

Preventing Sexual Abuse

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH MORE THAN A POUND OF CURE.

The focus of this practical topic about sexual abuse is **how to protect** our children from the devastating evil of sexual abuse that has and is destroying many young lives, also within church communities.

The key to prevention is that parents, church and school leaders educate children and teens in the areas of sexuality and personal boundaries.

But how do we do this effectively as well as discreetly?
How do we handle when we suspect or hear about abuse?

Text your questions during the topic to 920 791 1703¹
Pastor A. T. Vergunst
Waupun, WI

¹ (This outline and very extensive handout are also available at www.nrcwaupun.org under tab *Topics*)

I. WHY NEED THIS TOPIC?

- A. Because no family, church or school is exempt of this evil
- B. Because we parents are the key to arm our children
- C. Because sexual abuse is so devastating to the victim
- D. Because sexual harm is on the rise by *minimizing casual sex*

Hand-out #1: REASONS FOR TAKING PREVENTATIVE ACTION

II. WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

- A. It is sin (Lev. 18)
- B. It is the exploitation or use of a child or teen for meeting the sexual needs or desires of an adult, teen or older child
- C. Sexual abuse happens through sexual *contact* and *interactions*
- D. Examples of *Visual Sexual Interaction*
 - 1. Pornography
 - 2. Child or adult in a state of undress
 - 3. Photographs, videos in a state of undress
- E. Examples of *Verbal Sexual interaction*
 - 1. Inappropriate sexual talk, jokes, nicknames
 - 2. Seductive suggestions, comments
 - 3. Sexting
 - 4. Invitations to be alone with the abuser

- F. Examples of *Psychological Sexual Interactions*
1. Subtle communication that erodes appropriate role boundaries
 2. Dysfunctional adult/child relationships
 3. Surrogate husband or wife

III. BUILDING THE CASTLE OF PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

A. Prayer & Work

Thus did Job continually [pray along with the sacrifice]. Job 1:5

A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. For by wise counsel thou shalt make war; and in multitude of counsellors there is safety. Prov. 24:5-6

B. How build this castle?

1. Castle's Foundation: ***Education of Parents about Abuse***
2. Castle's Structure: ***Invest in Biblical Marriage & Family Life***
3. Castle's Walls: ***Education of Children about Abuse***
4. Castle's Gates: ***Guard by Minimizing and Supervising***

IV. THE CASTLE'S FOUNDATION: ***EDUCATE YOURSELF AS PARENTS***

A. LEARN the FACTS about sexual abuse and abusers

FACT 1: Predators usually don't look like evil men/women

FACT 2: Most kids know and trust those who abuse them

Handout #2: *TEN MOST COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF A PREDATOR*

FACT 3: Abusers use variety of common tricks to lure children
(grooming process)

Handout #3: TRICKS SEXUAL PREDATORS COMMONLY USE

B. Educate yourself on how to recognize possible sexual abuse

Hand-out #4: COMMON BEHAVIORIAL WARNING SIGNS IN SEXUALLY ABUSED

C. Realize most children don't talk about their abuse

1. Why do children not tell?

a. fear

b. self-blame

c. powerlessness – lack of confidence

d. denial

e. family loyalty

f. confusion

Handout #5: REASONS CHILDREN DON'T TELL

D. Prepare on how to respond if your child confides about being approached or abused

1. The initial response is vital
 - a. Don't get angry – stay calm – don't overreact
 - b. Believe the child
 - c. Reassure him/her about *safety*
 - d. Encourage them to talk and share facts (not feelings)
 - e. Don't promise them that *you will not tell anyone else*

Handout #6: RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL ABUSE

E. Keep up to date on technology & supervision

V. THE CASTLE'S STRUCTURE: INVESTMENT INTO MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE

A. Build on a healthy, functional family life (Parents' Investment)

1. Sexual abuse can happen in any family *but is more common in dysfunctional families*

Handout #7: FUNCTIONAL OR DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

Handout #8: THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES

2. Abusers target dysfunctional families and weak children
 - a. poor self-esteem/lack of confidence
 - b. empty love tanks
 - c. sexual naiveté
 - d. unhealthy fear of or submission to authority figures

Handout #9: BE AWARE OF CERTAIN TRAITS ABUSERS LOOK FOR IN CHILDREN/TEENS

3. Be wise and get help if you experience marriage difficulties

VI. BUILDING THE CASTLE WALLS: EDUCATE YOUR CHILD ON *BOUNDARIES, BODY AWARENESS AND SAFETY TO PREVENT SEXUAL ABUSE*

- A. Each age level requires different information and approach
 1. infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers
 2. school kids (ages 4-10)
 3. tweens and Teens (10-19)
- B. Each level needs to focus on the *three areas (B-B-S)*
 1. Boundaries
 2. Body awareness/sex education
 3. Safety strategies

