



Child Abuse Prevention: We Can Help Children in Need

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Abuse, domestic violence, maltreatment, and neglect do not discriminate by age, race, economic status or community. The short- and long-term effects can impact victims in often unforeseen ways and it differs from person to person. However, one thing is certain: the effects of child abuse and neglect can last a lifetime.

It's important to understand that child abuse can take many forms. The obvious, of course, is the intentional harm or mistreatment of a person under the age of 18. But it also includes verbal assault or emotional injury to self-esteem.

Neglect is also a form of abuse by depriving a child of their basic needs and failure to give proper care. This includes inadequate supervision, health care, food, clothing, housing, education, affection and safety needs.

Unfortunately, abuse can be difficult to detect. And the causes of child abuse aren't simple either, with many contributing factors that can range from poverty to alcohol and drug abuse to mental health issues.

One thing is for certain: The effects of child abuse and neglect can be devastating. Children may feel alone or isolated, fearful, or distrustful of others. There may be lifelong psychological consequences such as depression, low self-esteem, difficulty building relationships or educational challenges.

However, there is hope for helping children in abusive situations. Research shows children who receive support in early childhood can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress.

This is where all of us have a role to play:

- If you think a child you know may be neglected, try talking to the parent or guardian to see what stresses they may be under and determine how you can help or if you can direct them to services that could help. Then follow up with them so they know you care. If the neglect is significant, call 911.
- Be a positive influence on the children in your life. Whether it's your own child, a neighborhood child, or a niece or nephew, be kind and encouraging.
- If you witness child abuse firsthand, call 911. While you may hesitate because you don't want to get involved, always keep the child foremost in your mind.

- Check in with parents in your family or community. They may need someone to talk with, or an hour or two break, which could make a difference in how they treat their child.
- Donate to local organizations that provide basic needs and care for those who have been abused or neglected.

Our collective effort to prevent child abuse is a step in the right direction. Hope, education and community resources are powerful tools for change.

Finally, if you need help, reach out to Oneida Behavioral Health at (920) 490-3790. We are here to help.