

If Your Child Discloses Sexual Abuse
By Bright Tomorrows CAC Staff

Research has shown there are many factors that can help decrease the level of trauma children experience when they disclose sexual abuse. The biggest factor in determining the level of trauma for a child is how parents and other adults respond to the child's disclosure. Here are some suggestions on how to respond to a child's disclosure of abuse.

- Remain calm. If you become upset your child may feel they were wrong to tell you about what happened or that you are mad at them.
- Most importantly, tell your child you believe them and will do what you need to protect them. The child will be worried that you do not believe them, as many offenders will make that threat to keep a child from telling.
- Praise the child for having the courage to tell you about the abuse. Statistically, 1 in 10 victims will disclose before their 18th birthday. This means that for every 1 child that discloses, there are 9 more victims bearing the burden in silence. Kids who tell are incredibly brave!
- Don't question your child for further details. If they want to talk about the abuse, just listen. It is important that the first time the child is questioned about the abuse it is done by trained professionals.
- Call the local police or Child Protective Services to report what your child has disclosed. Keep in mind that every adult in Idaho is required by law to report any *suspicion* of abuse.
- If a child has waited days, months, or years to disclose, don't question him/her as to why he/she waited to tell you. There are many reasons children are afraid to tell, one of which is to protect you and your feelings.
- A disclosure may feel life changing. It is important to keep daily routines to help him/her understand that everything is going to be ok. Routines help children feel safe and know their relationship with you has not changed.

Know that there is help available. You don't have to go through this alone. For further information, visit our website at www.brightcac.org or contact us at 234-2646.