

9th GRADE: ABUSE

LESSON 1 OVERVIEW

Abuse: Know the Facts



Lesson Time:

30 Minutes

Materials Provided:

- Video: [Couple Charged with Child Abuse](#) (1:34)
- Video: [Erin Merryn Founder of Erin's Law](#) (5:30)
- Lesson Slides [Download](#)
- Parent Letter (shared electronically or printed one per student) [Download](#)

Materials Needed:

- A blank sheet of paper for each student
- Dry Erase Board & Markers
- Projector with Video/Audio Capability
- Markers and Poster Board

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify the four types of abuse.
2. Provide examples of each type of abuse.
3. Determine the necessity and available people and places to get help if abuse is suspected or experienced.

Educators:

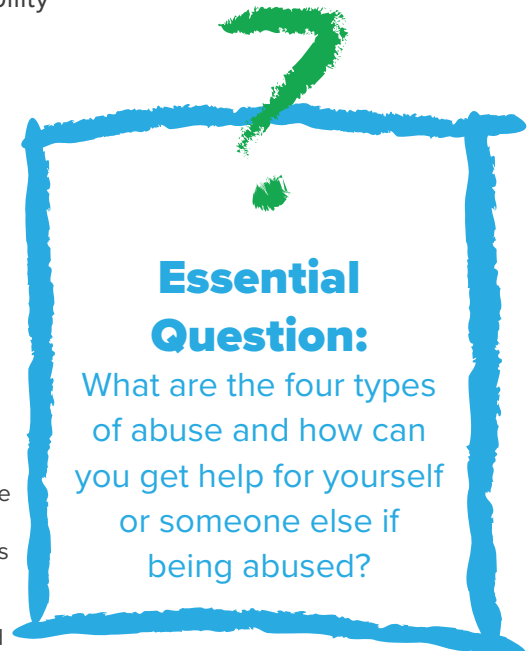
Did You Know?

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, 2024), 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 process of reporting.



Know the Facts



Lesson Introduction: (1 minute)

Today, our topic is the sensitive subject of abuse. Our goal is to explore the 4 different types of abuse and discuss how damaging all forms of abuse are and how everyone connected to it can be affected. During this lesson, please remember to be patient and respectful of everyone in the class and resist the temptation to make judgments. As we talk today, remember that we never know the ways in which the people around us may be struggling.

Core Lesson: (12 minutes)

Abuse can be identified in 4 forms: physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect. So let's brainstorm these before moving forward. *(At this time the teacher should write the 4 types of abuse on the board in 4 different areas in order to leave room to write student responses.)*

Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect

Looking at the words physical abuse, what does this mean or what this might look like?

Answers will vary. Possible answers may include:

- *Physical Abuse: hitting, black-eye, punching, burn marks, broken bones, easiest to see/identify, intent to control or harm, bruises, etc.*
- *Sexual Abuse: sexual contact, unwanted, adult/child, teen/child, secret, overpowering, under 18 years of age, touching or non-touching interactions, etc.*
- *Emotional Abuse: difficult to identify, hurtful, beatdown, threaten, criticize, damaged, lack self-esteem, name-calling, shaming, behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being, etc.*
- *Neglect: without, dirty, hungry, needing medical attention, no home, lack of supervision, left alone, failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs, etc. (CDC, 2024a)*

If you turn on the news or Google local/national news reports of child abuse it seems there are always new allegations hitting the airwaves. As you will see from these reports, abuse has no boundaries. It does not target one specific type of person, no certain financial level, no one type of background, nor does it occur in a specific area or region.

We are about to watch 2 video clips. The first one is a news report pertaining to abuse. As you listen and watch the videos, try to remember some of the words used to describe the individual situations. Following each video, we will discuss key points and details.

Video 1:

Couple Charged with Child Abuse (1:34)

<https://www.wsaz.com/video/2024/01/26/couple-charged-with-child-abuse/>

How many of the 4 types of abuse we discussed can we confirm at this point this child suffered? (Answers should include: Three: physical (bruises and broken bones, beating with a metal pipe, hand placed on a hot stove, an object thrown at her head), emotional (if physical abuse happens, emotional abuse is always present as well, lack of love and affection shown, self-esteem and self-worth severely damaged, etc.) and neglect (no medical attention for previous and present injuries, not being kept safe, etc).

This second video is about Erin Merryn's story. Sexual abuse is the 4th type of abuse that we will discuss. Erin was a victim of sexual abuse as a child and is a crusader for the protection of children. She works to inform and influence lawmakers to pass laws in every state to require sexual abuse prevention education in schools.

Core Lesson (cont)

Video 2:

Erin Merryn Founder of Erin's Law (5:30)

<https://youtu.be/5Y4Scon4xxk>

In many cases of sexual abuse, as in Erin's case, there are common details such as the perpetrator is usually someone known to the victim, the victim is told that what is happening is a secret, and if they told anyone, no one would believe them anyway.

In Erin's story, she was filled with shame, even though she was the victim. This shame and the depression she suffered led her to some very serious behaviors. She mentioned two; does anyone remember what she stated in the video? (*Answers: self-injury and suicide attempt*). The pain and trauma of abuse is deep and destructive. Thankfully, both the little girl in the first video and Erin were able to escape their abuse and abusers. They did so by finding the courage to tell someone. If anyone is suffering abuse or you suspect or know of anyone suffering from any kind of abuse, it is imperative to go to a trusted adult and report it. Even if you are not sure of the facts, it is still a necessary conversation to have with someone.

Activity: Abuse Advocacy Posters (15 minutes)

Slide 1: Advocacy Posters



In order to lead the struggle against child abuse, we can act as advocates for the victims. Do any of you know what advocate means? (*Allow for response.*) An advocate is someone who speaks out to help or protect another person. I am going to divide you into groups, and each group will create a poster with a message for students who are being abused. I have an example on the slide. Try to think of a good slogan for your poster and include tips for how to get help. Try to select people in your group who are creative to make the poster appealing. Work together to create the message you think would help abuse victims. (*Divide students into groups and give*

the supplies needed for their posters. This activity may be adapted. Facilitator may allow each student to create an advocacy message on copy paper.) You did a great job on your posters, students. If you didn't get time to finish, a person in each group may take it home to complete. We will hang your posters in the hallways to help students of abuse know that they are not alone, and there is help available.

Closing: Essential Question (2 minutes)

What are the four types of abuse and how can you get help for yourself or someone else if being abused? (*Allow for responses.*)

Today we have learned about the 4 types of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. All have noticeable signs, however, physical abuse is the easiest to spot and emotional abuse may be the most difficult to identify if one doesn't witness it. In the two video examples, it is obvious that telling someone or talking to someone about the abuse was life-saving. As stated in the introduction, this is a sensitive subject to talk about and process, but it is so very important. Please know that you may go to a trusted adult on this campus or a school counselor or social worker for any questions you may have regarding this topic. Take the last few minutes of class to write down on a separate piece of paper to hand in as an exit slip one thing that stood out to you or anything you would like to share about this lesson. Please fold it in half when you are finished and hand it to me on your way out today. Thank you everyone.

Core Lesson (cont)

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>
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