

**THANKS**

**FOR**

**COMING**



Niagara Regional Sexual Assault Centre  
43 Church Street, Suite 503  
St. Catharines, Ontario  
L2R 7E1  
Registered Charitable  
#11884-0040-RR0001  
Canada Revenue Agency [www.cra-arc.gc.ca](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca)

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## CAPP: Child Assault Prevention Program

*CAPP is an abuse prevention program that gives children skills and strategies they can use in potentially dangerous or abusive situations.*

The program presents situations with bullies, strangers and known offenders. Information is delivered through role play (which children can participate in if they choose) and discussions. Workshops are approximately 1.5 hours in length and we present to each class individually. There is an in-service with staff and parents prior to presenting to children. This ensures that the entire school community has the same information. We see over 3,000 students in Niagara each year with CAPP, and this program is funded mainly through donations.

“The Child Assault Prevention Program (CAPP) has made an incredible impression upon all staff and equipped our students with lifetime strategies in dealing with assault. These presentations were not only an outreach tool to our students, but a wonderful learning opportunity for our staff who were present during the sessions. This program, unlike any other in which we have participated, has and will undoubtedly improve the quality of life for many students.”

-Principal

Dear Kim, Donna and Sharon,

I really enjoyed your company. When you talked about sexual abuse, everybody started laughing. Well, I didn't. Because of a past experience. People who haven't been sexually abused I think it's funny. But I don't. It's actually kind of depressing. You have taught me that I should tell someone about that right away. Because of you, I am now safe, strong and free.

Yours Truly,

## CHILD ASSAULT PREVENTION PROGRAM

An abuse prevention program for grades 1 through 6 that teaches children skills and strategies they can use in potentially dangerous situations. Delivered by the Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre since 1995 to approximately 3,000 children each year.

"Your program and personnel were what we were looking for.

One very important concern of mine was the reaction and involvement of our special education pupils. I couldn't be happier! You succeeded in getting 100% participation - something that's not been achieved before.

We support your approach completely. For us it provides a unique service which we feel is essential."

*Principal*

"Feedback from the students showed that they received not only a great deal of information but practical strategies dealing with personal safety and self worth.

Our staff had nothing but praise for the presentations and felt that this program answered concerns about personal safety that are sensitive ones for them to deal with in the classroom.

The presentations to parents/guardians and staff beforehand cleared up many concerns and strengthened their views as to the importance of the CAP training program for all children.

Since our students are only K-Grade 3 we all felt the presentations were excellent to prepare young children!

You have my full endorsement of CAP - a program in which all children would benefit greatly. Their personal safety comes first!"

*Principal*



## The Child Assault Prevention Program

This program is *more* than street proofing.

It is an empowerment program that gives children skills and strategies they can use in potentially abusive and dangerous situations.

The program uses a combination of age appropriate discussion and role-play. We discuss with children the concept of rights and what it means to have them, particularly in potentially dangerous situations. The three rights we focus on are the rights to be 'safe strong and free.' This means children have a right to be safe wherever they are and whomever they are with; they have a right to stand up for their rights which may mean saying "no" to an adult; and they have the right to make choices about what happens to them. In order for children to be able to respond in abusive/threatening situations they first need understanding that they have a basic human right to expect NOT to be abused.

The three role-plays we do address different types of situations children may be in. The first one is about bullying. The second is about strangers and the last one concerns a known offender. There is facilitated discussion around each one, and children will be able to participate in the role plays if they choose. This activity is how children learn and practice the skills we are teaching

At the end of the program we have private time available for any children who may have questions or want to talk to us alone.

CAPP is a community-based project. This means that we all have a responsibility in ensuring our children grow up *safe, strong and free*. Your school communities' involvement in this program is a positive step in that direction.

Thank you for your support,  
The Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA Inc.)



