized and responded to as a criminal activity. The Task Force also stated:

The criminal justice system has responded inconsistently to acts of violence. Violence committed by a stranger is classified as an assault. If a person is apprehended after beating up a stranger, the usual result is an arrest and prosecution for assault and battery. Yet, when one family member assaults another, it is commonly viewed as a family squabble, something less than a real crime. This disparity in the legal response to assaults must be eliminated.

An assault is a crime, regardless of the relationship of the parties. A person beaten in the home is no less a victim than the person beaten on the sidewalk in front of the home. The law should not stop at the front door of the family home.
"And maybe she was ashamed to let people know that we didn't have a happy home."

"There is a great deal of stigma involved in publicly reporting this crime. In addition, the very real danger of retaliation by the husband also keeps many women from reporting," writes Mindy Resnik in the National Organization of Women (NOW) Counselor Training Manual.

As one victim said to me, "A restraining order can be obtained but a piece of paper will never stop a punch or a bullet."

In the January 1986 issue of Reader's Digest, Susan Schechter, a researcher at the Women's Education Institute in New York City and author of Women and Male Violence, is quoted: "Wife beating is a crime of rage and of power. It is a pattern of coercive control. One person dominates another, often making her afraid to do what she wants or even say what she thinks."
"Besides, the next morning, my dad would always tell us he was so sorry and that he would never do it again. I guess my mother believed him."

In her book, Getting Free, Ginny NiCarthy says, "The batterer believes he can force change by frightening the woman into submission and fidelity; and he, like the woman he victimizes, renews his hope for change."
"I didn’t know what to believe, I just wanted things to be better. I just wanted a safe home."

Living in a home with family violence as a steady diet takes its toll on children just as it does on the mothers. Even though some children are not direct victims of physical abuse, many have witnessed their mothers being beaten by their fathers or live-in boyfriends. This form of indirect abuse can also be very traumatic and can cause severe stress and emotional upheaval for youngsters. This indirect abuse can cause untold problems in their adult lives. Professional counseling is advised for the children as well as for the battered mother and the battering husband/father.
Lois Haight Herrington, former Assistant Attorney General of the U.S. Department of Justice, stated at the 1984 Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence, that victims of domestic violence often are uniquely isolated. Friends, who might otherwise be a source of support, hesitate to intrude on the privacy of "family matters" or to "choose sides."

Battered women/mothers usually have very low self-esteem. Often they are depressed, unhappy and see no hope for a better future. These mothers have a difficult time being a positive, loving, and nurturing parent. Their children often become victims of emotional or physical abuse and neglect by their unhappy, hurting mothers.
"Yes. My mother wanted us to be safe and happy. She finally realized that we had to get away from my dad's anger before things would get better."

Most women who leave the abusive home do not do so because of a single beating incident. The majority of women have been beaten on the average of anywhere from several times a month to daily.

Unfortunately, most women do not leave soon enough. When women finally make a decision to leave, the situation is very intense and they fear for their lives and those of the children.

Some women will endure the abuse while it is directed only at them. When the violence is focused at the children, finally they take action to change the situation.

Several victims told me, "When he beat me, that was one thing; but when he threatened to kill the kids, that's when I knew I had to do something."
"Finally, my mother heard about a place called a Women’s Shelter. One morning after my dad left for work, my mother took me there."

Many battered women are mothers. Children in this environment are at risk of being physically and emotionally abused or neglected by the batterer. They are in greater danger than usual because the battered mother certainly cannot protect her children from harm.

However, as I have said before, the fear for the safety of the children is often a major motivator for women to leave a violent home. The potential of having their children removed from the abusive home by authorities also prompts some women to leave and seek refuge and help in a shelter.
"What's a Women's Shelter?"

Women's Shelters offer safety and security to victims who are forced to flee their own homes to escape abuse but have no other place to go. Women's Shelters can play an integral role in helping these women and their children rebuild their lives and establish themselves in the community.

The telephone numbers of these shelters usually can be found under the heading of "ABUSE" or "CRISIS HOTLINE" in the community service section near the beginning of the telephone directory.
"It's a safe house where mothers and their children can go to get away from the person in their homes who is hurting them."

