

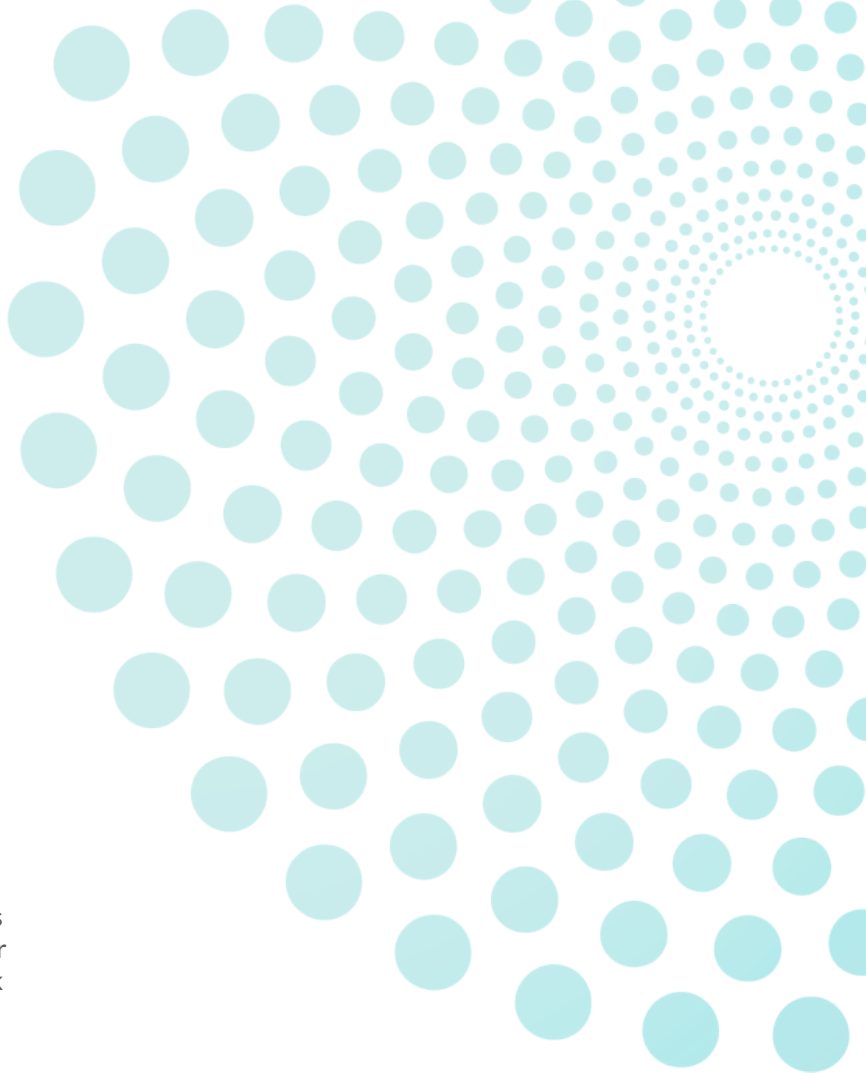
A GUIDE TO

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# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Keeping our families safe and strong.





If you have a reason to suspect a child in Queensland is experiencing harm, or is at risk of experiencing harm or being neglected, contact Child Safety Services and talk to someone about your concerns:

**During normal business hours:**

Contact the Regional Intake Service.

**After hours and on weekends:**

Contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 or (07) 3235 9999. The service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**If a child is in immediate danger or life-threatening situation call '000' (Triple Zero)**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was made possible through a Health and Safer Communities grant from Torres Strait Regional Authority in 2012.

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(Torres Strait version 2)

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## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource provides information on:

- wellbeing in children
- types of child abuse
- ways to help children manage unsafe situations
- facts and assumptions about child abuse
- things you can say and actions to take

You can use this resource to:

- use strategies to build children's self esteem
- learn more about child abuse
- build skills to help children in crisis
- find out what you can do if you are experiencing a family crisis



**No matter what age, race or gender, children have a right to be cared for and protected.**

## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

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Every child has a right to grow up in a safe and caring situation.

No matter what age, race or gender, children have a right to be cared for and protected.

Parents, adults and the community have a duty of care to make sure that all children: have an adequate standard of living

- are protected from maltreatment and abuse
- can play and have leisure time
- have access to education
- are given food, clothing and shelter
- have access to health care
- grow up in a supportive and caring environment.

