



HANDY BOOKLET

FOR PARENTS

3

CLUES TO DETECT IF YOUR CHILD IS A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE

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ESPACE Autonomous Community Organizations: Our Mission

Every action aims to offer children the chance to have a safe childhood free from violence. It is how we translate our ongoing commitment to preventing all forms of violence against children.

Preventing violence means not only giving children the tools they need to protect themselves against all forms of violence but also raising adults awareness of what their role is in prevention and equipping them to help children.

ESPACE's principal activities are:

- ◆ an educational program for elementary schools, daycare centres, recreational or sports groups, and other children's milieus. A one-on-one meeting is offered to the children after the workshop;
- ◆ raising awareness and supporting the general public, community organizations, associations, professionals, etc.;
- ◆ collaborating with various professionals in organizations, universities, colleges, the media, working groups, etc.;
- ◆ telephone consultations and referrals.

You can also view the activities of each ESPACE organization by visiting our website at www.espacesansviolence.org.

Introduction

Doing prevention is important. However, it's equally important to know how to recognize the signs that a child may be a victim of violence.

Bruises and injuries can sometimes point to physical violence. For children who are victims of verbal, psychological or sexual violence, however, the traces are not necessarily visible.

Your ESPACE organization

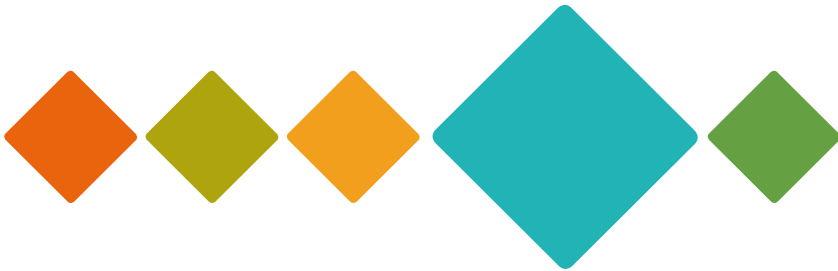
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Clues to detect if your child is a victim of violence

Children do not all react the same way to violent situations. Their reactions vary according to their age, personality, relationship with the abuser, the type of violence they've experienced and its duration and severity. Some children are able to confide in someone more easily, while others may remain silent or feel compelled to lie for various reasons such as:

- ◆ fear of not being believed;
- ◆ fear of retaliation;
- ◆ a sense of guilt;
- ◆ to protect the aggressor.



How to know...

Sudden changes in your child's behavior are often a sign that something is wrong. It is your role as an adult to verify what is going on with the child and offer your help.



A couple of days ago, Valerie suddenly threw a tantrum, like she sometimes does. Her parents were not too worried about it. But now, since that day, she seems sad, she has lost her appetite and has nightmares. There is undoubtedly something wrong...

Like Valerie's parents, you intuitively sense when your child is going through a stressful situation.

Most of the time, that stress is caused by:

- ◆ a new situation like:
 - ◆ a move;
 - ◆ starting school;
 - ◆ the birth of a sister or brother.

- ◆ difficult events like:
 - ◆ exams;
 - ◆ a divorce;
 - ◆ the loss of a loved one;
 - ◆ disputes or arguments.

It is possible that the child's stress is caused by something else: the child might be a victim of violence.

How to verify your suspicions

Your daughter or son may not be clearly expressing what is bothering them. But, at the same time, their behaviour is crying out: "I need help!" How can you get them to confide in you?

Take the first step by sharing your suspicions and concerns with them, remaining focused on your child's needs.



Listen, I feel as if something's wrong. It worries me and I would really like to help you. Do you feel like talking about it?

Expressing your worries and encouraging your child to talk shows that you care about their well-being and that you are available to help them resolve their problems.

It is, of course, very important to respect their pace. Despite your concerns, avoid harassing your child with numerous questions. Demonstrate openness and create a reassuring atmosphere. Your child will feel respected and will be more inclined to confide in you.

If your child does not confide in you, it might be because their problem can be resolved without your help. Respect their choice.

However, **if you feel that the situation is not resolved, share your concerns once again.**

"I understand. It's sometimes hard... But, do you think that by talking about it with someone you might find solutions more easily? Maybe you would prefer to talk about it with someone other than me...someone that you feel more comfortable with?"



If your child still does not open up and the situation worsens or becomes urgent, tell the child that you need to contact other people from your entourage that may be able to help you understand what is going on.

Ideas to help your child open up

Take advantage of everyday opportunities: a television show, a movie, a game, or an article can all be starting points to initiate a discussion about what seems to be bothering your child.

Use a real-life situation you know about, a particular event or a challenging experience that demonstrates the courage needed to speak out about a problem.

Take advantage of things you read by discussing them with your child; for younger children, made-up stories may be used portraying an animal as the hero... that encountered trouble... then talked about it with... and found solutions... and now feels much better!

Conclusion

When some people display a disrespectful attitude towards children, don't hesitate to point it out. Take the time to verify facts and actions that seem suspicious or odd. Remember, we're here for you and your children if you need support.

Every action is important. For additional information, you can also read the following booklets:

Booklet 1 — *Violence against children...*

Booklet 2 — *Prevention*

Booklet 4 — *When a child confides in you...*

Booklet 5 — *Help for you and your child*

Because every constructive action contributes to building a world where adults and children can finally feel **safe, strong and free!**



Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec

The Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec (ROEQ) is responsible for the implementation and development of the CAP-ESPACE program. It takes pride in the awards it has received.



- ◆ the Rights and Freedoms Award
- ◆ the Marie-Vincent Foundation Award
- ◆ the Persillier-Lachapelle Award
- ◆ the annual Desjardins award

In collaboration with Université Laval, ESPACE has participated in various research projects to assess the impact of the program. This research proved conclusive. Visit www.espacesansviolence.org for info on the detailed results.



How to contact your ESPACE organization

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ESPACE Gaspésie-les-îles	418 368-2015
	Tel : toll free 1 866 368-2015
ESPACE Mauricie	819 375-3024
ESPACE Outaouais	819 771-1546
ESPACE région de Québec	418 649-5140
ESPACE Surcoût	450 371-8096
Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec	418 667-7070

www.espacesansviolence.org

This booklet for parents is designed to help prevent violence against children and is part of a series of five. The booklets offer various tools to help you ensure that more and more children have a safe childhood free from violence.