Language and cultural differences might also be an overwhelming barrier for escaping a violent home.

In ethnic areas where many people do not speak English, materials that publicize the shelter and victims' assistance services should be available in appropriate languages and assure confidentiality.
"What was it like in the shelter, Mother?"

The need for assistance for the victims of family violence ranges from the most immediate need for safety and shelter to long-range needs for post-trauma counseling and therapy.
"The people in the shelter were very nice to us. They talked to us about what was happening at our house and about our feelings."

Many children in shelters tend to be confused by all the feelings they are experiencing because of moving to a new environment; the tensions of the violent scenes at home and of leaving their fathers are feelings that are always with them even in this new, safe setting.

Often the children handle these feelings by becoming very aggressive at the shelter, fighting with their siblings, being rowdy, and at times, being out of control.
"Mom got information about how to get us a different home, food, and a new job. We stayed there for about three weeks."

Other services offered by most shelters range from individual and group counseling, emergency medical care, food, clothing, transportation, specialized services for children, and information about available community services.
"Did you get to take any of your toys to the shelter, Mother?"

The research and testimonies I have seen and heard all indicate the dire need for more women’s shelters and safe homes. Most are functioning at capacity all the time and have waiting lists. This certainly cannot be very comforting to a woman who has finally mustered up enough courage to leave a battering situation or even perhaps is fleeing for her life.

Lack of funds has forced many shelters and safe homes to cut back on services, turn victims away and even shut down operation.

Greater public awareness about the plight of victims of family violence is needed to insure financing and support of these temporary residential facilities.
"Yes, I remember taking my favorite doll. We left home very quickly because we knew that my dad would be very angry if he found out that we were going to leave."

Although life at a shelter is safe, secure, and non-violent, it is still a very traumatic event in the lives of children and they often display a variety of behavior.

In their book, The Family Secret, William A. Stacey and Anson Shupl, say:

Children who have witnessed their parents' violent fighting, communicate the stress they feel in many ways. Some show signs of what psychologists call "regressive behavior," reverting back to habits of very young children: thumb sucking, bedwetting, or infantile temper tantrums. These children are trying to find peace of mind by escaping to earlier safe times when they did not have to worry about violence.
"Did you have to go to a new school again, Mother?"

Children from all walks of life sit in our classrooms, including those from dysfunctional and violent homes. These youngsters come to us feeling lonely and depressed and usually have very low self-esteem.

Because their emotional needs of love, trust, security, etc., have not been met at home, they have substituted feelings of fear, anxiety, hostility, and mistrust. It is often very difficult to know how to handle these youngsters because they resist our offers of love and help.

Often, we as educators are not given any background information on these children. So, we expect them to proceed on our academic schedules and become frustrated when our best efforts don’t bring about the expected results.

Because of their lack of academic progress, these children are diagnosed as “learning impaired.” If, and when, they receive help with the emotional turmoil they are dealing with, they usually make an academic turn-around.

Cooperation between parents, agencies, and schools is needed to give each child the help, love, support, and attention he or she deserves.
"Yes, my mother and dad didn't live together anymore. My mother got a job and I went to a new school."

The financial costs to society due to violence in the home are evident at the federal, state, and local level for human services and correctional services due to a host of problems stemming from family violence. School drop-outs, runaway adolescents, teen pregnancies, substance abuse, depression, and various forms of criminal behaviors are often traced to years of exposure to violence in the home.
"I finally felt safe and happy. I met some new friends. For the first time, I wasn't afraid to ask them to come over to my house to play."

It is imperative that all of us, family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, counselors, etc., exercise our moral responsibility to help keep children safe in their homes as well as on the street.

If you suspect that children are being battered, abused, or neglected, contact your local services agencies, such as Children’s Protective Services, Child Abuse Hotline, police, school nurse or counselor. As long as you call in good faith, you need not worry about being able to prove the abuse or about being sued for a false report.
"Did you ever see grandpa again, Mother?"

The effects on the children from these broken and dysfunctional homes when separated from one or both parents can vary.