Child safety is about making sure that children live in a situation free from violence, abuse and exploitation and have an opportunity to thrive and grow to adulthood with:

- positive self esteem
- skills to cope and manage daily life
- confidence to freely express their own opinions
- freedom to access information
- education to build talents, physical and mental abilities
- the ability to form caring and meaningful relationships with others.

Sadly, any child can be at risk of being abused. It is not always the parent who is the abuser.

A child can be abused by a step-parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent, boyfriend or girlfriend of the parent, a neighbour and/or even a sister or brother.

Often the abuser is known to the children. Child abuse is when an adult or older child is deliberately hurting and/or has power and control over a child.

Child abuse, or child maltreatment as it is also called, can happen to children of any age, of any gender and of any race.

The types child abuse that can happen are:

- physical abuse (for example, shaking, pinching, slapping biting, strapping)
- emotional abuse (for example, swearing, abusing, threatening, scaring, standing over)
- sexual abuse and child molestation (for example, having sexual activity with a child and using a child for sexual stimulation)
- neglect (for example, not providing adequate food, clothing, shelter or health support for a child when you have the means to do so).

## Physical abuse

There are many forms of physical abuse of children.

Physical abuse is not just hitting or smacking a child.

Any action or behaviour that deliberately causes hurt or pain to a child is a form of physical abuse.

Examples of physical abuse are:

- shaking violently
- slapping
- strapping
- torturing
- biting
- tying a child up
- choking
- pulling hair
- shoving
- burning or scalding
- filling mouth with pepper or soap

## Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse of children involves emotionally hurting children by what you say or how you act toward them.

Even if you don't really mean what you are saying, or that it is said in anger or frustration it doesn't change the fact that it is emotional abuse and can have long term consequences on the wellbeing of the child.

Examples of emotional abuse are:

- Putting a child down all the time ("You're dumb" "What an idiot")
- Calling the child names ("You're a slut" "You no good dog")
- Threatening a child ("I'll smash you if you don't...")
- Shaming a child
- Denying children contact with their extended family
- Ignoring children
- Making the child feel guilty
- Ignoring or giving a child the silent treatment
- Never hugging or showing a child physical love and affection
- a child witnessing or hearing a family member being assaulted or verbally abused.

## Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse of children is often a secretive form of abuse. The perpetrator may spend time gaining the child's confidence first before any sexual activity happens.

Sexual abuse can range from assault to very serious crimes against children. Because of its secretive and taboo nature sexual assault can have a devastating impact on the lives of victims.

There are many different forms of sexual abuse including:

- Grooming a child (that is, befriending a child in preparation for later sexual activity), giving gifts and then asking for kisses and cuddles, stroking, massaging, isolating and spending time alone with a child with the intent of gain trust for sexual stimulation
- Forcing a child to watch pornography
- An adult exposing their genitals to a child
- Making a child show their genitals
- Touching and fondling a child's genitals
- Trafficking children for child prostitution or creation of child pornography
- Filming, photographing or videoing a child in the nude
- Raping and sexual intercourse with a child
- Sexual exploitation of children
- Children being paid money or gifts for sex

## Neglect

Neglect is a form of abuse where the child is denied the physical or emotional caring they need to grow in to healthy and well-adjusted adults. Take a look at these examples of neglect:

- Denying babies, children or young adults, adequate nutrition to thrive and grow
- Denying children love, support, encouragement and emotional protection
- Using money that you receive for children on drugs, alcohol and/or gambling
- Leaving children unsupervised and to fend for themselves
- Not seeking medical or health services when a child is six or unwell and withholding necessary treatment
- Denying children access to developmental opportunities and education
- Abandoning children
- Deliberately keeping children isolated from all human interaction (locking children up)

## Stalking

Stalking is also a form of child abuse. Stalking is following, pestering or targeting a child in order to frighten, physically hurt or sexually abuse them.

Take a look at some behaviours that are considered stalking:

- Adults befriending children on the internet
- Adults following children
- Unwanted attention from adults to children
- Spying on children
- Lingering around locations where lots of children are
- Following children with the intent of child abduction

# WARNING SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

Sometimes when child abuse happens the child will behave differently. They may not be able to say anything or be fully aware of what is happening to them. Below are some of the common warning signs that child abuse may be happening.

