

7th GRADE: ABUSE

LESSON 1 OVERVIEW

Understanding Abuse



Lesson Time:
30 Minutes

Materials Provided:

- Video: Erin Merryn: Breaking the Silence
[Erin Merryn: Breaking the Silence](#) (3:46)
- Handout: “Abuse Four Square” (printed one per student)
- Classroom Set of “4 Major Types of Abuse Information Sheet” (printed one per four students)
- Parent Letter (shared electronically or printed one per student)
[Download](#)

Materials Needed:

- Projector with Video/Audio Capability
- Writing Utensils

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

1. Identify the 4 types of abuse.
2. Provide examples of 4 types of abuse.
3. Determine how to get help if they or someone they know is experiencing abuse.

Educators:

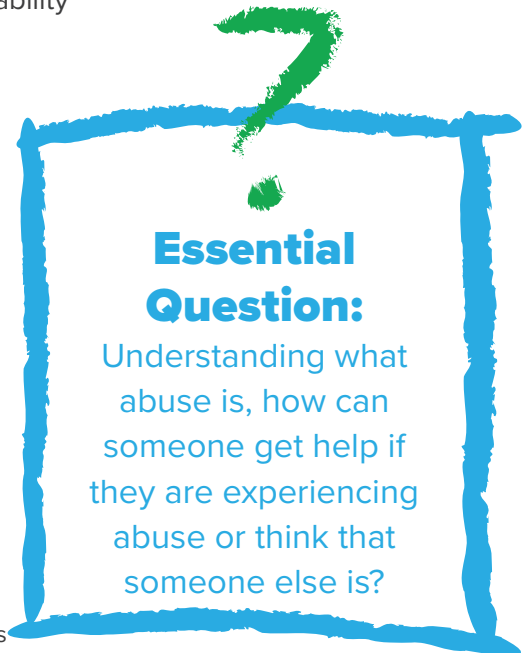
Did You Know?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it is estimated that 1 in 7 children has experienced child abuse and/or neglect in the past year (CDC, 2024a), with neglect continuing as the most common form of abuse. These survivors are more likely to experience a wide range of difficulties as adults from high-risk behavior such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, and unsafe sex (Springer, 2003). They can experience mental health disorders including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, PTSD, eating disorders, and substance abuse disorders (Cameranesi, 2019). Some of these difficulties begin to manifest themselves during childhood. Recognizing signs and risk factors for abuse is key to helping children who are suffering. Signs of abuse may include physical signs, unexplained changes in behavior, and emotional signs such as depression, mood swings, or anxiety. Risk factors vary, but the CDC’s research indicates that a higher risk exists for children with caregivers who experience high levels of stress, past abuse, drug/alcohol issues, and financial strain, among others (CDC, 2024b). As students age, they become more careful in revealing signs of distress, but they do exist. There is hope for children in abusive situations through concern, care, and commitment. The healing from this trauma begins with the action of a trusted adult who will advocate for them.

Educator Prevention Tips:

These lessons have a variety of objectives and are not all centered around the harsh facts of abuse. Although the definitions of abuse and neglect will be introduced, most lessons focus more on mental health, healthy boundaries, and responses to challenging situations. We encourage you to be an advocate for the children in your classroom. Convey to them that you are a trusted adult who genuinely cares for their physical and mental well-being. Be aware of the dynamics in your classroom during these lessons in order to maintain a safe space.

If the topic of child abuse is new to you, we encourage you to educate yourself and research some tips for helping those in need. Also, know your obligations as a mandatory reporter. Talk to a counselor or administrator if you have questions about the reporting process.



Understanding Abuse

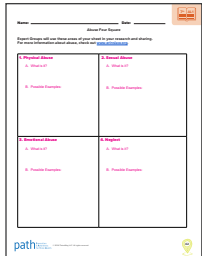
Lesson Introduction: (1 minute)

Today, our topic is a very delicate and very difficult one. We will be talking about abuse. As we discuss this subject, remember that we don't know all the ways in which the people around us may be feeling. For some of us, this subject is very hard. We are going to talk about the 4 different types of abuse and possible examples of each. During this lesson and after, please don't judge anyone based on the way they look or act and remember to be kind and respectful of everyone.

