

Total Fitness
Emotional Fitness

Overcoming Child Abuse

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Abusers of authority

Should not shepherds take care of the flock?

... You have ruled them harshly and brutally...

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock... I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them... I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. (Ezekiel 34:1-11)

Who is greatest?

Jesus called a little child and said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:2-4)

Treat children like Jesus

Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matthew 18:5-6)

Respect little ones

See that you **do not look down on one of these little ones.** For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven... your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. (Matthew 18:10,14)

Why respect a child?

- Jesus says a child is greatest.
- Jesus takes personally the way each child is treated.
- The angels and the Father himself cherish each child.
- If you harm a child, you'd be better off at the bottom of the ocean.

Respect vs. abuse

Respect can mean different things:

- Treating someone like a **person**.
- Treating someone like an **authority**.

If you insist on being treated like an authority but don't treat someone like a person, you are abusing that person and abusing your authority.

Child abuse

- Verbal
- Physical
- Sexual

Train and discipline

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Prov 22:6)

Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul. (Proverbs 29:17)

Verbal abuse

Reckless words pierce like a sword...

A deceitful tongue crushes the spirit...

The tongue has the power of life and death. (Proverbs 12:18; 15:4; 18:21)

The tongue is a fire... set on fire by hell itself... It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:6-8)

Verbal reproof

Rebuking without provoking

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
(Ephesians 6:4)

Physical abuse

The Lord hates everyone who loves violence. (Psalm 11:5)

Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men;
protect me from men of violence.
(Psalm 140:1)

The Lord upholds the cause of the oppressed. (Psalm 146:7)

Physical discipline

Spanking without embittering

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him (Prov 22:15).

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (Colossians 3:21).

Healthy correction

- Be calm.
- Be consistent.
- Be reasonable.
- Be fair.
- Be attentive.
- Be affectionate.

Child abuse

- Verbal
- Physical
- Sexual

Myths of sexual abuse

- Only girls and women are assaulted.
- Accusations are usually made up.
- Most rapists are strangers.
- It's not assault if you're married.
- Immodest clothing makes you partly responsible for being assaulted.

Stages of sexual abuse

1. Niceness and secrecy
2. Touch that seems okay
3. Actual sexual abuse
4. Threats and privileges to maintain ongoing abuse and secrecy

Damage of sexual abuse

- Powerlessness
- Betrayal
- Ambivalence

Damage of sexual abuse

- Depression, feeling contempt
- Sexual problems
- Compulsions: alcohol, drugs, eating disorders, perfectionism
- Ulcers, headaches, stress
- Styles of relating

Styles of relating by abuse survivors

- Good girl
- Tough girl
- Party girl

Child abuse

- Verbal
- Physical
- Sexual

Preventing abuse

- Adults, deal with your own past hurts and bad tendencies. Don't abuse.
- Don't leave a child alone with just one adult, even someone you know.
- Teach children that others should not touch their private parts.
- Listen and take children seriously.

Responding to allegations

- Listen calmly without judging.
- Pause and pray.
- If alleged victim is under 18:
 - ✓ Affirm the child for telling.
 - ✓ Report to civil authorities.

Healing from abuse

- **Honesty** faces the damage of being victimized and reactive self-protection.
- **Repentance** faces the harm we have done to ourselves, others, and God.
- **Bold love** revokes revenge, hungers for restoration, and pursues good for the abuser.

Honesty

I have been abused. I am a victim of a crime against my body and soul. I am not responsible for the crime. Abuse has damaged my soul. My damage differs from others but is worth facing. It will take time to deal with inner wounds. I must not keep a veil of secrecy and shame over my past, but I don't need to tell it to anyone I don't feel I can trust.

Repentance

This is NOT repentance about being abused. It was not your fault.

Repentance is an internal shift in our perceived source of life. It is recognizing that our self-protective means to avoid hurt have not ushered us into real living or to purposeful, powerful relating...

Ultimately, repentance is a hungry, broken return to God. (Dan Allender)

Bold love

What would you do if God gave you the choice between pushing a button on your left, which would utterly destroy your father at this minute, or a button on your right, which would lead to radical, deep repentance and the kind of change that would make him the father God intended him to be? (Dan Allender)