PHYSICAL ABUSE	
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL SIGNS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• afraid of certain person/people</li> <li>• bed wetting</li> <li>• changes in speech</li> <li>• withdrawn and moody</li> <li>• acting out on sisters and brothers</li> <li>• angry</li> <li>• talking about not wanting to live anymore</li> <li>• swallowing poisonous substances</li> <li>• known family and domestic violence</li> <li>• verbal accounts of physical abuse</li> <li>• stuttering, developing speech impediment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bruises (old and new)</li> <li>• cuts</li> <li>• bleeding from the nose</li> <li>• burns</li> <li>• welts</li> <li>• chock marks around neck</li> <li>• rope marks around wrists or ankles</li> <li>• fractures</li> <li>• bite marks</li> <li>• drowsiness, fits or vomiting with head injury</li> <li>• female genital mutilation</li> <li>• abdominal pain</li> <li>• appear glassy eyed, lethargic and rigid</li> </ul>

EMOTIONAL ABUSE	
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL SIGNS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• withdrawn</li> <li>• extremely demanding, aggressive or passive</li> <li>• always anxious about doing something wrong</li> <li>• behaves like a baby (rocking, thumb sucking, throwing tantrums)</li> <li>• lack of physical contact between the child and the care giver</li> <li>• avoids eye contact</li> <li>• doesn't smile</li> <li>• is not joyful and happy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timid and shy</li> <li>• keeps to themselves</li> <li>• dull and blank look</li> <li>• repetitive actions such as pulls eyebrows or hair out</li> <li>• lack of attachment to parent or care giver</li> <li>• lack of concentration</li> <li>• head down</li> <li>• body hunched over</li> </ul>

SEXUAL ABUSE	
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL SIGNS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describing sexual acts</li> <li>• child being in the company of a known paedophile</li> <li>• going to bed fully clothed</li> <li>• sexual knowledge inappropriate for age</li> <li>• risk taking behaviour</li> <li>• running away from home</li> <li>• acting sexually toward adults or other children</li> <li>• bed wetting or bed soiling</li> <li>• verbal accounts of being sexually abused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bruising or bleeding from genitals</li> <li>• self-harming and self-mutilation</li> <li>• suicide attempts</li> <li>• unexplained adolescent pregnancy</li> <li>• anorexia or over-eating</li> <li>• money or gifts from an adult</li> <li>• sexually transmitted disease</li> <li>• bruising around breasts, buttocks, thighs</li> <li>• genital warts or genital infections</li> <li>• bruising or bleeding around the anal area</li> </ul>

SEXUAL ABUSE	
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL SIGNS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stealing food</li> <li>• no adult supervising child's behaviour</li> <li>• spending time in parks, public places, friends places</li> <li>• rocking back and forth</li> <li>• poor school attendance</li> <li>• head banging</li> <li>• lack of trust in anybody</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• underweight</li> <li>• failure to develop</li> <li>• unwashed and unclean</li> <li>• pale complexion and poor hair</li> <li>• listless</li> <li>• unable to concentrate</li> <li>• thin</li> </ul>

# Encourage children to learn about the wider world and praise attempts whether the outcome is successful or not.

## CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

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### Ask questions

Asking questions is a good way to check your own behaviour and to think about the wellbeing of all children in your life.

The answers you give can indicate that things are okay or point to highlight that help may be needed.

Think about how you would answer these questions:

- Are the children in your life open, confident and happy?
- Do they fear spending time with a particular relative or extended family member?
- Do they understand and know how to protect themselves from child abuse?
- Are they well-fed, clean and well looked after?
- Do they often have cuts, bruises and marks on their body with no clear explanation?
- Do they pull or shy away when you or a particular person approach them?
- Has their behaviour changed recently?
- Do they display behaviours that concern you (for example, self-harming, pulling eyebrows or hair out, picking at own skin)?

