



## ***IF A CHILD COMES TO YOU FOR HELP***

- ⇒ Respond as calmly as possible. Be patient.  
Be aware of your tendencies to deny or minimize.
- ⇒ Believe what the child is telling you.
- ⇒ Without asking leading questions, try to get enough information to determine if you *suspect* what happened may be abusive.
- ⇒ Do not make promises, especially that you won't tell or that everything will be all right.
- ⇒ Use simple words the child will understand.
- ⇒ Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling you.
- ⇒ Assure the child that what happened was not his/her fault, that you are not angry with the child, and that the child will not be punished.
- ⇒ Protect the child by:
  - removing him/her from contact with the suspected abuser
  - asking for specialized intervention from Children's Protective Service
  - having the child examined for medical treatment as necessary.
- ⇒ Be prepared to talk with the child about the abusive situation.  
She/he will need to talk about it to regain a sense of control and to overcome fears, anger, etc.
- ⇒ Encourage
  - empowerment of the child by including him/her in decision-making that affects his/her life and honoring the child's inner wisdom
  - "normalization" of life routines and school activities as soon as possible, but don't force.
- ⇒ Obtain professional counseling for the child, as well as yourself and other family members. The emotional trauma resulting from abuse is often too intense for the child to cope with alone and can interfere with normal developmental processes.

### **Key Elements:**

authenticity  
respect  
empathy  
listening "beyond" the words spoken  
listening to one's own self