## EMPOWERMENT VS 'RULES'

We have many safety rules in our society designed to keep us safe and we pass these on to our children. We know this from listening to our children. They are well versed in these rules. There is nothing wrong with rules; however there must be something else as well. Rules are about controlling the victim.....e.g. the notion that if you just follow all the rules, you will be safe and we know that is not true. Rules can actually leave people feeling more fearful because they focus on what you have to remember to be safe and how to do it right. Often you have no back-up plan because you are counting on the rules to work. It can also increase your feeling that you must have done something wrong because you followed the rules but were assaulted anyway..... "I didn't take the shortcut home, but was still assaulted."

Did any of you break a rule when you were a kid? It is inevitable and so kids need a back-up plan (so do adults). If a child does break a rule and something does happen to them, they are often more worried about getting in trouble for that and so many may not say anything about the assault (story about the girl and her backpack).

In contemplating child abuse we have been forced to contemplate children's status in general. As a class of people they are highly vulnerable.

The problem with preparing for the worst is..... first you have to imagine it yourself. You have to be prepared to talk about it.....whatever the 'it' may be.

Lessening children's isolation lessens their vulnerability. CAP encourages children to think of each other for support when they need it.

Abuse prevention means preparing children for what might happen by giving them information. This does include providing rules but it also means talking about what else they could do if the rules are not enough. That is what empowerment means.

How do we know when something is wrong? Often we feel it or we trust our instincts about it. We must teach children to do the same. Trusting your instincts is the exact opposite of living in fear and in most cases is where self defense starts. In many cases if you don't trust your instincts it will be too late to do anything else.

**\*\*\*REMEMBER----YOU ARE THE EXPERT ON YOUR CHILD\*\*\***



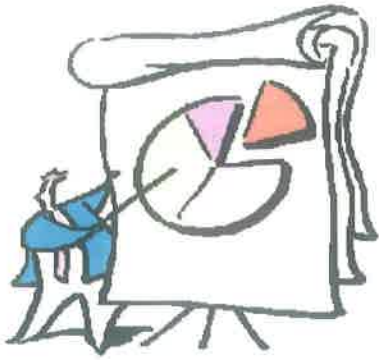
C. A. P. P.

## IF A CHILD IS SEXUALLY OR PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED

**BE CALM.** Breathing will help you stay calm. Your response to the assault will make a big impact on how the child feels about it. Getting very upset in front of the child will only make him/her feel worse about the assault. Share your feelings of concern honestly and calmly.

**BELIEVE THE CHILD.** Questioning their honesty will make them feel doubted and unsupported. It may cause them to stop talking. Too often children lack credibility. Listen to the child in a non-judgmental way. Do not push them to do more than they are ready to. Let the child tell their story in their own way at their own pace. You or someone else will have time to get the facts later. Assure the child that what happened was not their fault, that the offender has a problem and that he needs help. Let them know how brave they were to talk about it.

Tell the child directly and openly what you plan to do to deal with the situation. Also, ask them what they would like to do. Respect their wishes as much as possible. **It is important at this time that the child begins to regain some sense of control over the situation.**



# STATISTICS

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1-3 girls and 1-5 boys will be sexually assaulted by someone they know before they turn 18

When disclosing abuse children need to tell on average 8 times before finding someone who will listen and help them

Kidnapping by a stranger is rare. Out of nearly 70,000,000 children, fewer than 100 are kidnapped by strangers. (U.S. stat)

The average child molester victimized between 30-50 children before ever being arrested

8 out of 10 students say they have experienced some form of sexual harassment at school

90% of households have video games. Children play on average 2hrs per day

An extensive U.S. study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health found as strong a link between excessive television/video game consumption in formative years as there is between lung cancer and smoking

The average age boys begin watching pornography is 10 years old

Cyberbullying has replaced 'face-to-face' bullying for most students. The majority of bullying that occurs is on social media, making it more difficult for students to avoid it or dis-engage from it.

## DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS?

Teaching children this rule makes us feel better. This is probably one of the most difficult rules to enforce or monitor. We believe that if children follow this rule it will help keep them safe.

