

^{IF} ~~WHEN~~ WHAT TO DO WHEN A CHILD TELLS OF HIS OR HER ABUSE

Listen. Do not put words into a child's mouth. Allow them to tell only as much as they want.

Five Basic Rules:

BELIEVE WHAT THEY SAY.

SAY YOU'RE GLAD THEY TOLD YOU.

SAY YOU'RE SORRY IT HAPPENED.

LET THEM KNOW IT'S NOT THEIR FAULT.

LET THEM KNOW YOU'LL HELP.

Let them know too that they're not the only one.

This sort of thing happens to other children too sometimes.

Do not over react.

A child's initial disclosure of sexual abuse is a critical moment. He or she will be monitoring every reaction.

Do not panic.

If the child judges you unable to handle the situation, he or she may not disclose any more of the story.

Do not criticise.

Don't say: "You should have told me sooner." or "Why did you let him?"

Ensure the child's immediate safety.

Try not to alert the alleged abuser.

Seek advice and assistance.

The people who are running the Feeling Safe programme will have an up to date list of support services in your area.

Find support for yourself

Dealing with sexual abuse is hard, especially when it involves someone you care about. Discuss the matter with someone you feel comfortable with, someone you trust, someone who will respect the confidentiality of the situation.