Handout # 10: BOUNDARIES, SAFETY AND AWARENESS

VII. “B-B-S” IN BABIES, TODDLERS & PRE-SCHOOLERS

- A. Boundaries with babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers
 1. Teach, model and enforce personal boundaries in the family
 - Respect feelings... of others – about hurting others
 - Respect property
 - Respect other’s body and space
 - At this age, learn to obey without fuss or delay
 - Yet, there is a place for child’s choices
 2. Teach, model and enforce God’s boundaries (God’s 10)
 - Discuss authority structure

- “God says so”; “God wants us to say kind words”
- Parents set clearly defined rules; use consistent, calm, loving teaching & discipline

B. Body Awareness with babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers

1. What does safe / unsafe feel like?
2. What is a good touch / bad touch?
3. Repeat often no one is allowed to touch or look at their nakedness
4. Repeat many times: tell mommy or daddy
5. Correct vocabulary: *private body parts*
6. Explain difference between a Secret and Surprise
7. Teachable moments!

C. Safety with babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers

VIII “B-B-S” IN SCHOOL KIDS 4-10

A. Boundaries with school kids

1. how to recognize boundaries
2. what to do when boundaries are violated
3. realize the dangers in teaching *unconditional obedience*
4. teach them when they can say/should say ‘No’ to authorities

B. Establish boundaries at home – Family life

1. Foster respect for other’s rights to safety, privacy, personal space, opinions
2. Healthy families allow children to express their feelings (with appropriate self-control) without rejection, ridicule or punishment

- C. Body-awareness and sex education with school kids
 - 1. Begin early: teach correct terms, answer questions about bodies, sexuality & reproduction with correct, age-appropriate info
 - 2. Teach sexuality is God's gift and that He forbids sexual behavior outside of marriage for our good
 - 3. Teach specifically about what sexual sins are
 - 4. Don't let them go to school without knowing what sexual abuse is
 - 5. Buy or help your girls choose modest clothes and teach why God commands modesty

- D. Safety Consciousness with school kids
 - 1. Stranger – Danger: *'buddy system'*
 - 2. Emphasize that risks are MUCH GREATER from people who are NOT strangers
 - 3. Teach how to recognize a potentially dangerous *situation* (not potentially dangerous *person*)
 - 4. Specify what they are to do if approached for sexual activity
 - 5. Teach self-defense skills
 - 6. Discuss TRICKS people can do that lead to dangerous situations in which they could be harmed or groomed

IX "B-B-S" IN TWEENS AND TEENS (AGES 10-19)

- A. Boundaries with Tweens and Teens
 - 1. Help teen set limits for self and others that are biblically-based
 - 2. Discuss how to communicate their boundaries to their friends
 - 3. Empower teen to trust his/her intuition
 - 4. Do they need help becoming more assertive?

5. Discuss what to do if they are in a situation where someone violates their boundaries
6. Give respect, love, attention, open communication and trust

B. Body Awareness & Sex Education with Tweens and Teens

1. Teach positively about marriage, God's gift of sexuality, His protective boundaries of purity & abstinence till marriage, modesty, respect for opposite sex
2. Teach that sexual interaction is gift of God to be enjoyed within the boundaries of marriage
3. Open discussion about sexual sins promoted by our culture
4. Locker room danger
5. Bragging about sexual exploits can often lead to abuse of younger siblings
6. Empower them to stand up for what is right! and be unashamed of Christian values

C. Safety Consciousness with Tweens and Teens

1. Know how to recognize potential safety issues of walking, exercising, driving or parking in crime-prone areas
2. Alcohol, drugs, peer pressure connect to sexual abuse
3. Dangers of Electronic devices – need for filtering

X COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER DURING THEIR DATING YEARS

A. Rules about dating

1. Help them set boundaries and goals for themselves
2. Be an accountability partner with understanding & care
3. Keep lines of communication open
4. Ask questions if you're worried

5. Talk to son about responsibility for purity & respect
6. Talk to daughter about responsibility for purity & empower her to set relationship boundaries

XI THE CASTLE GATES: *GUARD BY SUPERVISING AND MINIMIZING ACCESS*

- A. Be a partner with your children
- B. Be aware that the world is a village
- C. Teach and Maintain Cyber Safety
 - Rule 1: Never give personal information online.
 - Rule 2: Never meet anyone in person that you met online
 - Rule 3: Never send anyone your photo or your school photo without checking with mom or dad first.
 - Rule 4: Always tell a parent if you receive any emails, messages or requests that include inappropriate language or photos or anything that makes you feel uncomfortable

HANDOUT # 11: *BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RECOMMENDED RESOURCES*

CONCLUSION: *WHO ARE OUR CHILDREN'S ENEMIES?*

- A. TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED
- B. TO THOSE WHO ARE ABUSERS
- C. TO THOSE WHO FEEL THE PAIN OF THE ABUSED

**IF YOU DESIRE MORE INFORMATION, FEEL FREE TO EMAIL US:
atvergunst@gmail.com or michelle.vergunst@gmail.com**