

**Conference
Preventing sexual abuse of children
Madrid, 10-11 December 2013**

**Focused prevention: empowering parents
and persons working in contact with children in preventing sexual abuse**

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Summary

Children have the right to live without suffering any form of violence. Adults who take care of them, mainly parents and educators, together with states, are directly responsible for the fulfilment of this right. But they need to be prepared to do so. And this preparation is not only a knowledge issue, it's an attitudinal learning.

Parents and educators need tools to be able to face their internal fears to this issue. Because child sexual abuse forces us to break the thought of "in my home this is not going to happen" or "If I do right, if I am aware enough, my children will be safe". Only when receiving training on the issue, families and educators will be able to talk about it without fear.

Majority of prevention methodologies are designed for older children, but we need to begin to talk to children from a much earlier stage. We need to give materials, methodologies and training to parents and educators to do so. Prevention of child sexual abuse should be part of the sexual and affective education to children in homes and schools, considering the child as an active actor engaged in society and capable of self-protective behaviours, breaking the discourse of protectionism, defeatism and victimism that often, on a misunderstanding of the concept of prevention, is transmitted to children.

When we talk about empowering parents and educators on child sexual abuse prevention, there are some specific difficulties to deal with:

1. Families and educators need to face their fears to be able to have effective prevention of child sexual abuse: fear of helplessness of children and fear of breaking the natural confidence of their children.
2. The majority of child sexual aggressors are known and loved people of the child, so, it is not enough to teach children "not to go with strangers". We need to work on a complex issue regarding "loving right and loving wrong" giving children tools to identify power relationships.
3. Child sexual abuse is not just sexual behaviour, but a form of violence based on abuse of power over the child. Parents and educators need to understand that prevention of child sexual abuse not always means talking about sex. We need to talk about secrets, affective manipulation or how to look for help, between other topics.

4. We need to strengthen children for revelation. So, we need to teach them that the best protection strategy is to ask for help and support, not to face the fear and difficulties alone. Be brave for a child has to be equal to “talk and ask for help”, not to “defend yourself”. But this also means giving them opportunities to meaningful participation in families and schools.
5. Parents and educators don't want to face the possibility of child sexual abuse between very young children. It is difficult to imagine a child a priori as an aggressor, especially if it concerns one's own children.

One example of child sexual abuse prevention program with families, children and educators is “Listening my “belly””.

Useful link:

<http://www.espiralesci.es/nuevo-libro-de-pepa-horno-escuchando-mis-tripas/>