In this book, "Protecting the Gift", Gavin DeBecker says, since children see their parents violate this rule all the time... *Never talk to strangers, it turns out it isn't a rule at all, but a highly flexible and incomprehensible concept that only Mom and Dad really understand if even they do.*

Children WILL talk to strangers, despite this rule. Their idea of a 'bad' stranger is based more on that persons' appearance. The disservice this does children is that you cannot make that kind of decision based solely on looks and it does nothing to help children develop their own inherent skills of evaluating this behaviour.

\*\*\* If lost, your child's ability to talk to strangers is the single greatest asset he could have. Fear of people is really the fear that we cannot predict their behaviour.

Communicating with strangers is part of the good will. Children who communicate with strangers are exercising their intuition. They learn what feels comfortable and what does not. That learning can be aided by a parent who watches a child communicate with a stranger and discusses it with them. *For example*, in a restaurant or other public places you can ask general questions about any encounters that have, i.e., "what do you think of that man/woman who started talking to you while we were in line?"

Children need to know that not all strangers are bad, and they need to know how to talk to them and who to choose if they need help. The issue isn't really strangers, it is more about *strangeness*... paying attention to behaviour and whether or not that behaviour, makes them feel ok or not. Talk to them about what they would do if they got separated from you in a public place; Who would they go to for help? Why they would choose that person? This gives you an opportunity to discuss their plan with them, arrange for a place to meet if they get lost.

For most types of violence, a predator needs to have control of his target and privacy to be able to do anything, which is why teaching children to *make a scene* is so important. Think about how many times in a public place *you* wander far enough away from your child, or are preoccupied with something else to allow enough time for the opportunity for a predator to approach your child. In these kinds of situations, time is of the essence, so children need to be prepared to yell, make a scene, draw attention to what is happening... immediately!

Children who are *always* afraid and children who are *never* afraid have something in common; neither one will get the benefit of fear and what that means when they need it most. Constant depiction of a dangerous world (mostly through exposure to media) leads children (and adults) to believe that they aren't competent to meet the challenges of life and that belief can permeate the entire experience of life.



## What Makes Children Vulnerable?



When you think about what kind of children are vulnerable to assault, what kinds of things do you think of? CAPP has thought a great deal about this and the following are some of things we feel make children vulnerable to assault?

### Their size

More than the obvious size difference between adults and children is the assumption that children cannot or will not fight back. CAP teaches children basic self-defense skill they can use. One of the most important ones is being to trust their instincts. **Trusting your instincts is the first line of defense for us all.** We get a 'feeling' when we don't like something or someone and so do children. Encourage them to trust this feeling. Ask them, "How do you know you are in danger?" "What kinds of reactions do you get in your body?" Discuss this with them so that they begin to appreciate that *these feelings are their body's way of telling them something is wrong.* In his book, *Protecting the Gift*, Gavin DeBecker says parents should always trust their instincts about their children for two reasons: (1) It is always based on something, and (2) It has the best interests of your child at heart. *Trusting your intuition is the exact opposite of living in fear.*

### Their Ability to Do Things ... Decision-Making Skills

As parents we need to think about where are the places we make choices for our child? Understandably, children need to rely on adults for many of the choices in their lives, however if they are never given any practice at making choices for themselves, they can be completely reliant on adults to make all decisions. This could make them vulnerable to assault, with adults who would take advantage of this. Therefore, **it is important to let them make as many age-appropriate choices as possible.** They need to feel that they do have some control over their lives, and this decision-making ability fosters the kind of independence and self esteem that makes children less vulnerable to assault.

### Their Need for Love and Affection

Children, by nature, are very affectionate. They should know that **they always have a CHOICE** about who they are affectionate with. For example, how often do we force children to give another adult a kiss or hug "to be polite" whether they want to or not?

### Access to Information and Resources

Children will have to respond to an assault situation based on their own resources whether they are 4 or 14. You won't be there to help them. Therefore it is very important to *give children the information they need to be safe in their day-to-day lives.* They should know their address and phone number; how to use the phone in a phone booth; where the nearest public places are; what to do if they get separated from you while shopping; what neighbours are 'safe' to go to, etc.

