

## **Communicating with Your Child about Difficult Matters**

Good communication between parents and children is imperative for combating many issues that affect children and adolescents.

Research tells us the way parents or loved ones react to a child's disclosure of abuse can have a longer lasting negative effect on a child than the actual incident. As upsetting as this may be, try to remember your child has already "lived" the experience. Reassure your child that they did the right thing by telling. Being calm, open, and non-judgmental are all key factors for communication. Let them know they are loved and accepted in spite of any details revealed. Remind your child that you are there for them if they need to talk.

Children are very astute in reading body language. If the child is revealing information that is hard for the parent to hear, the way you verbally and physically react can keep two way communication open or shut it down.

Make it very clear and reinforce to your child that you are proud of them for coming to tell you about the difficult situation, and your love is unconditional. This is very important and will pave the way for the child to feel safe. Often children believe when things happen that it is their fault. Assure your child that they did not do anything wrong.

The Children's Advocacy Center provided the following information from the nationally recognized organization Darkness to Light:

### **Step 1: Learn the facts. Understand the risks.**

Realities should influence your decisions regarding children.

### **Step 2: Minimize opportunity.**

Eliminate or reduce one-adult/one-child situations, that dramatically lowers the risk of abuse for children.

### **Step 3: Talk about it.**

Children often keep abuse a secret, but barriers can be broken down by talking openly about it.

### **Step 4: Stay alert.**

Don't expect obvious signs when a child is being abused.

### **Step 5: Make a plan.**

Learn where to go, whom to call and how to react.

### **Step 6: Act on suspicions.**

The future well-being of a child is at stake.

### **Step 7: Get involved.**

Volunteer and support organizations that fight child abuse.

Additional information regarding the topic of abuse can be obtained by calling the Children's Advocacy Center located in St. Tammany Parish at (985) 892-3885, visit their home web page at [www.cachopehouse.org](http://www.cachopehouse.org) or visit Darkness to Light at [www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org).