Happy children

Sad children

All about children’s feelings
Why do some children feel sad?

Most adults are kind and loving to children. But sometimes adults hurt children or make them feel bad. These are some of the things that adults may do to children:

- Kick, hit, or pinch them
- Say harsh words and not hug or cuddle them
- Leave them at home alone, or not give them enough to eat
- Touch or kiss them in a way that makes them feel worried or unhappy, maybe pretending it's a game or a secret.

When an adult treats a child like this, it is called child abuse. Child abuse isn't about getting hurt or pain, it's mostly about people treating a child badly most of the time, making you feel that nobody loves you and that your feelings are not important.

Remember:
- You have the right to say what happens to your body and who can and can't touch it.
- Child abuse is never the child's fault, even if they think they have done something wrong.

What kind of adult hurts children?

It's really difficult to tell which adults treat children badly. You certainly can't tell by looking at them. Most children know the adult who is hurting them. It might even be the child's own parent or step-parent.

But sometimes a child does not know the person who is trying to harm them. A stranger may start talking to a child he or she doesn't know, and try to trick the child into going somewhere or doing something. This can happen anywhere, outside school, at the store or in a playground or park.

A lot of these children might be abused and feel bad. But you can't tell which ones it will happen to. They might be boys or girls. They might be a lot naughty or very well-behaved. They might come from rich families or rough poverty homes.

Some of the children have problems of their own, be upset about money or jobs, or they might have been treated badly when they were small. But wherever the reason, it's never OK and they must get help.

Which of these children will be injured?

What's going on?

Sometimes it can be very hard to tell what is child abuse and what isn't. The pictures on this page show adults and children doing different things. But if you can tell which ones are child abuse and which ones aren't...

This isn't child abuse. This is just something the child is doing.

Come here and play a secret touch game.

This isn't child abuse. This man wants to touch and the child is afraid because he likes it. He says, "Sam, I just know it is true, she knows it is a good thing to do and will probably make her feel good.

This isn't child abuse. The doctor isn't hurting. The injection will help him from getting sick.

This isn't child abuse. Sam wanted to play with his friend. His friend hurt his body.
Stay safe!

- If an adult who is looking after you is making you feel bad most of the time, tell an adult you trust.
- If an adult or much older child wants to touch you in a way that makes you feel unhappy or uneasy, or wants you to touch them, say "NO" as loudly as you can, even if the person is someone you know or love.
- Never go out on your own without first telling the adult looking after you where you are going, who you are going with, and when you will be returning home.
- Never go off with an adult you don't know. And never accept sweets or presents from them, however friendly they seem.
- If someone you don't know tries to force you into a car or to do things you don't like, you should shout, kick and bite and do anything else to escape.

Mark Speight

Is it happening to you?

If you think a parent or another adult is being unkind and making you feel bad, or if you are worried about a friend, you can do something to help stop the abuse.

Tell an adult

If you have been abused, the first thing to do is to tell an adult you trust what has happened. If the adult you tell doesn't believe you, keep telling until someone does.

Phone a Helpline

Phoning a helpline means talking on the phone to someone who will listen to you talk about a problem. You do not need any money to make these calls and you can make them from any telephone, including public telephones. You can ring at any time of the day or night.

ChildLine

Telephone: 0800-1111

This helpline is for children and young people, and can help with any kind of problem, including child abuse. You can also ring them if you are worried about a friend. You can also write to them at: Freepost 1111, London N1 0BR. You do not need a stamp.

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

DONT KEEP IT TO YOURSELF

0800 800 500

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free, 24 hour service which provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse.

Please call us on 0800 800 500 or Telephone 0800 056 0566.

Sometimes children worry that they will be taken away if they tell someone that they are being abused at home. This is not what usually happens. Children are only taken away from home if it is dangerous for them to stay there. Most return home, just as soon as it is felt they will be safe.

What happened to Jamie?

If your parents are kind and look after you well, you might find it hard to imagine what it's like to feel unloved. Here is nine-year-old Jamie's story.

'I used to get into bad tempers all the time because I wanted my mum and dad to love me and be interested in me, but they kept telling me I was a bad boy.

One day I made my mum so angry, she hit me. Later she told me she was sorry and that she had telephoned some people called the NSPCC who could help make us happy. I thought they would take me away. But they didn't. They said that I wasn't bad and that what had happened to me wasn't my fault.

We went to the NSPCC every week. My mum and dad talked about how they felt and I told them how angry I was. I knew now that my mum loves me, and she shows it. My mum and dad pay me lots of attention, and I'm so much happier now.'

About the NSPCC

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is the UK's leading charity specialising in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children.

The NSPCC exists to prevent children from suffering abuse and is working for a future for children free from cruelty.

The NSPCC visits primary and middle schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. If the NSPCC visits your school, please join the fun and find out what you can do to help children at risk.