Some children will be greatly relieved to be away from the abusive parent. Others will have a difficult time adjusting even if life at home was unbearable.

How soon the child may see the abusing parent again may be determined by a caseworker or counselor, based upon how willing the parent has been in seeking and receiving help with his or her abusive behavior.
"Yes, but not for quite a while. I was sad about that because I did love him a whole lot."

Even if children have been abused by their parent(s), it is normal for children to still love them. All children have the need to be loved and to love, and they look to their parents to fill this need.
"But, I was mad at him for hurting us. I was even mad at my mother because we had to leave our house and all our things."

Victims of abuse go through a myriad of feelings. They experience hurt, fear, anger, distrust, hate, betrayal, and loneliness, and perhaps others, but not necessarily in this order.

At times, some of these feelings, especially anger, are also vented against the non-abusive parent. The children are angry at the non-abusing parent for staying in the abusive situation so long, for not protecting them from the abuse, and even at times for having to leave their home or for having the abusive parent forced to leave home.

Professional counseling help is needed to sort out these feelings and to put the events of their lives in proper perspective.
"But soon I was glad we left because at last my mother and I felt safe."

For additional information on women's programs, you may want to write to:

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2401 Virginia Ave., N.W., Suite 206
Washington, D.C. 20037

For men's programs write to:

National Organization for Changing Men
c/o Raven
P.O. Box 24159
St. Louis, MO 63130

The National Domestic Violence telephone number is:

1-800-333-SAFE
"Later on, after my dad got some help to learn how to control his anger and drinking problem, I was able to see him once in a while."

Violence is a learned behavior. Parents can learn to rechannel angry and aggressive feelings into constructive positive actions.

Christine Cornstock Herbruck wrote the book, Breaking the Cycle of Child Abuse. This book contains the stories of a number of people who abused their children and who finally, in desperation, called a group known as Parents Anonymous for help.

Ms. Herbruck states, "Parents Anonymous is a self-help group for parents who have abused or who fear they might abuse their children. These parents meet weekly with a sponsor, who acts as a facilitator, to discover how not to abuse their children and for support in times of crisis."
"Mother, there's a little girl in my class who looks as sad as you do in this picture."

The 1984 National Symposium on Child Abuse lists several conditions of poor child care in households where child and wife abuse exist:

- Physical neglect
- Moral neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Medical neglect
- Educational neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

Some of these conditions or various combinations of these conditions most likely will be prevalent in dysfunctional homes.

Children who have been physically and/or sexually abused by the persons they love are not able to trust anyone. These children learned at an early age they cannot trust even the people closest to them. They have feelings of fear and distrust with others.
"I asked her to play with me at recess time, but she just shook her head and stood by herself."

Loneliness may become a way of life for these children. An abused child often plays alone, makes friends only with a pet, or creates a rich fantasy life.
"Do you think she could be going through family problems in her home like you did, Mother?"

Children from dysfunctional and/or violent homes often have trouble relating to their peers. Often the youngsters are hungry for love and affection, but just don't know how to interact with other children or adults in acceptable ways to generate the attention they want and need. They haven't had positive role models at home.

Some abusive parents forbid their children to make friends. They neither let their children play with other children nor allow their children to bring friends home.
"There could be many reasons why your little classmate is so sad. Maybe she's just shy. Maybe she doesn't trust anyone. And perhaps she is having the same kind of problems I had when I was little."

Cynthia Crosson Tower of NEA lists extremes of sudden behavioral changes that may be evident in a physically abused child:

- Does the child cry easily or very little?
- Does the child show no real expectation of being comforted?
- Is the child either very fearful or seemingly fearless of adult authority?
- Is the child unusually aggressive or destructive or extremely passive and withdrawn?
- Does the child display regressive behavior such as pants wetting, thumbsucking, or frequent whining?
- Is he or she becoming disruptive or uncommonly shy and passive?
- Is there any evidence of role reversal behavior? In homes where parents are disorganized, psychotic, or chaotic, children are often forced to take the role of the parent. They become protective and attempt to take care of the parent's needs.
"You see, Penelope, there are many, many homes where the parents don't know how to handle their anger and so they hurt the people in their families."