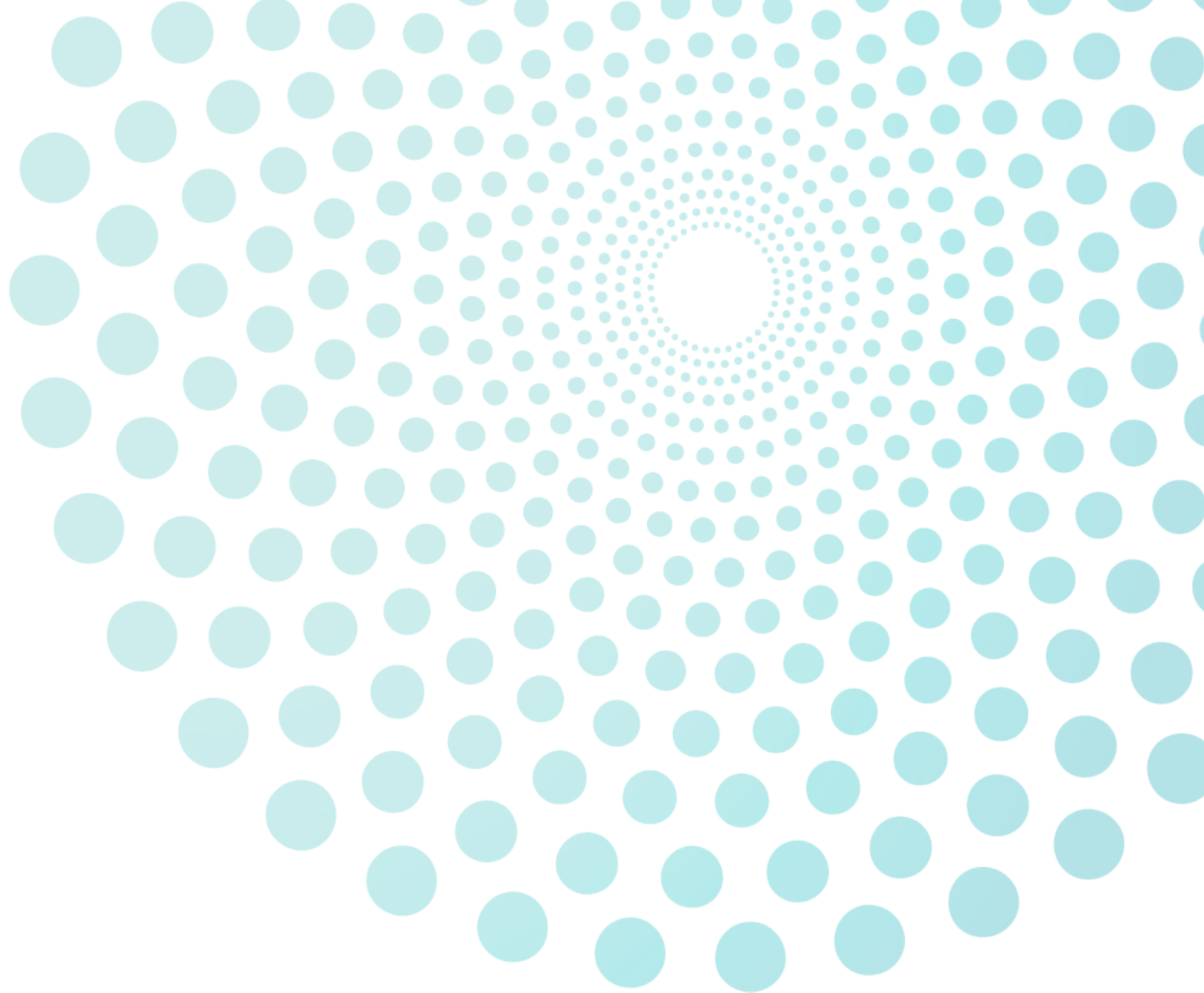
### Support and encourage self-esteem in children

There are lots of words and actions you can do to help children build confidence and self-esteem.

If you are unsure of how to say or do positive things with the children in your life you could talk to other parents/ caregivers or family support workers to get ideas.

Here are just some of the things you could do:

- Smile at, hug, and cuddle your children and tell them how you feel (for example, 'You are just so gorgeous', 'I love you very much').
- Encourage children to learn about the wider world (for example, allow a baby to crawl around and explore the environment, teach young children about other cultures, prepare young adults to think about career and life long goals).
- Praise attempts whether the outcome is successful or not (for example 'Gee that was a great game you played', 'Wow what a great try', 'Well done, I know you studied really hard for that').
- Help children become problem solvers (for example, 'How could you fix that problem?').
- Discourage naughty behaviour rather than put child down (for example, 'That was very naughty to throw that ball at the window' rather than 'You naughty boy').
- Be a role model (for example, show confidence, be consistent, encourage and support others) so that children learn to have confidence in themselves and their decisions.
- Teach children how to help others.
- Encourage children to do exercise.
- Praise children when their behaviour is good or they have done a good job (for example, 'Gee I was proud of you today when you helped grandma', 'What a great job you did putting your toys away').
- Spend time doing one-to-one activities with them (for example, reading, fishing, making art together).
- Enjoy and encourage extended family and community involvement.



## GIVE CHILDREN A CHOICE

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Help children to think about what they could to keep themselves safe. Ask them who they could go to for help.

Give them tips and hints on what to do if they feel unsafe with someone.

