



HANDY BOOKLET

FOR PARENTS

4

WHEN A CHILD CONFIDES IN YOU...



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Adaptation for First Nations

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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

Sometimes, the problems that your child (boy or girl) confides in you may seem minor. Others will sound more serious. Remember that from the child's point of view, no matter what the problem is, the situation is important to them. Therefore, you need to give each disclosure the attention it deserves and help your child to the best of your ability.

Your ESPACE organization

Member of the Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec



When a child confides in you

Start by putting the child at ease

Put yourself in the position of the child who is or has been the victim of abuse or violence.

In a **quiet, discrete place**, take the time to **listen** and **believe** what they are telling you, without passing judgement. Just doing this will already make them feel better!



Try to control your reactions as much as possible

While your child is confiding in you, you may experience all sorts of emotions, like fear, sadness, anger, or outrage.

- ◆ If you can, **stay calm**.
This will help keep your child calm and help to not dramatize the situation.
- ◆ If you can't **control your emotions**,
reassure your child that what is upsetting you is what happened to them, and that you are not angry with them

Reassure the child

What your daughter or son wants to hear is:

- ◆ "I think it's great that you are talking to me about this; it's the right thing to do and it's very brave of you."
- ◆ "You have the right to feel safe everywhere and at all times."
- ◆ "What is happening to you is not your fault."
- ◆ "I love you and I will always love you."



Simply listening to and believing a child, without passing judgement, is already a precious step for the child toward solving their problem.

You can help them

If a child confides in you, it's because they trust you. Just by being there for the child at this stage, you've already done a lot for them.

To continue, you can:

- ◆ Encourage them to **express their emotions**, without suggesting yours. *The child will feel understood and supported. It'll do them good!*
- ◆ Ask them **how you can help and what ideas they have for solving the problem**. *You'll be giving them back control over the situation. They'll feel that their opinion matters.*

It is important for a child to feel supported and encouraged. Avoid taking charge of everything and imposing your solutions. Trust the child; very often their ideas can guide you along the way.



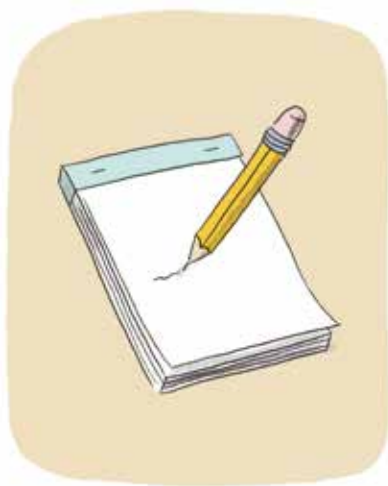
If you are comfortable to continue

Let the child tell, in their own words, their version of the facts, from beginning to end.

- ◆ The story might be a bit unclear; the child might not be telling you everything, or may be starting with the easiest parts.
- ◆ Believe what the child is telling you without judging.
- ◆ As trust grows, you will learn more of their story.
- ◆ Respect their pace. Ask simple and open-ended questions, which means questions starting with who, what, when, where; this will help them to elaborate further.
- ◆ Don't make any promises that you cannot keep. Keep in mind that there are no magic or instant solutions.

If the problem is easy to solve

- ◆ Establish an action plan with the child (why not write it down or draw it?).
- ◆ Lend your support throughout the process.



If the problem is more complex



- ◆ Determine if the child is safe. Do you have considerable or limited time in which to act?
- ◆ If the child is in danger, explain all the steps that will follow; tell the child that it is possible that other people might need to get involved. This is a difficult time: often the child wants the violence to stop, but doesn't want to cause trouble for the abuser or might be afraid of the consequences...

- ◆ During this difficult time, the child will need to be surrounded by people who will provide support and comfort.



The problem-solving period will have its ups and downs. However, children will remember that someone took concrete steps to help stop the violence.

If you can no longer help

The situation might be difficult to resolve. You might not feel comfortable continuing. If so, it is important that the child know that you will not abandon her or him. Make it clear that you will get **the child all the help her or him need, if not from you, then from someone else.**

- ◆ Ask if there are any other adults that they can confide in who can help them.
- ◆ Make sure that the child continues to work toward a solution, and offer to accompany them if that's what they want.
- ◆ Be sure to **hook the child up with the other person they chose.**

What works for your child
can also work for any
other child who considers you
a trusted adult or who shows
behaviours that worry you.



Conclusion

We hope this booklet provided you with concrete tools to offer support to any child when necessary. Remember, we're here for you and your child 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 3 — *Clues to detect if your child is a victim of violence*

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!**



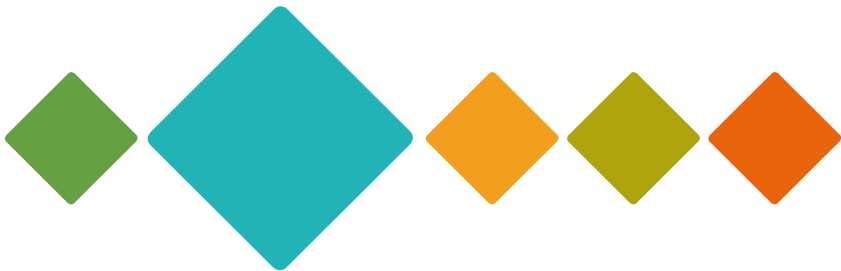
Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec

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

ESPACE Abitibi-Est		819 824-3572
ESPACE Centre-du-Québec	Tel : toll free 1	819 752-9711 833 297-9711
ESPACE Chaudière-Appalaches		418 603-8383
ESPACE Côte-Nord	Tel : toll free 1	418 296-2403 866 589-2405
ESPACE Gaspésie-les-îles	Tel : toll free 1	418 368-2015 866 368-2015
ESPACE Mauricie		819 375-3024
ESPACE Outaouais		819 771-1546
ESPACE région de Québec		418 649-5140
ESPACE Suroît		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.