

Boys' Life[®]

Confronting Child Abuse

By W.E. Butterworth IV

Help break the cycle that hurts millions of children each year.

In a counseling session, 13-year-old Sammy said: "My dad used to come home drunk and get real mad. He would throw me against the wall. My head hurt a lot. I would never hurt my kids like my dad [did]."

Unfortunately, the sad odds are that Sammy would.

According to the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, abused children are six times more likely to become abusive adults than are kids reared in non-violent homes.

Scary stuff. But there may be a happy ending.

Breaking the Cycle

While every April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, the problem is dealt with every month.

It has to be. The cycle must be broken.

Since 1985, the number of reports of child abuse and neglect has risen 50 percent. In 1993, according to the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, nearly 3 million children in the United States were reported as abused and neglected. Worse, at least three abused children died each day.

Four Types of Child Abuse

What exactly is child abuse? There are four types:

Physical Abuse

Beatings, burns, bites, strangulation, immersion in scalding water and other actions causing bruises, welts, broken bones, scars or serious internal injuries.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual contact with an adult or older child for the gratification of the offender.

Emotional Abuse

Attacking a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth.

Neglect

Not giving a child the basic necessities: food, clothing, shelter, medical care, attention to hygiene and more.

Here's Help to Stop the Abuse

So where's the happy ending? It is in our ability to find help. Organizations dealing daily with the problem include:

- Covenant House Neline, (800) 999-9999. (24 hours)
- National Resource Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, (800) 227-5242.

- National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, (800) FYI-3366 or (703) 385-7565.
- National Information Clearinghouse for Infants With Disabilities and Life-Threatening Conditions, (800) 922-9234, ext 201; in South Carolina: (800) 922-1107.
- National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, (800) KIDS-0006.
- National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse. NCPA [Publications Department, P.O. Box 2866, Chicago, IL 60690, (312) 663-3520] offers a free catalogue of publications on child abuse, child abuse prevention and parenting.

No Time to Waste

If you need help—or know someone who does—follow Sammy's lead:

Call for help. Do it now.

You can help break the sad cycle of child abuse

A Child's Bill of Rights

If you find yourself in what you believe to be a dangerous situation, you have the right to:

- Trust your instincts or feelings.
- Expect privacy.
- Withhold information that could place you in danger.
- Refuse gifts.
- Say no to unwanted touching or affection.
- Say no to inappropriate demands and requests from adults.
- Be rude or unhelpful if the situation warrants.
- Run, scream and make a scene.
- Physically fight off unwanted advances.
- Ask others for help.

(Read more in the pullout parent's guide bound in every "Boy Scout Handbook," "Webelos Scout Book," "Bear Cub Scout Book" and "Wolf Cub Scout Book.")

The Boy Scouts of America

<http://www.scouting.org>