Get children to build a network of people they could to for help:

- police (000)
- parent
- teacher
- aunt or uncle

- big brother
- grandparent

Help children develop strategies to do when they feel unsafe:

- call the police (000)
- be confident and say 'no'
- tell someone on your list of people what happened
- go to a safe place
- call for help
- go to a Safety House



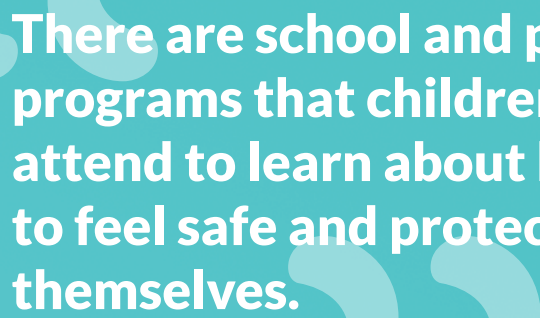
## EXPLAIN WHAT SAFETY HOUSES ARE

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Safety Houses are all over Australia. Anyone who has been approved to be a Safety House has a yellow sign on their letterbox.

Safety houses are a place where children and/or adults can go if they feel unsafe. The people in Safety houses are there to help adults or children in need.





**There are school and police programs that children can attend to learn about how to feel safe and protect themselves.**

## TEACHING CHILDREN TO PROTECT THEMSELVES

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### What are protective behaviours?

Protective behaviours are about teaching children that they have a right to feel safe. Protective behaviours give children the skills to:

- understand warning signs
- recognise and trust their feelings
- be assertive in an unsafe situation
- build a network of people they can trust.

There are school and police programs that children can attend to learn about how to feel safe and how to protect themselves.

There are also programs for parents, teachers and community members to learn about child abuse and how to empower children to protect themselves in unsafe situations.

If these programs do not operate in your region you could request the school or police to organise a protective behaviours program.

# THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAFE AND UNSAFE SITUATIONS

Take the time to talk to children about how feelings are important because they can help to work out whether a situation is safe or not.

Ask children to think about the behaviours and feelings they experience when they feel safe.

Here are some examples to give them as well:

- feel warm inside
- smile
- body feels relaxed
- feel happy
- laugh.

Ask children to talk about the things that happen when they feel unsafe. Here are some examples to give them as well:

- sweaty palms
- heart beating faster
- getting goose bumps
- feeling sick in the stomach
- feel shaky
- breathing quickly
- feeling anxious and panicky

Explain to children that it is important to know the difference between safe

and unsafe situations. Get them to give you examples. Give them some of these examples as well.

Discuss events where they might feel out of control. Give them some examples such as these:

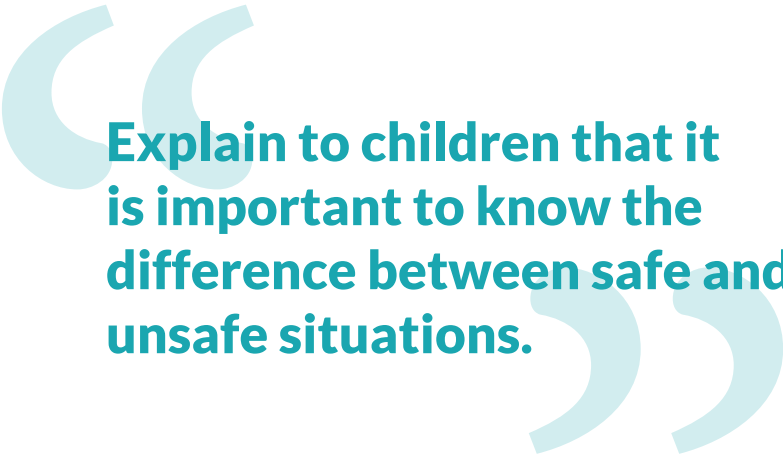
- a dog runs toward to you barking
- you lose your mum or dad in the shopping centre a car swerves toward you.

Ask children to explain what they think good touches and bad touches mean? Give them a simple explanation such as:

- good touches: a hug from your parent, a kiss from your grandma, when you and your friend hug each other
- bad touches: when someone touches you in your private parts, when someone hits or hurts you, when someone pinches or kicks you.

Discuss secrets with children. Ask them to think about what they think the difference between good secrets and bad secrets are. Give them some examples to show them the difference.

