



MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

MYTH: Physical punishment helps parents control their child's behavior.

FACT: Parents who use excessive punishment are not in control. Physical punishment does not teach children how to make good decisions, how to determine what is right and wrong, or how to control their own behavior. Instead, physical punishment makes children submissive, fearful and/or aggressive. It also teaches them that hitting is a way to solve problems with other people.

MYTH: Parents who physically abuse their children are bad and unloving people.

FACT: Most parents love their children and do not mean to hurt them. They discipline their children because they want them to behave well. Many parents feel frustrated with their children's behavior and do not know any other way to discipline them, but are open to learning effective parenting strategies to reduce the risk of physical abuse in the future.

MYTH: It's only physical abuse if you mean to hurt your child.

FACT: Even accidental injuries of a child are considered physical abuse if the act that injured the child was done intentionally as a form of punishment.

MYTH: Good parents don't get frustrated or angry with their children's behavior.

FACT: All parents get angry at their children sometimes. It is okay to be angry, but it is not okay to hurt your children in anger. Angry feelings cannot get you into trouble but violent behavior can. It is important for parents to learn how to express and control their anger so that their children learn to do the same.

MYTH: Incest only happens in lower class or rural families.

FACT: Incest plays no favorites. Incest crosses all socio-economic, race, and class barriers. It happens in both rural and urban centers.

MYTH: Children make up stories or lie about sexual abuse.

FACT: While children do make up stories, they seldom lie about sexual abuse. Also, children who have not been abused do not usually have explicit knowledge of intimate sexual behavior. Statistics indicate that most reports of child sexual abuse are true.

MYTH: Abuse is most often committed by strangers.

FACT: Most abuse is committed by someone the victim/survivor knows and trusts.

MYTH: Offenders look sleazy, cruel, or unusual.

FACT: Offenders come from all walks of life and look like ordinary people. They can be fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, stepfathers, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, stepmothers, babysitters, coaches, teachers, doctors, social workers, religious leaders, neighbors, etc. . . .

MYTH: Abused and neglected children almost always come from poor, minority or inner-city families.

FACT: There is no evidence that links socioeconomic status, race, or educational levels to abuse or neglect. Child abuse occurs within every neighborhood and school community across the country.

MYTH: Child abusers are easy to identify.

FACT: Child abusers cannot be easily distinguished from others. They usually are not adults with mental illness or mental retardation. In fact, many offenders are up-standing community citizens.

MYTH: Most children who are abused do something to cause the abuse to occur.

FACT: The child is always the victim. The responsibility for the abuse lies solely with the adult. In the case of child sexual abuse, many offenders try to shift the blame for their actions by accusing the child of being seductive or promiscuous.

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-482-5964

www.stoparchildabuse.com