

When a Child Discloses

– HOW TO RESPOND –

1. Stay calm

Remain calm. Try not to show panic, shock, anger, etc.

Say, “I’m really glad that you told me.”

Reassure the child that they are not in trouble.

Say, “It’s not your fault.” Abusers often blame their victims, so reassure the child they are not responsible for what happened.

Don’t insult the offender. Children are protective of people they care about, even their abusers. Your negative response may alter the child’s statements.

2. Listen

Listen to the child. If the child is having a trouble finding the words, be patient. Allow the child to tell you what happened in their own words.

Don’t interrogate. The child’s statements are the main evidence in a case, so it’s important to not “taint” the evidence by asking leading questions or suggesting what may have happened.

Say, “I believe you.” False accusations by children are extremely rare.

Be aware of your own feelings. Try to not project these feelings onto the child.

3. Report

Ensure the child is not in immediate danger, then report the incident. Use the child’s vocabulary when reporting.

Don’t keep it a secret. By reporting abuse, we demonstrate that children are valued and worthy of protection. Reporting abuse helps to stop the cycle of abuse.

Have the child examined. Find a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) medical professional to complete a wellness exam of the child.

Utilize therapy resources. Ensure that the child receives a professional follow-up visit with a victim’s advocate or therapist.

REMEMBER

Adults are
responsible
for keeping
children
safe.