SAFE SITUATIONS	UNSAFE SITUATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parent helping you get ready for school</li> <li>• playing with your brother or sister</li> <li>• mucking around with your best friend</li> <li>• your teacher praising you</li> <li>• playing sport at school</li> <li>• going to church with your family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unsafe but having fun, like going on a scary ride or watching a scary movie</li> <li>• unsafe but not fun, like getting a needle or going to the dentist</li> <li>• unsafe and not fun like when an accident happens that you didn't expect (for example, falling down and getting hurt, being lost, someone hurting you or someone following you, or someone bullying you)</li> </ul>
GOOD SECRETS	BAD SECRETS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not telling your friend what you have bought them for their birthday</li> <li>• making a surprise gift for your mum or dad</li> <li>• putting on a surprise party for your grandparents</li> <li>• saving up your money to buy a present for your cousin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• someone doing something wrong (like stealing) and telling you not to do or say anything</li> <li>• someone touching your private parts and telling you it's a secret that you can't tell another adult because they would be angry</li> <li>• someone following you and you keeping that secret from your parents</li> <li>• being hurt by someone and not telling</li> <li>• being threatened by an uncle or aunt that if you tell what they did you'll be in trouble</li> </ul>



**Explain to children that it is important to know the difference between safe and unsafe situations.**

## SILENT MESSAGES

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When adults do not take action to stop child abuse it sends the wrong message to children suffering abuse.

Being an adult bystander to child abuse can make the child feel that:

- abuse and maltreatment of children is okay
- there is no one willing to help them
- there is no one to trust
- they are worthless and unlovable.

Children who grow up being abused or maltreated can:

- feel suicidal
- be drawn to abusive relationships as adults
- experience low self esteem
- suffer from anxiety, depression or other mental illness
- experience memory blanks as adults
- abuse drugs and alcohol
- self-harm
- find it extremely difficult to trust others.

## WHAT IMPACT DOES CHILD ABUSE HAVE?

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Children who are victims of child abuse can be affected in a number of ways.

The impact of child abuse can affect someone throughout their adult life.

Some the impacts of child abuse include:

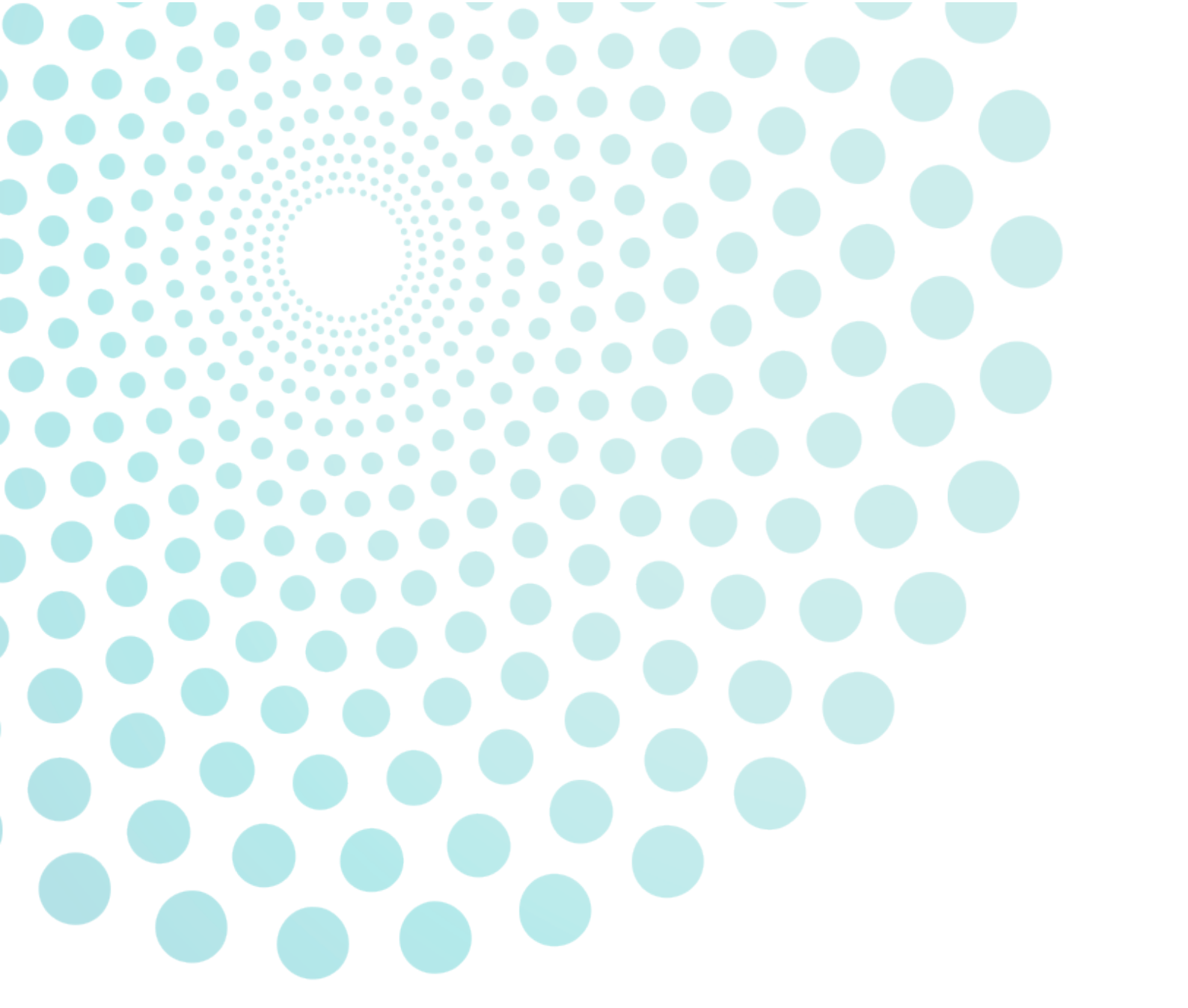
- developmental delays
- poor self- esteem

