

## Reflections On Child Abuse Prevention Month

By: Crystal Miller

The main purpose of Child Abuse Prevention Month is to increase community awareness in the hope that each of us takes a moment to consider those unfortunate children who are either neglected or abused in this country each day. April has been chosen as the month to remember these children but in reflection of the cause, we should remember the children throughout the year. Through greater community awareness about child abuse and its ever lasting effects on a child, the child abuse prevention team hopes that each of you will become more aware of what goes on in the lives of children in your communities and in your own families.

### What is child abuse?

Child abuse is often defined as the non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries of a child that cannot be explained by parents or other caregivers. Child abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and dependency.

Physical abuse is serious physical injury inflicted by or allowed by a parent or caretaker or substantial risk of serious physical injury to the child by other than accidental.

Sexual abuse is any sexual behavior imposed on a juvenile. Sexual abuse includes a range of activities: fondling the genital area, masturbation, oral sex and vaginal or anal penetration by a finger, penis, or any object, exhibitionism, child pornography, and suggestive behaviors or comments.

Emotional abuse is expressing attitudes or behaviors toward a child that create serious emotional or psychological damage as evidenced by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, aggressive behavior toward self or others, and delinquent acts.

Neglect is any serious disregard for a juvenile's supervision, care, or discipline. The caretaker may withhold or fail to provide the child with basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or attention to hygiene.

Dependency is the lack of a parent, guardian, or custodian responsible for a child's care and supervision due to physical or mental incapacity and the absence of an appropriate alternative child care arrangement.

Child Abuse Prevention Month is over; however, each one of you can take this information with you and use it as children become a part of your lives. An important fact to remember is that if you know a child who is in a dangerous situation YOU can prevent it by reporting it anonymously to local authorities. Research indicates that 80% of child abuse can be prevented through programs that provide support, information, and early intervention. Only a small percentage of parents are unreachable in terms of treatment and that is important to understand. The Child Abuse Prevention Team and the Department of Social Services are not in the business of taking children from their homes. They are in the business of family preservation, teaching and training proper parenting, and assuring the best interest of the child. Children are only removed from their homes in extreme cases of abuse where the child's life is in immediate danger.

### Dear Parents,

*Mother's Day and Father's Day are upon us. These are special days for both parents and children. On this day we all stop and take a moment to show our own parents that we appreciate them. For some this may be hard to do. Not everyone grew up in a loving and nurturing environment and often find it difficult to show love and respect to a parent who failed to provide that for them.*

*I address this to parents because I want to call attention to each of your situations. Especially those of you who are resentful to your parents or those of you who find it hard to forgive your parents for mistakes made in your lives. It's true, not all parents are perfect and yes, children do hold a grudge.*

*Now I'd like for all of you who have children of your own to do a serious self evaluation and hopefully you will see that you have the power to give your child the things that you did not get. You can love, nurture, and care for your children so that on Mother's Day and Father's Day, there will be no question whether or not you deserve your child's respect and admiration.*

*Raising a child is perhaps the most difficult task ever faced in life. I know from personal experience. I am currently raising 4, ages 10 mos., 2 1/2 years, and two 5 year olds. Along with being the most difficult task I have ever faced, it is also the most rewarding. At 26 years of age I could think of a million places I would like to go and a million more things I would like to do but you know what? My children didn't ask to be brought into this world, I chose to bring them into this world and now they deserve 200% of my effort in providing love and care for them as do all of the children born in this world everyday.*

*If you were abused or neglected in any way as a child, please know that if you treat your child the same way a cycle will continue throughout their lives and the lives of your grandchildren. Break the cycle of abuse and get help, you will then become a hero to your child and wouldn't that be a reward within itself.*

Sincerely,

Crystal Miller

A Concerned Mother