Keeping Ourselves Safe

Parent workshop questions

# Opinions about child abuse

Put a mark somewhere along the line between **Strongly agree** and **Strongly disagree**, to show what you think about the statement.

1. Abuse only happens in poor or criminal families.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

1. It is reasonable to punish bad behaviour by smacking a child to teach him or her a lesson.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

1. Your children will be safe if you tell them never to go anywhere with strangers.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

1. It is important to teach children to use the correct terms for genitals.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

1. It is reasonable to leave children as young as 11 years old on their own, or to use them as babysitters.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

1. Children almost always tell the truth about abuse.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

1. Sexual abuse is the most damaging form of abuse.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

1. What goes on in our house is nobody else’s business.

**Strongly agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Strongly disagree**

# Comparing opinions about child abuse

After completing the previous section above, you may like to consider some of the following ideas as you discuss your opinions about child abuse with your family, friends or other groups you belong to.

1. *Abuse only happens in poor or criminal families.*

Child abuse and neglect occur in all cultures, races, and socio-economic groups. No sector of the community is protected from abuse.

1. *It is reasonable to punish bad behaviour by smacking a child to teach him or her a lesson.*

It is illegal for a parent to use force against their child to discipline them or correct their behaviour. Repeatedly using force against a child for discipline or correction could amount to domestic violence.

There are only limited circumstances where a parent may use reasonable force:

* preventing or minimising harm to the child or another person
* preventing the child from doing something that amounts to a criminal offence
* preventing the child from being offensive or disruptive
* doing the normal daily tasks relating to good care and parenting

Police do have the discretion not to charge a parent for using force against a child to correct or discipline them if the offence is so inconsequential that there is no public interest in prosecuting parent. However, the starting point in terms of “smacking” is that parents are not justified in using force to correct their children. ([YouthLaw Aotearoa](http://www.youthlaw.co.nz/information/home-family/smacking/))

1. *Your children will be safe if you tell them never to go anywhere with strangers.*

Research shows that most children are abused by people they know and trust. These can be family members, close family friends, or members of groups or clubs that children belong to. This can lead to denial on the part of parents and caregivers when a child reports abuse. The old idea of ‘stranger danger’ is not helpful. Also, children may have to ask someone they don’t know for help.

The chances of your child being harmed by a stranger are very remote.

1. *It is important to teach children to use the correct terms for genitals.*

It is important to use correct terms for the genitals, such as penis, vagina and vulva, just as correct names are used for other parts of the bodies. Calling these parts by pet names, not referring to them at all, or telling children it is ‘dirty’ to talk about them, can make children think about genitals in a negative way, and make them reluctant to tell others. If they ever need to report abuse, or tell a doctor where they are sore, it is important that they can use the correct words.

1. *It is reasonable to leave children as young as 11 on their own or use them as babysitters.*

In New Zealand it is illegal to leave a child under 14 years without reasonable supervision or care (Section 10B Summary Offences Act 1981). The question of whether the lack of supervision is reasonable or not, is considered on a case by case basis. It asks the question, "Having regard to all the circumstances, was the period of time that the child was left unsupervised reasonable?

If you have to leave your children alone for some reason, you must think carefully about the following things to help you decide if the child has reasonable supervision and care:

* the age and ability of the child you leave in charge
* if there is someone older nearby who can be called to assist
* how long you will be gone
* the time of day you will be away
* if you have made a plan for how the child can contact you or another adult, and the child is able to do this
* any risks in the home.

1. *Children almost always tell the truth about abuse.*

Believe what children tell you, it is usually true. Children can only describe events within their own experience. Explicit descriptions of sexual or physical abuse will very rarely have come from books, television or from overhearing conversations (Unsinger et al 1993).

1. *Sexual abuse is the most damaging form of abuse.*

All child abuse is damaging. Children rarely forget. Survivors of child abuse can experience distress and suffering which may last a lifetime.

1. *What goes on in our house is nobody else’s business.*

If there is abuse in your home or in the home of a friend or relative, you may need help from someone outside your home, such as an external agency. We all need to take action to get help and prevent abuse.

# How do you see child abuse?

Below are some statements for you to discuss. Answer the following statements by circling either **T** *(TRUE)* or **F** *(FALSE).*

1. Teaching about child abuse to young children is going to frighten them. **T/F**
2. Children with disabilities are more likely to be sexually abused than other children. **T/F**
3. Neglect is nowhere near as serious as sexual abuse. **T/F**
4. Personal safety education can significantly help reduce the incidence of child abuse. **T/F**
5. A school should have a child protection policy available for parents to look at. **T/F**
6. The majority of people who abuse children have a major mental illness. **T/F**
7. Boys are at less risk of sexual abuse than girls. **T/F**
8. In New Zealand, some traders in Internet child pornography are teenagers. **T/F**
9. When sexual abuse is committed by a young person, it is less damaging than when perpetrated by an adult. **T/F**

# How do you see child abuse? - answers

1. *Teaching about child abuse to children is going to frighten them.*

**FALSE -** Often this is just the perception of the parents and caregivers, not the children. Child abuse prevention education should be covered in a matter of fact way. We teach children about water safety, safety on the roads, sun safety and so we should teach them about safety with other people. This is done in a positive way, in a safe supportive class or centre environment.

1. *Children with disabilities are more likely to be sexually abused than other children.*

**TRUE -** Children with disabilities are up to seven times more likely to suffer sexual abuse than non-disabled children.

1. *Neglect is nowhere near as serious as sexual abuse.*

**FALSE -** Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. It is also the most ignored and under-reported. Its effects can be as damaging as any other form of abuse, if not fatal.

1. *Personal safety education can help reduce the incidence of child abuse.*

**TRUE -** Programmes like ***Keeping Ourselves Safe*** teach children to tell a parent, carer, or other adult about abuse. Studies show that children who have completed ***Keeping Ourselves Safe*** are much more likely to make suggestions for keeping themselves safe than children not involved in such a programme (for example, saying no, walking away, or changing the subject).

1. *A* school should have a child protection policy available for parents to look at*.*

**TRUE –** Under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, all state and state-integrated schools, and partnership schools kura houra, must have written child protection policies stating how suspected neglect and abuse will be identified and reported. The policy must be available on school websites or on request. Do not hesitate to ask. Your school will value your enquiry.

1. *The majority of people who abuse children have a major mental illness.***FALSE -** The majority of people who abuse children do not have a major mental illness.
2. *Boys are at less risk of sexual abuse than girls.*

**FALSE -** Girls and boys of all ages are sexually abused. Boys are as vulnerable to sexual abuse as are girls. Victims can sometimes be very young children such as toddlers or even babies.

1. *In New Zealand, some traders in Internet child pornography are teenagers.*

**TRUE -** It is true that some traders are teenagers. However, in recent years this number has dropped off, and most people caught trading child pornography on the Internet are males in their 20s to 50s.

1. *When sexual abuse is committed by a young person, it is less damaging then when perpetrated by an adult.*

**FALSE -** Sexual abuse can be as violent, humiliating and damaging for a child when the abuser is an older brother or sister, peer or friend, as it is when an adult is the abuser.