



WHY CHILDREN DON'T TELL

Children are often “**groomed**” over a period of time to feel special and not recognize that the affection is artificial, but a manipulation toward the future abuse.

Children become **confused** about what is happening to them. They are often told they are “special,” that the abuse is a “secret,” or that they are going to “play a game”; they may not recognize the activity as abuse. Their sense of reality is distorted by the abuser so that children begin not to trust their own intuition, understanding, feelings, and conscience.

Children are often **threatened** with the withdrawal of love and support by one or both parents and/or with future negative consequences or physical harm to themselves or someone/something they love (like their pets or siblings). Bribes, threats affection, coercion and/or manipulation are common strategies used by abusers.

Children are often **made to feel responsible** for the abuse, that somehow they “asked for it” or in the case of sexual abuse, that they enjoyed it.

Children are **isolated** from peers, social activities, and other supportive adults out of fear of discovery.

Research indicates that the **most effective response at the time of disclosure** is

- belief of the child
- prompt, appropriate action
- reducing the child’s sense of guilt