

LEARN THE SIGNS

By recognizing the signs, you can help a child access safety and support.

Children who have been abused may display a wide variety of emotional, behavioral, or physical signs and symptoms. And, sometimes they may not display any symptoms at all.

What is most important is that if you notice changes in a child that you let them know you are concerned, want to help, and that they can come to you for anything and you will not be upset.

The signs below do not necessarily mean abuse is happening, but can serve as a guide to understanding an abused child's behavior.

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS:

- Acting withdrawn or detached
- Acting out at home, school, or in social settings
- Excessive or unusual clinginess
- Sudden mood swings
- Self-injury
- Changes in eating patterns
- Running away from home
- Knowledge of sexual activity more extensive than what it should be for their stage of development
- Alludes to secret knowledge

EMOTIONAL SIGNS:

- Fear of being alone
- Fear of going to bed

- Fear of going to a certain place or visit a certain person/people

PHYSICAL SIGNS:

- Bruises, cuts, bleeding, welts, burn marks
- Trouble sitting, standing, or stiff/forced movements
- Stained, torn, bloody clothes and/or undergarments
- Trouble eating or drinking
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting and/or thumb-sucking at an age beyond developmental appropriateness
- Presence of a sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy
- Frequent headaches or other pain
- Money, expensive items, or clothing without financial means or reason

In addition to signs a child may exhibit, it is also important to pay attention to how people around a child are behaving. While most people are being genuinely nice or helpful, be mindful when someone seems to always want to babysit, spend time with a child, or take a child places alone or without the parents/primary caretaker.

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