- lack self confidence
- copying abusive behaviours on younger brothers and sisters
- being cruel to animals
- being withdrawn or depressed
- attempting self-harm
- poor concentration
- feeling worthlessness.

# ASSUMPTIONS AND FACTS

Take a look at some of the common assumptions that people have about children abuse and then take a look at the facts.

ASSUMPTIONS	FACTS
Children make up stories of abuse.	Usually children do not make up stories about being physically, sexually or emotionally abused.
It's only abuse if you are hitting a child.	The emotional threat of abuse and/or power and control over a child is just as abusive as hitting them.
Child abuse doesn't happen in good families.	Child abuse happens in all sorts of families and across all cultural and racial lines. Abuse can occur in families who seem to have it all.
Children don't get affected by things because they are young and strong	Children can grow up very affected by abuse in their childhood. They can experience low self-esteem, have poorly developed relationship skills, become self-harming and/or addicted to alcohol and drugs.
Most child sexual abusers are strangers.	While some sexual abusers are strangers to the child it is much more likely that the abuser is a close relative (for example, parent, grandparent, step parent, uncle, aunt, brother, sister) or someone close to the family.
Neglect only happens in poor families.	Being poor doesn't mean a child is neglected. If the child is given food, love, shelter and health care it is not being neglected. Neglect is when the basic necessities of life are deliberately withheld from a child.
It's not my business to say anything or report child abuse because they are not my children.	As an adult you have a duty of care toward children in abusive situations. They are dependent on caring and protective adults to help them.
Abused children will end up being abusers as adults.	While some children who were abused may lack skills as effective parents, many child abuse survivors work hard not to repeat what happened to them.
Only really bad parents abuse their children.	Often people who abuse their children don't see themselves or what they are doing as abusive. It may be the only way they know how to parent.



## RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE

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Sometimes people are not even aware that what they are witnessing is child abuse.

Even if they suspect something they may be reluctant to act because they think it not their business.

Regardless of age, race, gender or cultural background, children have a legal right to be safe and protected.

Responding to known or suspected child abuse can make a real difference to that child. Your actions can lead to the child and/or children being in a safer situation.

Intervening and getting help for children

in abusive situations can have a range of positive benefits including:

- stopping the abuse from happening
- letting the child know it is not okay for them to be abused
- providing them with the safety and protection they need
- giving them an opportunity to grow and thrive to reach their potential
- beginning the process of healing their physical and emotional wounds
- providing them with appropriate health care
- providing support services to act in their best interests
- supporting their care givers to make positive parenting possible.

# ACTIONS IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE

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## DO:

- Document anything you have seen, especially the dates and times.
- Make of note of any dramatic changes in a child's behaviour.
- Call the local protective services and discuss your concerns with them.
- Take the child to the doctor to be examined and/or talk to the child's teacher. Under the law, both doctors and teachers must report cases of suspected abuse.
- If possible keep the child away from the suspected abuser until you can get appropriate services involved.

