

# Supporting your Child

who experienced sexual abuse

Which of these approaches have you already used to support your child since you learned about the sexual abuse? Are there ideas below that you might use? Keep in mind... it's not a problem at all to begin any of these things, at any time.

## 1. STAY STEADY

Your child looks to you for cues that they are going to be OK

"I believe you" is a powerful statement for your child to hear. You can say this even though you may have difficulty believing what happened. Separate your own responses and thoughts from that of your child.

## 2. REASSURE YOUR CHILD

"You are safe now"  
"I'm here"  
"We will get through this together"

## 3. SOOTHE YOUR CHILD

Children want and need to be heard too

## 4. TAKE WHAT YOUR CHILD SAYS SERIOUSLY

REMEMBER NOT TO FOCUS ON WHY YOUR CHILD DID NOT TELL YOU SOONER

Focus on this: They did tell or you did find out. Now you can focus on how to keep them safe and help

As difficult as this is, your child may have positive feelings toward that person

## 6. AVOID JUDGMENTAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE PERSON WHO HURT YOUR CHILD

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Here are some more ideas to consider...

Listen, but don't press for details. You don't have to be afraid to talk about it by listening and talking without solution finding or investigating

7. FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD

8. EXPLAIN WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Re-establish safety and provide simple explanations of what you know lies ahead for them

If you don't know what will happen, it's OK to say that, but let your child know you are going to see what you can find out. For example, instead of, "they will go to jail" say, "a judge will make a decision about what should happen because that person broke the law of Canada"

9. BE CAREFUL TO AVOID PROMISES YOU CAN'T KEEP

10. BE HONEST WITH YOUR CHILD

Sexual abuse thrives with secret keeping. Modeling open and honest communication is key. Say, "we now have a 'NO secrets' Motto in our family".

It's completely up to you. Have one or two close supporters that know the situation, and for the rest, say, "We are dealing with a difficult situation where my child was hurt, but we are getting through it, thank you"

11. CHOOSE WHO YOU WANT TO TALK TO ABOUT IT AND HOW MUCH YOU WANT TO SHARE