



## Abuse of the Innocent

With over 3 million *reported* cases of child abuse investigations per year, the United States holds one of the worst records of industrialized nations in this area of Child Abuse. These cases are actually weaned down from referrals involving 6.3 million children, according to state child protective services statistics. To further understand the horrific scope of this abuse on our precious and most vulnerable segment of our population here a few other statistics: **Four to Five** children **die**

each **day** from abuse and/or neglect. (**80%** of these children were **not old enough for kindergarten. 70%** were **under 2.**) At least **one parent** was **responsible** for **80%** of the above stated **deaths**.

Child Abuse includes many types of maltreatment and one type can frequently be a subset of another. These types include: Shaken Baby Syndrome (a form of physical abuse), physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.

### Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs when usually a frustrated parent or caregiver suddenly and vigorously shakes an infant or very young child. This causes the child's brain to bounce in multiple directions and repeatedly hit the skull wall, causing parts of the brain to rupture, tearing brain cells and blood vessels. This is five to ten times more forceful than a child tripping and falling. Weak neck muscles add to the extent of injury. There is no visible sign of injury since the damage is all internal. This can cause the brain to swell and cause damage; a subdural hematoma; developmental delays, learning disabilities, or mental retardation; blindness; deafness; paralysis; and death.

### Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is the most visible of all the child abuse types. It is described as non-accidental injury of a child which includes beating, punching, biting, burning, kicking, hair pulling, excessive and harmful punishment. The visible proof includes bruises, cuts, burns, swelling, punctures, missing clumps of hair, sprains, broken bones, visible injuries in different stages of healing, weak explanations of existing injuries, death. Sometimes there is a pattern to new injuries seen after a weekend or vacation, or noticed after a school absence.

Sometimes a child's behavior or changes in behavior is a clue to the presence of physical abuse. These might include aggressive behavior towards peers or animals; fear, withdrawal, depression, and /or anxiousness; afraid of parents and/or other adults; wears long sleeves when weather doesn't warrant it; nightmares; insomnia self-destructive behavior; acting out; imaginative play and artwork express violence. And, although rare, a child may self-report the injuries.

### **Emotional Abuse (also known as Psychological Maltreatment)**

Emotional Abuse is described as serious interference with a child's emotional, psychological, cognitive, or social development. Some examples of maltreatment in emotional abuse are:

- Ignoring and Rejecting- failure to respond to a child when he/she is reaching out for attention, love, eye contact or touch; not calling the child by name; and ridiculing the child. ("Failure to Thrive" is a medical condition which exists in an infant due to the lack of physical touch which produces the needed bonding between baby and parent. Infants become weak and frail and frequently result in the death of the infant.)
- Isolation-preventing social interactions including confining the child and/or limiting their freedom of movement.
- Verbal Assault and Terrorizing-constant shaming, ridiculing, blaming, threatening (the child or their sibling), belittling, bullying, creating a climate of fear, and placing rigid and unrealistic expectations upon the child with actual or implied threats of harm if the expectations are not met.
- Exploitation and/or Corruption-when a child is taught to develop inappropriate and illegal behaviors, such as teaching them to steal or forcing them into prostitution.

Emotional Abuse should not be considered a "less severe" form of child abuse. It can and frequently does have lasting effects on a child's psyche which are frequently carried on through their adulthood. It should also be pointed out that children who are being physically abused are being emotionally abused as well through verbal assault and terrorizing. Abuse is difficult for an adult to handle, imagine being a young child and having to live their lives daily in an abusive situation without having the stature, strength, or maturity to "fight back".

Emotional Abuse causes many of the same behavioral problems that physical abuse can. They also can suffer from anxieties; phobias; acting too "adult" or too young; have destructive and anti-social behavior; depression; and suicidal thoughts. Emotionally

abused children often grow up with thoughts of “not being good enough”; “can’t do anything right”; or that they are deficient in some way.