In their book, *Wife Beating, the Silent Crisis*, Roger Langley and Richard C. Levy report: "After studying our own empirical data and numerous independent investigations, we are convinced that persons taking part in such conflicts are of all ages, communities, income levels, races, religions, employment situations, and marital status. In other words, we could find no definitive characteristics of the wife beater. The crime of spouse assault and battery knows no social, geographical, economic, age, or racial barriers."

However, they go on to say, "Most studies involving only official records, such as police reports, show the poor have the highest number of wife assault cases."

In New York, Maria Roy, director of Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC), says, "We see abuse of women on all levels of income, age, occupation, and social standing."
"Mother, do you think you and I could go to schools and tell children that if this is happening in their homes..."

Dr. Suzanne Steinmetz says, “The chances of a battered child becoming a battering adult are very, very strong.” She goes on to say, “I have found that there were patterns that extended over three generations.”

David Bakan, in his book, Slaughter of Innocents, writes, “Persons who engage in violence tend to have been victims of violence.”

While it is true that many abused children grow up to be abusers, we must realize that there are also many victims who are determined that they will not perpetuate the cycle of abuse. We must applaud their successful efforts to go from victim to victor over child abuse.
"...they need to tell their teacher, counselor, principal or some other trusted adult so they can get help."

Judy Burks, in her book entitled, *Child Abuse and Personal Safety*, says:

It would seem natural that when a child becomes of school age, he or she would tell someone about the abusive situation in his or her home, but this is usually not the case. The child generally will not talk about the abuse. Such a child has been raised in an abusive environment and is suspicious of adults. To an abused child, adults are cruel people who hurt. Their experience is that adults do not offer help or nurturance so why should they believe that adults at school would meet their needs?
Disclosure is the first step in the long, ongoing process of moving from victim of abuse to survivor. The sooner the disclosure, the sooner intervention can begin.

The short- and long-term effects of disclosure will vary with each child. Professional counseling to help with the emotional healing process for these children is highly advised. If the pains of the past aren't dealt with now, the abusive cycle may not be broken and will produce a multitude of problems in the future.
"Children need to know that the hardest thing to do is to tell a trusted adult for the first time."

Judy Burks, who was quoted previously, suggests the following guidelines be used if a child discloses abuse:

• Keep your manner calm and do not express shock; simply accept what the child is telling you.
• Let the child know that you believe that he or she is telling you the truth.
• Remember, it is not your job to investigate. It is your job to be supportive of the troubled child.
• Reassure the child that he or she is not responsible for the abuse.
• Determine the child’s immediate need for safety.
• The child may ask you to promise not to tell anyone else. Do not make such a promise! Explain that child abuse is against the law and that failing to report it when you know about it is against the law too, so you have to report it.
After a child has disclosed abuse, be sure you let him or her know what you will do and what will probably happen next. He or she has told you something that is traumatic and perhaps even life threatening, especially in his/her belief system, and is very concerned about the consequences.

It is important to level with the child and tell him or her that perhaps things may even seem to get worse before they will get better. Perhaps you could liken it to when we get sick and go to the doctor. The doctor may give us a shot or some "yucky" medicine to take which may seem worse than being sick. However, in the long run, the shot or medicine will help us get well. The child needs to know and remember the only way to stop the abuse is to tell and get help. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing to tell and that things will get better.

"If the person they talk to doesn't believe them, they need to tell someone else they trust."
"It's important that children know that they deserve to live in a safe home."

Report your suspicions of abuse or the child’s disclosure of abuse to your local Children’s Services Division, the police, or the sheriff’s department. Generally, it is best to call Children’s Services Division.

If your school has a child abuse reporting policy, follow it. If your school policy is for a designated person to do the actual reporting, be sure to follow up and make sure the report was made. You are ultimately responsible and may be held liable and even subject to a fine if the report was not made.