Equip them with any information you determine they may need to know to stay safe. This also increases their decision making skills.

### Lack of Credibility

In our society, children are generally not viewed as the most credible people, so when they tell someone about being assaulted in may seem questionable. When children do lie it usually to protect themselves or someone else (as they may have been threatened) or they may be denying that the abuse happened. Abusers count on society's belief that children lie about this as a way to silence them. We should always take a child's report of abuse seriously and investigate it as necessary. On average, children need to tell eight adults before finding one who will listen and help them.

### Self Esteem (or lack of)

Children with poor self esteem may be vulnerable, simply because abusers recognize the child who feels unloved or unwanted. The abuser can play on this to gain their trust.

### Fear & Compliance with Authority Figures

We teach children to obey and respect adults. Imagine this scene: you are going out for the evening and have a babysitter. What is usually the last thing you say before going out the door? "Mind the babysitter. Do what he/she says." Children must always know that there might be some situations where they should not listen to the authority figure, whether it is the babysitter or a family member. These are things you can talk to your children about in the context of discussing any safety information. For example, you can ask, "if the babysitter ask you to do something you don't think is right, or makes you feel funny, what could you do?"

### Natural Curiosity

Children are naturally curious about their bodies, so it is important to talk to them about who has the right to touch them and when. Explain to them what is O.K. touching and what is not, and how some touches may confuse them especially if they know the person. Children should be encouraged to talk to an adult they trust about any touch that confuses them.

Through the CAP program, children learn about different kinds of assault situations. We discuss options with them and give them information about these situations. We role-play solutions with them so that they have an opportunity to practice the skills we have learned and discussed. This is empowerment! It does not mean that nothing will happen to them but it gives them a fighting chance.



## *Reinforcing CAP at Home And in the Classroom*

### *"What if ...." game*

This is a game you can play with children to help them brainstorm about what they would do in dangerous situations. Having a plan ahead of time is important in reducing your child's vulnerability to assault. Dinnertime, bedtime or riding in the car are good times to play this game. Pay attention to times when this game can be played spontaneously, such as when your child asks you a question or tells you a story about a friend.

The game is played by asking your child "What would you do if ..." and then letting the child respond. The key is to let the child come up with ideas, and then reinforce good ideas with praise and approval. This will empower children by building their self-confidence in handling dangerous situations. Some questions you can ask are:

- *What would you do if your bike broke down and a stranger offered you a ride home?*
- *What would you do if I weren't home and the telephone man came to the door and said that he wanted to fix the phone?*
- *What would you do if a babysitter did something to you and asked you to keep it a secret?*
- *What would you do if someone touched you in a way that you didn't like or confused you?*
- *What would you do if someone asked you to touch them inside their pants? (or be more specific)*

### *Storytelling*

You can tell any kind of story about a child staying safe. A story about being lost, abandoned, problems with a stranger, etc. can be used. Use your imagination. ALWAYS end with a successful way of dealing with the situation. For example:

*There was a little boy who had a favorite uncle who always bought him whatever he wanted. But the uncle would scare him by hiding behind furniture and jumping out just when the little boy came along. The little boy didn't like to be scared, but he didn't know what to do. One day he asked his father if he was ever scared. His dad said that he was afraid sometimes. The little boy asked how he got "unafraid." Dad asked him if something was frightening him. The little boy told his dad about the way his uncle scared him. His dad helped him figure out that he could ask the uncle not to do that anymore. When his dad asked him if wanted any other help, the little boy said that he would try it himself first, and let his dad know how it went.*

### *Talking about "Private Parts"*

Teach your child that it is OK to talk about genitals. Not naming those parts of the body and being secretive about genitals conveys to children that these parts are bad and should never be mentioned. This will make it difficult for them to report sexual assault. When a child is young, he/she should learn about breasts, penis, vagina and buttocks. These will then be accepted parts of the body.

