

Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse

The following are behaviors commonly displayed by children who are or have been sexually abused. Although the presence of one or more of these indicators is not proof that a child is being sexually abused, it should be enough to cause the concerned professional to closely observe the child to try to uncover the source of the behaviors. If, at any time, a professional suspects a child is being sexually abused, s/he should report her/his suspicions to the appropriate social service agency.

1. Depression
2. Withdrawal, i.e. child with few friends
3. Isolation from peers
4. Drug/alcohol abuse
5. Chronic runaway
6. Increase in physical complaints, i.e. headaches, miscellaneous and/or chronic illnesses
7. Hysterical paralysis
8. Attention-getting behavior - inappropriate acting-out
9. Suicide attempts
10. Physical abuse - self-inflicted (mutilation) or inflicted by another
11. Truancy, i.e. skipping school or classes
12. Drop in academic performance
13. Poor self-image, reflected in choice of clothes, overall appearance, cleanliness
14. Limited participation in organized social activities
15. Overly seductive behavior
16. Bi-sexual/homosexual experimentation
17. Prostitution
18. Promiscuous sexual behavior
19. Heavy child care responsibilities
20. Heavy household responsibilities, i.e. regular responsibility for laundry, meal preparation
21. Overly restricted social activities

Behavioral Signs Among Young Children:

1. Excessive masturbation
2. Enuresis (bedwetting)
3. Encopresis (fecal soiling)
4. Altered sleep patterns
5. Severe nightmares
6. Fears or phobias
7. Regression in developmental milestones
8. Learning problems
9. Explicit knowledge of sexual acts
10. Excessive curiosity about sex
11. Precocious sex play
12. Seductiveness
13. Overly compulsive behavior
14. Clinging/whining to a particular parent (non-abusive parent)
15. Open sexual behavior after age 5-7