Reporting a suspected case of child abuse is simply a request that an investigation be conducted to make sure a child is safe. Once the agency receives the report, it determines whether it warrants further investigation. Judy Burks, quoted earlier, cautions us, “In many cases, while everyone involved believes the abuse has taken place, there simply is not enough evidence for the case to go any further at that time. It is important that you continue to collect and document evidence and that you continue to show your belief and support of the child. Report the abuse each time you suspect it so that eventually there will be enough evidence to warrant an investigation."
"So the sooner they tell, the sooner they can get help and feel safe at last!"

With this video, Safe At Last, let's teach children that there are adults they can trust and who really do care and want to help. It is vital for youngsters to know that all children deserve a safe and secure home.
## Indicators of a Child's Potential Need For Protection

The American Association for Protecting Children, Inc., the Children’s Division of the American Humane Association, Denver, Colorado, has put together a list of indicators of a child's need for protection directed toward teachers, school administrators, nurses and counselors. If there is suspicion that a child is being abused, it is recommended that the presence of one or more of the following indicators be examined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Abuse</th>
<th>Physical Indicators</th>
<th>Behavioral Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- unexplained bruises (in various stages of healing), welts, human bite marks, bald spots</td>
<td>- self-destructive</td>
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<td>- unexplained burns, especially cigarette burns or immersion burns (glove-like)</td>
<td>- withdrawn and aggressive - behavioral extremes</td>
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<td>- unexplained fractures, lacerations or abrasions</td>
<td>- uncomfortable with physical contact</td>
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<td>Physical Neglect</td>
<td>abandonment</td>
<td>- arrives at school early or stays late as if afraid to be at home</td>
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<td>- unattended medical needs</td>
<td>- chronic runaway (adolescents)</td>
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<td>- consistent lack of supervision</td>
<td>- complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably</td>
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<td>- consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene</td>
<td>- wears clothing inappropriate to weather, to cover body</td>
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<td>- lice, distended stomach, emaciated</td>
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<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>- torn, stained or bloody underclothing</td>
<td>- regularly displays fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep in class</td>
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<td>- pain or itching in genital area</td>
<td>- steals food, begs from classmates</td>
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<td>- difficulty walking or sitting</td>
<td>- reports that no caretaker is at home</td>
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<td>- bruises or bleeding in external genitalia</td>
<td>- frequently absent or tardy</td>
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<td>- genital disease</td>
<td>- self-destructive</td>
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<td>- frequent urinary or yeast infections</td>
<td>- school dropout (adolescents)</td>
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<td>Emotional Mal-treatment</td>
<td>- speech disorders</td>
<td>- withdrawal, chronic depression</td>
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<td>- delayed physical development</td>
<td>- excessive seductiveness</td>
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<td>- substance abuse</td>
<td>- role reversal, overly concerned for siblings</td>
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<td>- ulcers, asthma, severe allergies</td>
<td>- poor self-esteem, self-devaluation, lack of confidence</td>
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<td>- peer problems, lack of involvement</td>
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<td>- massive weight change</td>
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<td>- suicide attempts (especially adolescents)</td>
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<td>- hysteria, lack of emotional control</td>
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<td>- sudden school difficulties</td>
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<td>- inappropriate sex play or premature understanding of sex</td>
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<td>- threatened by physical contact, closeness</td>
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<td>- habit disorders (sucking, rocking)</td>
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<td>- antisocial, destructive</td>
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<td>- neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)</td>
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<td>- passive and aggressive - behavioral extremes</td>
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<td>- delinquent behavior (especially adolescents)</td>
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<td>- developmentally delayed</td>
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A WORD ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ELAINE KRAUSE

is an elementary teacher who is internationally known as a pioneer in the field of writing and producing child sexual prevention curriculum. Elaine developed, "SPEAK UP, SAY NO!" and "FOR PETE'S SAKE, TELL!" for children ages 4-10, to teach them how and when to be aware, alert, and assertive to help protect themselves from sexual abuse.

Her latest video, "SAFE AT LAST", deals with family violence and the physical and emotional abuse and neglect children often suffer in their own homes.

Elaine believes, we must begin prevention and intervention programs with children at an early age to help stop child abuse in future generations.