Core Lesson: (2 minutes)

In 2021, 3 million children in the U.S. required an investigation by Child Protective Services (NCA, 2024). It is alarming that so many cases of abuse are reported, and imagine how many others are happening that law enforcement doesn't know about. When you hear the word abuse, what does that mean to you? (*Elicit answers and write those that are applicable on the board.*) Abuse is a topic that can be very complicated to understand and has many different forms. It is quite sensitive, so it's important that we approach it very seriously and maturely during these lessons. Again, please do not react with any judgment as we watch videos or discuss types of abuse as there may be some people in the room who have a connection to an abusive experience.

Handout



Lesson Script/Talking Points

Activity: Abuse 4 Square & Expert Groups (25 minutes)

Abuse can take many forms and many of those types can occur at the same time. Let's explore 4 different types of abuse. We will do this by using a learning strategy called "jigsaw reading". You will begin in groups of 4, this will be your "Home Group," then you will leave your home group to work with another group to research and become an "Expert" regarding one of the 4 types of abuse. Finally, you will return to your "Home Group" to share what you learned.

(Place students in groups of 4, this will be their Home Group. Have students number off 1 through 4 then re-group the students into their Expert Group based on their number, with all number 1s in one area of the room, 2s in another, and so forth. Inform the students that their groups will be educating themselves on the type of abuse indicated with the corresponding number below.)

Group 1 – Physical

Group 2 – Sexual

Group 3 – Emotional

Group 4 – Neglect

(Pass out the printed copies of the Information Sheet "4 Major Types of Abuse")

What Is Abuse?

Abuse is when someone physically hurts or causes emotional stress to someone else. Abuse can affect anyone. It can happen in any kind of relationship, like a friendship, romantic relationship, or among family members. Abuse can happen in many ways. Child abuse is harm caused to a child under the age of 18.

(Provide each student with a printed copy of the Abuse Four Square Handout. Instruct students that as they work in their expert groups, they will need to work within their group to make notes regarding their assigned type of abuse in the corresponding square on their handout. Only their designated square should be completed at this time. **Once students have completed this portion of the activity, collect the printed copies of the Information Sheet**)

Now that you each have become an "Expert" on your assigned abuse type, it's now time for you to share what you have learned. Return to your original Home

Core Lesson (cont)



Group and share with your group members. As each member of your group is sharing, complete the square corresponding to their type of abuse on the handout.

(The original Home Groups should gather together and spend time sharing with one another the information they learned about their assigned abuse type. As each member is sharing with the group, the remaining group members should be taking notes and completing the remaining boxes on their handouts.)

(If time allows, play the following video)

Video: [Erin Merryn: Breaking the Silence](#)

Now that you have become “experts” in the 4 types of abuse, let’s watch a video that has real-world connections and demonstrates the impact of abuse. This video is very heavy, so please be prepared for this delicate subject matter.

Do we have any new thinking about abuse? *(Answers will vary.)* You were introduced to Erin Merryn. Erin’s Law was named after this woman who experienced abuse as a child but hid it because she didn’t know what to do and thought no one would believe her. Her mission is to educate others about abuse and what to do if someone is experiencing abuse or suspects someone else is. At the time this video was created, Erin’s Law was in 26 states. Erin’s Law is currently mandated in 38 states, and her courage to speak up continues to make a difference in the lives of others.

Closing: Essential Question (2 minutes)

Understanding what abuse is, how can someone get help if they are experiencing it or suspect that someone else is? *(Allow for responses.)*

Let’s think back on what you shared at the beginning of class, thoughts from the video, and some of your ideas about abuse. Hopefully, you have a lot more information about the types of abuse and what each might look like. Out of the four types of abuse, you may realize that physical abuse is probably the most obvious form while sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect may be easier to hide. We will talk more next time about recognizing the signs of abuse. The more aware you are of the signs and types of abuse, the more empowered you will feel to take action if you suffer abuse or if you see that others are being abused. Always take what you know and what you have seen to a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher, counselor, coach, or any adult you feel you can trust.

As we close today, you know about the 4 types of abuse and the adults in your school and community that you can reach out to in order to seek help from abusive situations. No one should ever suffer through this in silence.

References:

- Cameranesi, M., Lix, L. M., & Piotrowski, C. C. (2019, May 31). *Linking a history of childhood abuse to adult health among Canadians: A structural equation modelling analysis*. MDPI. <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/11/1942>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024a, February 14). *About child abuse and neglect*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/about/>
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- National Child Abuse Statistics from NCA*. National Children’s Alliance. (2024, March 4). <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/media-room/national-statistics-on-child-abuse/>
- Springer, K. W., Sheridan, J., Kuo, D., & Carnes, M. (2003, October 18). *The long-term health outcomes of childhood abuse. an overview and a call to action*. *Journal of general internal medicine*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1494926/>
- YouTube. (2015, August 28). *Erin Merryn: Breaking the silence*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vclSu0q4qUA>

[Click Here to Provide Feedback on this Lesson](#)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Abuse Four Square

Expert Groups will use these areas of your sheet in your research and sharing.
For more information about abuse, check out www.erinslaw.org.

