Signs & Symptoms of the Sexually Abused Child

It is Our Responsibility as Adults to look for & Notice the Signs & Symptoms!

The below listed Signs & Symptoms may be indicators of other forms of abuse or distress that the child may be experiencing… and may not necessarily point towards sexual abuse. Some of these Signs & Symptoms may indicate some type of medical issue. This is not an all-inclusive list.

Disclosure by Child: Not Guaranteed / Possible, but Unlikely

Physical Evidence: Not Enough / Possibly Caused by Something else / Children’s Bodies Resilient

- Gradual and/or sudden changes in behavior such as Isolation, Introverted, Withdrawal, Fearfulness, Agitation, Excessive Crying, Depression
- Aggressive/Disruptive Behavior
- Excessively Active
- Cruelty to Others / Cruelty to Pets
- Change in or Loss of appetite
- Recurring Nightmares; Disturbed Sleep Patterns, Fear of the dark
- Sudden Change displaying Immature Behavior for their age
- Regression to a more Infantile Behavior (Bedwetting / Thumb Sucking / Excessive Crying)
- Torn or Stained Underclothing
- Vaginal or Rectal bleeding, Pain, Itching, Swollen Genitals, Vaginal Discharge or an STD
- Unusual Interest in and/or Knowledge of Sexual Matters
- Expressing Affection in ways that are Inappropriate for a Child of that Age
- Inappropriately Exposing their Body/Genitals at Home and/or in Public
- Sexual Acting Out / Inappropriate Sexual Play (with Self, Other Children, Adults, Pets, Toys)
- Excessive Masturbation
- Fear of a Certain Person or an Intense Dislike of being Left Somewhere or With Someone
- Trying to Avoid a Familiar Adult
- Fear of People of the Same Sex and/or Age of the One Who is Abusing Them or Has Abused Them
- Afraid of Places Similar to Where the Abuse Occurs or Occurred
- Overly Compliant Behavior
- False Maturity / Mature Appearance and/or Behavior, Inappropriate for their Age (Acting / Dressing Older) / Heightened Sense of Responsibility / Devotion to Duty
- Unusual/Strange/Inappropriate Interaction Between a Child & a Specific Person
- Unhealthy/Odd attachment to a Specific Person
- Change in Behavior Only Around a Specific Person
- Difficulty Walking or Sitting
- Wearing Many Layers of Clothing
- Afraid to be Left Alone
- Excessive Daydreaming
- Unable to go to Bathroom or Refuses to go; More than Likely Only Around a Certain Person
- Pretending to be Sick or Actually Becoming Sick / Recurring Health/Medical Issues
- Sudden Loss of or Lack of Interest in Friends, School, Sports, Other Activities, Etc…
- Difficulty Learning in School / Inability to Concentrate / Short Attention Span / May Appear to have a Learning Disorder / Appears to be Hyperactive (may even be Diagnosed as ADD or ADHD)
- Hesitant to Change Clothes for Gym Class
- Fear of Physical Activities at School

A Child @ Play: Watch & Listen! You may be surprised at what you can learn by observing a child during playtime. This is applicable primarily with younger children that still play with toys. That is why so many Therapist use Play Therapy when dealing with younger children.

See Page 2 for Additional Information concerning Pre-Teens / Teens…

National Child Abuse Hotline
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
1-800-4-A-Child
1-800-422-4453

SpeakingOut against Child Sexual Abuse, Inc. @ www.speakingout-CSA.com
Signs & Symptoms of the Sexually Abused Child - Continued

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Additional for Pre-Teens / Teens

- Extreme and/or Unexplained Anger
- Running Away
- Delinquent Behavior
- Low Self-Worth
- Self Destructive Behavior / Self-Harm / Self Mutilation (Cutting / Burning)
- Seductive / Promiscuous Behavior
- Low Self-Esteem vs. Something to Prove
- Eating Disorders
- Addictions (Drugs / Alcohol / Sex / Pornography)
- Anxiety
- Mood Swings
- Happened or Happening to a “Friend”
- Sudden Change in School Performance & Behavior
- Arriving at School Early / Staying Late
- Unexplained and/or Excessive Fear
- Lack of Trust in Self & Others
- Difficulty Forming Relationships / Poor Peer Relationships / Avoidance of Relationships
- Signs of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Suicidal Thoughts / Attempts and/or Suicide

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