

WORKING WITH CHILDREN EXHIBITING SEXUALLY PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR

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TRAUMA

“A single event or series of events over time, which can tax or overwhelm a person’s resources and sense of wellbeing.”

HOW AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONDS TO TRAUMA DEPENDS ON:

- **The person**
- **The traumatic event**
- **The environment**

FAMILY RISK FACTORS MAY INCLUDE:

- **Sexual abuse, domestic violence, physical abuse**
- **Exposure to adult sexual activity**
- **Access to sexual materials**
- **Extreme parental dominance**
- **Enmeshed, unhealthy families**
- **Secrecy is a norm**
- **Unclear family roles**
- **Special privileges for one child over another**
- **Unequal roles, unequal power – especially related to gender**

ADDITIONAL FAMILY RISK FACTORS MAY INCLUDE:

- **Inappropriate adult roles for children**
- **Parent is jealous of child**
- **Isolated from community and supports**
- **Extreme reaction to sex education materials**
- **Excessive use of alcohol or drugs**
- **Intolerance of/denial of/ lack of feelings**
- **Lack of consequences for sexual behavior problems**
- **Covertly sexualized atmosphere**

GREEN LIGHT BEHAVIOR

- **Exploration with children of similar age and size; usually not siblings**
- **Voluntary, spontaneous - usually not shame, fear or anxiety**
- **Sexual behavior balances with curiosity about rest of their world**

**May still need limits or intervention
(Just because it's normal doesn't mean it's OK)**

YELLOW LIGHT BEHAVIOR

- **Preoccupation with sexual themes**
- **Attempts to expose other's genitals**
- **Sexually explicit conversation, graffiti, innuendo**
- **Precocious sexual knowledge or language**
- **Preoccupation with masturbation**
- **Mutual/group masturbation**

RED LIGHT BEHAVIOR

- **Sexually explicit conversations with others of significant age difference**
- **Touching genitals of others**
- **Degradation/humiliation of self or others with sexual themes**
- **Forced exposure of others (hazing)**
- **Inducing fear/threats of force**
- **Sexually explicit proposals/threats**

RED LIGHT BEHAVIOR, CONT.

- **Repeated or chronic peeping, exposing, pornographic interest, rubbing genitals against others or objects**
- **Compulsive masturbation**
- **Female masturbation that includes vaginal penetration**
- **Simulated intercourse with dolls, peers, animals, or younger children**
- **Oral, vaginal, anal penetration of dolls, children, animals**
- **Forced touching of genitals**
- **Simulating intercourse with peers (nude)**

DEFINITE NEED FOR THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION:

- **Extensive preoccupation with sexual themes**
- **Secretive, anxious, confused**
- **Angry, violent, forceful in sexual behavior with others**
- **Compulsive sexual behavior; not necessarily enjoyable**
- **Age-inappropriate sexual activity**
- **Sexual activity with much younger or much older child**
- **Attempts sexual intercourse with animals**

Experts generally agree that sexual behavior problems are best understood and explained using a continuum of behavior approach. Many treatment providers have chosen to use the continuum developed

Toni Cavanaugh Johnson

TONI CAVANAUGH JOHNSON'S CONTINUUM OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS:

- 1. Normal Sexual Exploration**
- 2. Sexually Reactive Behaviors**
- 3. Extensive Mutual Sexual Behaviors**
- 4. Children Who Molest**

GROUP 1: NORMAL CHILDHOOD EXPLORATION

- **Sexual behavior based on discovery and development**
- **Exploring feelings/genitals**
- **Interest in language**
- **Similar age and size**
- **Friends rather than siblings**
- **Voluntary, light-hearted, fun, silly**

GROUP 2: SEXUALLY REACTIVE BEHAVIORS

- **Preoccupation with sexuality**
- **Often have been abused or exposed to pornography and sexual stimulation**
- **Shame, guilt and anxiety**
- **Usually alone, or with peers of similar age and size**
- **Do not use force or threats**

GROUP 3: EXTENSIVE MUTUAL SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

- **Approach sexuality as the way they play**
- **Use coercion and manipulation, but rarely violence**
- **Without emotional affect**
- **Often have a history of severe abuse, neglect or abandonment**
- **Must relearn social skills**
- **Require intensive supervision**

GROUP 4: CHILDREN WHO MOLEST

- **Obsessed with sexual thoughts**
- **Engage in full range of sexual behavior**
- **A pattern, rather than a solitary incident**
- **Feelings of anger, rage, loneliness, fear**
- **Choose vulnerable and younger or smaller victims**
- **Lack compassion**
- **Borders on compulsive**

6-STEP MODEL OF INTERVENTION

- **Manage your own reaction**
- **Neutralize the behavior**
- **STOP the behavior**
- **Define the behavior, specifically and clearly**
- **State house rule or expectation about the behavior**
- **Redirect the child and/or enforce the consequences**

PREVENTION EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SEXUAL BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

- **Teach about different kinds of touch**
- **Role-play and/or set up a safety plan**
- **Personal space and boundaries**
- **Regular sexuality education**
- **Birth control information**
- **STD prevention information**

CONFIDENTIALITY RULES

You may discuss information with:

- **DHR representatives**
- **Non-offending parent**
- **GAL/CASA worker**
- **Others designated by the Social Worker**
- **Bus driver**

Check with your Social Worker for guidance regarding sharing information with teachers, counselors, and other professionals.

SAFETY AT SCHOOL

- Request a coordinated meeting with the social worker and school officials.
- Provide a copy of the child's safety plan as it relates to the school setting, with the permission of the child's social worker.
- **DO NOT** inform the school that the child is a sexual offender.
- Some activities may need to be limited based on the child's specific safety plan.
- Maintain open and frequent communication with the school; request regular review meetings.

SAFETY PLANS

- **Define the issue or problem**
- **Be clear about who needs protection**
- **Pinpoint when the behavior occurs**
- **Determine who is involved in the plan**
- **Set a time limit**
- **What if the plan fails?**
- **Re-evaluate**

HOUSE RULES

- **Privacy**
- **Respect, courtesy**
- **Supervision**
- **Bedrooms, bathrooms**
- **Clothing, modesty**
- **Horseplay, tickling, wrestling**
- **Sexual talk**
- **Personal touch, personal space**

ALLEGATION PREVENTION

- **Keep your behavior above reproach**
- **Rule of three**
- **Separate bedroom for foster child**
- **No physical punishment**
- **Clarify house rules around privacy and touching, wrestling, tickling, horseplay**
- **Good documentation**
- **Family and group therapy**
- **Reduce your stress**
- **Address issues as they happen**
- **Avoid teasing, suggestive or ambiguous language**
- **Good relationship with caseworker**

QUESTIONS?