

Common Parent Questions and Answers About Abuse



(from Dallas Children's Advocacy Center—producers of our training DVD)



1) What does it mean when a perpetrator “grooms” a child or a family?

Grooming is when a perpetrator builds a relationship with a child and builds trust. Grooming makes it difficult to escape the abuse and keeps the child from telling, as he likes the person and feels loyalty to him. It makes the child feel that it is her/her fault. At times power and authority is used as a tool. It is important to recognize when grooming may be occurring. Once a child is groomed he/she internalizes the abuse as their own fault, making the possibility of them telling someone minimal. Some signs of grooming to look for are:

- buying the child gifts or giving the child money;
- finding excuses for one-on-one time with the child
- treating the child as more special than other children;
- viewing the child when nude or exposing the child to nudity/pornography;
- excessive** appropriate touching or inappropriate touching;
- talking about sexual activity with a child.



2) What is involved regarding sexual abuse between an abuser and a child?

Perpetrators downplay the defenses of children by explaining they were merely playing a “game”. Abuse usually begins with touching and kissing and progresses to more severe sexual activity. The perpetrator often creates names for the child’s and his/her own body parts to lessen the child’s alarm at what is happening.

3) I believe my child tells me everything. Wouldn't he/she tell me if he/she was being abused?

Abusers manipulate children into keeping the abuse a secret. Children feel helpless to disclose the abuse, due to the fact that the abuser has told them many reasons why the child should not tell. Some reasons why a child would not tell include:

- the abuser is a trusted friend or family member; thus, the child thinks no one will believe him/her;
- the child feels ashamed or embarrassed;
- the abuser has threatened the child or the child’s family;
- the abuser blames the child; the child feels responsible and doesn’t want to get in trouble;
- the abuser bribes the child;
- the child likes his/her abuser and doesn’t want the abuser to get in trouble.

4) I couldn't imagine my child enduring abuse. How is it possible for an abuser to convince my child to participate?

Abusers devise a thorough plan to manipulate the child and his/her family. By manipulating the child and his/her family, the abuser grooms the child and the family to gain trust. The abuser now uses his/her relationship with the family to take advantage of one-on-one time with the child. Once the victim has been groomed, it becomes difficult for a child to escape or feel comfortable telling someone about the abuse. The grooming has created a sense of loyalty from the child to the abuser. In 93% of abuse cases, the child knows and trusts the abuser.