Legally, Emotional Abuse is the hardest form of abuse to prove. This is why under the legal system it is usually presented as a “symptom” of Physical Abuse or Neglect.

## **Neglect**

Legally, neglect is considered the withholding of a child’s education, medical care, and/or mental health treatment. This is also a form of Emotional Abuse due to its isolation characteristics. It is also a form of Physical Abuse under certain circumstances (such as lack of medical care of physical injuries creating a worse physical condition) leading to the child experiencing more pain or death.

Clues to a child being neglectfully abused may include: a child wearing clothes that are the wrong size, dirty, in ill-repair, or inappropriate for the weather conditions; always hungry and when having access to food gorging and “stockpiling” of food; always tired and sleepy; low weight and height for age; admits caring for siblings; truancy; incomplete homework; changes schools; lack of proper immunizations and untreated medical conditions; and mental issues that become progressively worse.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual Abuse is broken up into three categories: Touching; Non-Touching; and Exploitation.

Touching Sexual Abuse includes: fondling; forcing a child to perform oral sex; forcing a child to touch an adult’s sexual organs; and penetration of a child’s vagina or anus with a penis (no matter what degree of penetration is achieved) and/or any object not needed to be used for a medical reason.

Non-Touching Sexual Abuse includes: masturbating in the presence of a child; deliberately forcing a child to watch a sexual act; subjecting a child to indecent exposure or exhibitionism; and exposing a child to view pornographic material or an adult’s sexual organs; forcing a child to show their own sexual organs to an adult; or inappropriately speaking sexually in front of or to a child.

Exploitation: engaging or soliciting a child for prostitution; or using a child to film, photograph, or model pornography.

As with many instances of child abuse, the effects of child abuse are far reaching into their adulthood. Sexual Abuse robs their childhood; creates a loss of trust; low self-esteem; feelings of guilt; self-abusive behavior; anti-social behavior; depression; withdrawal; eating disorders; poor self-image; absenteeism and decline in school performance; recklessness; running away from home; substance abuse; nightmares; identity confusion; and can lead to future intimate relationships fraught with problems.

Children who experience **Child Abuse and Neglect** are **9x** more likely to become involved with criminal behavior. **Two-thirds** of people in drug treatment programs reported being abused or neglected as children. **14%** of men and **36%** of women in United States prisons were abused as children.

The CDC/ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Study conducted between 1995-1997 performed comprehensive physical exams and interviews of 17,000 Health Maintenance Organization members who continue to be followed. This study revealed some startling results:

Prevalence of different categories of abuse results of 17,000 interviewees:

Physical Abuse	28.3%	Physical Neglect	9.9%
Sexual Abuse	20.7%	Emotional Neglect	14.8%
Emotional Abuse	10.6%		

Certain professions are required to report suspected cases of child abuse. If you are unsure if you fall into this category go to:

[www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/mandate/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/mandate/)

This will list, state by state, mandated professionals.

If you do not belong to one of these professions and you suspect child abuse you can report it anonymously to your state's Child Protective Services Agency.

“The shame and the downfall of a modern materialistic society is her inability to treasure, care for, admire, adore, cherish, value, revere, respect, uphold, uplift, protect, shield, defend, safeguard, treasure and love her children. I praise all the cultures of this world that naturally harbor and actively manifest these instincts. If a nation or if a population of people fails to recognize the excellent value and distinction of the lives of her children and is defective enough to have lost the capability of expressing and acting upon these instincts then there is nothing that can save that nation or those people. The prosperity of a people is not measured in banks, financial markets, economy and the death of its humanity is evident not through the loss of life but in the loss of love for its children.” — C. JoyBell C.

*With Gratitude.*

*Kai*

#### REFERENCES

Berger, Kathleen S.; The Developing Person Through the Lifespan; Worth Publishers; New York 2001

[www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/mandate/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/mandate/)

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

<http://www.helpguide.org>

[www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)

[www.childhelp.org/child-abuse/](http://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse/)

[www.childhelp.org/child-abuse-statistics](http://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse-statistics)