<p>1. Physical Abuse</p> <p>A. What is it?</p> <p>B. Possible Examples:</p>	<p>2. Sexual Abuse</p> <p>A. What is it?</p> <p>B. Possible Examples:</p>
<p>3. Emotional Abuse</p> <p>A. What is it?</p> <p>B. Possible Examples:</p>	<p>4. Neglect</p> <p>A. What is it?</p> <p>B. Possible Examples:</p>

Name: _____ Date: _____

Abuse Four Square - Answer Key

Expert Groups will use these areas of your sheet in your research and sharing.
 For more information about abuse, check out www.erinslaw.org.

<p>1. Physical Abuse</p> <p>Answers may include: - when someone intentionally hurts another person’s body and results in injury</p> <p><u>examples:</u> hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, pinching, biting, choking, beating, throwing, hair-pulling, and other actions that cause physical injury, leave marks or cause pain</p> <p>may include an adult hurting a child or it may occur between children</p>	<p>2. Sexual Abuse</p> <p>Answers may include: - includes any type of sexual contact between an adult and anyone younger than 18 - or between a significantly older child and a younger child - also sexual abuse at any age if one person forces or overpowers another.</p> <p><u>examples:</u> violations of bodily privacy, touching body parts that would be hidden by underwear or a bathing suit, showing pornography, etc.</p> <p>online sexual abuse such as being asked/forced to share inappropriate pictures of themselves or it is done to them, taking part in sexual activities via webcam or smartphone, and/or having sexual conversations by text or online chat, etc.</p>
<p>3. Emotional Abuse</p> <p>Answers may include: -any attitude, behavior or failure to act/protect that harms emotional well-being and self-worth</p> <p><u>examples:</u> excessive yelling and anger, adults or peers constantly criticize, threaten, insult, shame, make fun of, name-calling, or talking down to children or teens</p> <p>- will hurt and cause damage even if it’s not visible online emotional abuse such as any type of online message sent to bully or hurt another person (like an intimidating or threatening message)</p> <p>- can occur on social media or through text messaging or any public or private online forum</p>	<p>4. Neglect</p> <p>Answers may include: - can be physical or emotional neglect - a parent or guardian does not provide for a child’s basic needs -is an act of omission</p> <p><u>examples:</u> Physical Neglect: - when a child or teen doesn’t have proper or enough food, housing, clothes, medical care, access to school, or supervision, etc.</p> <p>Emotional Neglect: - when a parent doesn’t provide enough love and affection, emotional support, and/or rarely pays attention to their child</p>

Lesson 1 Understanding Abuse

4 Major Types of Child Abuse

Information Sheet

Types of child abuse are broken down into four categories:

1. Physical abuse

2. Sexual abuse

3. Emotional abuse

4. Neglect

What is Physical Child Abuse?

Physical child abuse is intentional physical force or aggression that can result in injury.

Some examples include: beating, slapping, hitting, pushing, shaking, kicking, throwing, pinching, biting, choking, or hair-pulling; burning with cigarettes, scalding water, or other hot objects; severe physical punishment, etc.

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Sexual abuse is pressuring or forcing a child (minor) to engage in any sexual behavior or act involving the private areas of the body. This includes touching as well as non-touching interactions.

Possible examples include: touching a child's genitals and/or making a child touch an adult's genitals; violations of bodily privacy such as forcing a child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom; exposing children to adult sexuality.

What is Emotional Child Abuse?

Emotional child abuse is behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being. It can range from a simple verbal insult to an extreme form of punishment.

Examples include: name-calling, rejecting, shaming, excessive yelling, and anger; adults or peers that constantly criticize, threaten, insult, make fun of, or talk down to children or teens, etc.

What is Child Neglect?

Child neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs. Neglect is a type of child abuse that is an act of omission - of not doing something. A single act of neglect might not be considered child abuse, but repeated neglect is child abuse.

Some examples are: failure to provide food, clothing appropriate for the weather, supervision, a home that is clean and safe, and/or medical care as needed; failure to enroll a school-age child in school or allowing excessive absences from school; failure to provide emotional support, love, and affection, etc.