### *Personal Space Boundaries*

Help your child develop boundaries about touch, physical affection, privacy and nudity. When talking about their bodies, talk about good, bad and confusing touch. Phrases such as "under your dress" or "down your pants" can be used. If you are comfortable doing so, use specific terms. Teach a child to wash his/her own genitals, and say that they are his/hers to take care of. You can also add "If anybody else wants to touch you there, I want to know." at age 6 or 7 children begin to ask for privacy when going to the bathroom, dressing, taking a bath, etc. RESPECT THEIR WISHES.

### *Room Privacy*

Children begin to want their own room, closed doors, and private time alone. It's important to foster that so children learn they have the right to control their own body and personal space. An analogy can be drawn between a bedroom door (closed) and sexual assault. If a door is closed, like a bedroom door, then another person should not enter it without permission. Later, a child will generalize this to mean "No one can do anything to me without permission."

### *Learning to say "NO" - A safe, strong and free word*

One of the reasons that "NO" isn't said more often is that children quickly learn that they aren't supposed to talk back to adults or refuse to do what they say. For example:

- "Don't answer back. Just do as I say"
- "Be nice to people. It's not nice to hurt people's feelings."
- "Don't be rude. If someone speaks to you, answer him or her."
- "People like children who are nice, not those who aren't"

Rules like these put children in vulnerable positions because they may be generalized into all situations with authority figures. A much better instruction: "in a situation that is dangerous or make you feel funny inside, don't worry about being nice. Run away and get out of the situation."

### *The "NO" game*

This game lets children practice saying "no" to each other. One child makes a request. The other simply says "no" without an explanation. Let them get used to saying "no." Later, have them ask each other why they said it. Parents often ask, "What if my child begins to say "no"

when I don't want him/her to?" This concept doesn't mean every time children say "no" to bedtime, vegetables or baths, they should get their way. It means that when you can, let the "no" stand. When you can't, talk it out with the child. "I understand that you would rather not go to the babysitter today. I have been gone a lot this week, but I have to go to work. Are you feeling lonely and want me to stay home? Is something happening at the sitters?"

Make sure that children aren't learning powerlessness through games that can't be stopped when the game is no longer, such as tickling sessions. Respect when the child says "NO" and end the game. Intervene when someone else doesn't.

### *Physical Activities*

Encourage games and organized sports not only for boys but also for girls. This will help them gain a sense of physical self-confidence in case they need to protect themselves. Discourage games in which the adult or older child say, "Hit me as hard as you can; you can't hurt me." What this teaches children is that they are powerless against someone bigger, which is not necessarily true.



*Information from the CAP Project of Contra Costa County.*

*\*Starred information from No More Secrets, by Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay.*

## Is Your Child a Victim?

### Warning Signs Your Child may be a target of School Violence:

1. Missing items and /or mysterious injuries: Don't automatically assume that these are the result of carelessness, especially if it is happening frequently or more than is usual for your child. \
2. Skipping school, making excuses to not go, or failing grades: Your child may be afraid to be at school.
3. Lack of friends or friends you do not know: Trouble socializing at school can leave children more vulnerable to being bullied
4. Talking back: Victims of violence often feel helpless and strike out at parents and teachers or siblings.
5. Loss of appetite, trouble sleeping or excessive secretiveness: Any of these may be a reaction to a bullying situation.

Talk to your child if you suspect he/she is the target of bullying. Let them know that it is not their fault and that you are there to help them. Help problem solve a solution with your Childs' input. This is empowering them and helping them feel that they are capable of handling the problem

**Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre**  
(CARSA, INC.)

**43 Church Street, Suite 503.**

**St. Catharines, Ont. L2R 7E1**

**Business Line: 905-682-7258**

**24-Hour crisis line: 905-682-4584**

**[www.niagarasexualassaultcentre.com](http://www.niagarasexualassaultcentre.com)**

**Email: [carsa@sexualassaultniagara.org](mailto:carsa@sexualassaultniagara.org)**

**We provide in office counselling to survivors of sexual assault/sexual violence (males and females) as well as outreach counselling throughout the Niagara Region. 85% of our clientele are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.... This statistic underscores the need for this program in our schools.**