

Why We Must Have a Long Game in Child Sexual Abuse Prevention © Participant Handbook

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Objectives:

Participants will:

- learn common misconceptions about child sexual abuse prevention efforts.
- learn of short game (immediate) prevention strategies that work to prevent child sexual abuse.
- learn of long game (generational change) prevention strategies that can create lasting change in safety for children.
- strategize how to be equitable and inclusive in both the short and long-range practices

Contact Us:

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Introduction and Safe Space

Introductions

Safe Space

Child sexual abuse and sexual abuse prevention is a very challenging topic for most people. Your attendance here today is an important step in helping to protect children. Statistics show that when groups of people gather for training, it is likely that some of them have either experienced child sexual abuse and / or may have engaged in sexually harmful behaviors. It is important for us to work together to create a safe space for all trainees. Here are some ways that we can do so:

- Recognize that you or others may have strong feelings throughout this training.
- Take care of yourself. If you need a break, feel free to “check out” in your seat, or get up for a drink, or mute video for a while
- Respect the feelings of the other people in the room by muting if you have background noise, avoiding side conversations, and potentially harmful language.
- Maintain confidentiality around conversations attendees have during the training (with the exception of any mandated reporting situations that may arise).

Notes: _____

Visualization Exercise

Close your eyes. Imagine that you visit a new society with people you have never met before
 Scenario: You are introduced to a group of 200 children (half boys and half girls). The tour guide identifies that 27 of the girls and 8 of the boys (18% of the children are sexual abuse survivors).

- How do you feel about this society?
- Would you feel as if the efforts of the society to protect children were enough?
- How alarmed would you be if they said 18% of these children had survived a lion attack?
- Now with eyes still closed, imagine that each of the 18 affected children hold a photo of their abuser.
- You can open your eyes.
- Who are these abusers? Was it just one person? Why not? Was there a “type” of person who would be in the photo?

CDC, 2020; Finkelhor et al., 2014; Swingle, et al., 2016; Friedman, et al., 2011; Herbert et al., 2009; Lund and Vaughn-Jensen 2012; Oates, et al., 2000

Child Sexual Abuse in the U.S.

- 25 - 27% of girls experience child sexual abuse
- 5 - 8% of boys experience child sexual abuse
- Children with disabilities and children who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual are sexually abused at 3 times the rate of their peers
- Only about 1 in 4 children who experience this abuse disclose it during their childhood
- 21% of these delayed disclosure by one year after the abuse
- 57% delayed disclosure 5 years after the abuse
- Males are twice as likely as females to not disclose sexual abuse
- 98.5% of the time children are telling the truth about sexual abuse

The Elephant in the Room

Adults:

- Many adults do not understand consent (Gruber, 2016).
- Given the prevalence (CDC, 2020) of child sexual abuse, we cannot continue to believe that only monsters engage in sexually abusive behaviors toward children
- So many instances of child sexual abuse by adults are not disclosed that adult offenders may not receive sanctions nor interventions to change their behaviors (Swingle et al., 2016; Herbert et al., 2009)

Children:

- 30 to 50% of cases of child sexual abuse are due to the harmful sexual behavior of another child or youth (Finkelhor, et al., 2019, CDC, 2020)

Three-pronged Approach to CSA Prevention

Short Game – Safe Environment for Children

- Train adults to recognize grooming and intervene to protect children
- Train adults about healthy boundaries in relationships to increase sanctions of inappropriate behaviors
- Train adults to carefully monitor children, particularly in groups with varying ages, developmental phases, and power dynamics

Long Game – (Child Focused) Children Have Healthy Relationships Across the Life Course

- Teach the next generation of adults (children and youth) the socio-emotional skills to recognize and respect other’s boundaries
- Communication skills – ability to recognize and accept “no” in verbal, facial, and body cues
- Emotional intelligence and empathy
- Body sovereignty

Long Game (Adult Focused) – Adult Norms Evolve

- Teach adults the very real, lifelong consequences that survivors experience
- Provide consistent informal sanctions for grooming and boundary violating adults
- Teach adults to carefully monitor children (different: ages, developmental stages, statuses)

Defining the Short Game

Discussion: What do parents perceive is the purpose of school-based instruction?

Discussion: What do teachers hope children gain from school-based instruction?

Misconceptions about the Short Game

Myths

- We do lessons with children to keep them safe from adults who intend to sexually abuse them
- The primarily goal of student lessons is to get children to disclose abuse

Let's Talk

We never believe that we can prevent physical abuse of children by teaching them about healthy discipline tactics and telling them to say “no” to certain forms of discipline. Why?

Truths

Teaching children that some touch is “good” and other touch is “bad” and telling children to say “no” to “bad touch” is not helpful for the following reasons:

- Ignores the power dynamics between adults and children
- Fails to recognize that children are harmed by those who they know well
- Ignores children’s cognitive processing abilities

Additionally:

- When a child discloses, abuse has already occurred (not primary prevention)
- Affects of disclosure are complicated for the survivor (Swingle et al., 2016)
- Disclosure DOES affect the involved parties, but does not address the systemic challenges that created the issue

The Short Game - Teach Adults to Protect

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- Children are traumatized by child sexual abuse at alarming rates. Being able to identify grooming behaviors in other adult and take action to intervene can save children from this kind of harm.
 - Grooming: “A process by which a person prepared a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of the child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child’s compliance and maintaining the child’s secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender’s abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions.” (Craven, Brown, & Glichrist, 2006 p. 297)

Child-Focused Long Game

- What skills do children need to have healthy relationships?
 - What strategies work to teach children to use empathy to respect others' right to consent?
 - When are children most ready to learn these concepts?
 - Will children with these skills become adults who honor consent?
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Long Game – Change Adults' Beliefs and Norms

Attitudes Toward Child Sexual Abuse and Source

- Describing adult-child interactions as “sexual intercourse”, “fondling”, or “an affair” rather than “rape” or “molestation” – the media
- Portrayal of child sexual abuse as uncommon – Most introductory psychology textbooks
- Portrayal as consensual, “Maybe it was a way of him to, once this did happen, to satisfy his sexual needs. At 13, if you think back, people mature at different ages.” (about teacher – student case) – New Jersey Supreme Court Judge
- Belief that harm is lesser or non-existent for boys – the judge above and the general public
- Belief that harm to a child is minor or short-lived – the judge above and the general public
- Belief that false report of child sexual abuse is common – jurors, the general public
- Belief that someone besides the perpetrator is responsible (child, child's mother, etc.) – general public
- Belief that strangers are primary risk; that perpetrators “look” different from other adults – general public

Cromer and Goldsmith, 2010; Quas, et al., 2005

Adult-Focused Long Game

Discussion: What strategies work to change adult attitudes about child sexual abuse?

Social Justice Approach to Primary Prevention

Discussion: How can prevention specialists who teach children be equitable and inclusive?

How can prevention specialists who train adults be equitable and inclusive?

Summary of Three-Pronged Approach

- Short Game – Adults create safe environments for children monitored and supervised by responsible adults and report suspected child sexual abuse
- Child Focused Long Game – Adults teach children healthy relationship skills including empathy-based consent; the next generation of adults respect others’ body sovereignty
- Adult Focused Long Game – Adults interrupt grooming behaviors and set standards for adults who live / work with children; norms change

Evaluation QR Code

Please evaluate this training. Many mobile devices will allow you to use an app specifically designed to scan QR codes or do so automatically in the standard camera app.

1. Open the camera app
2. Focus the camera on the QR code by gently tapping the code
3. Follow the instructions on the screen to complete the action



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