## DON'T:

- Don't suggest to a child that they have been abused.
- Don't decide an allegation is true. This is the job of government services.
- Don't show disgust or shock if a child tells you things that have happened to them.
- Don't yarn with others about what the child has said, or about the family or abuser.
- Don't tell the child they are making it up. If you doubt what is being said, keep it to yourself.
- Don't get the child to give information in front of other children.

# CONTACTS IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE

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If you have a reason to suspect a child in Queensland is experiencing harm, or is at risk of experiencing harm or being neglected, contact Child Safety Services and talk to someone about your concerns:

### During normal business hours:

Contact the Regional Intake Service.

### After hours and on weekends:

Contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 or (07) 3235 9999. The service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



**If you suspect child abuse,  
contact the local protective  
services and discuss your  
concerns.**

# THINGS YOU COULD SAY

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## Talking with parents or care givers

It is always important to think about how to approach a parent whose child you suspect is being abused.

It's important not to accuse anyone but rather express that you are worried for their child. Do not approach the person who you believe is the abuser; try and talk the other parent/caregiver instead.

Here are some ways to approach the topic of child abuse.

- 'I am really concerned about Cassie. She seems troubled and withdrawn. Is

she okay?'

- 'Gee, Solomon is in the wars. He always seems to have a lot of bruises these days. It might be worth taking him to the Doctor to get checked.'
- 'You know your new friend Kutcha. He seems to buy Sasha a lot of gifts all the time.'
- 'Are you sure you know who Josiah is talking to on the internet. My friend found out her daughter was being stalked on a social network site.'
- 'I don't like the way your new partner always puts Ketch down. He's a good kid.'

# THINGS YOU COULD SAY

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## Talking with children

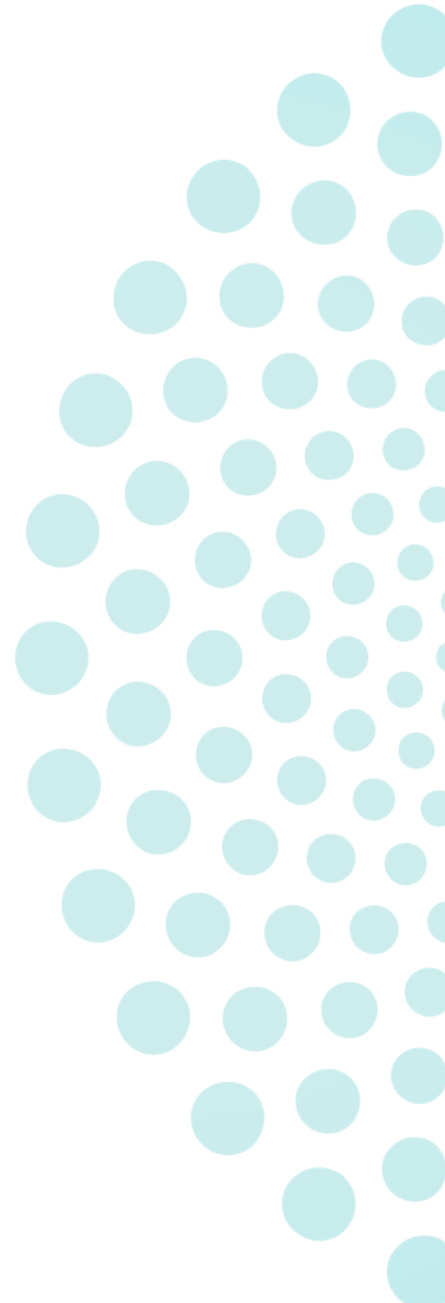
Talk to the child to get an idea of how they are feeling or what is going on.

Let them know you are there for them. It's important for children to know someone is there even if they are not ready to talk about it.

Here are some examples of how to approach children.

- 'Is everything okay?'
- 'You look a bit sad about something. Do you want to talk?'
- 'You can trust me. I will help you.'
- 'We need to tell someone about this so they can help.'

- 'Whatever it is, you can always tell someone.'
- 'Gee Solomon, you are in the wars. You seem to have a lot of bruises on you.'
- 'It's not good to keep bad secrets.'
- 'You are really brave to tell me that. Now let's talk to someone who is going to help us.'
- 'What happened...it's not your fault.'
- 'Gee, that's a lovely bracelet. Who gave you that?'
- 'Who was that guy with your friend Toby. I haven't seen him before.'
- 'Just remember there is always someone you can tell if something bad happens.'



When adults do not  
take action to stop  
child abuse, it sends  
the wrong message to  
children suffering abuse.



Community groups empowering community

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