

Robbie-Ann – A Story About Child Sexual Abuse

Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime.

Herbert Ward

A myriad of factors acts together to help the occurrence, growth, and concealment of child sexual abuse.

A person sexually abuses a child when he or she exposes the child to sexual acts or behavior. Child sexual abuse is an abuse of trust, power, and authority that may cause serious short-term and long-term problems for a child (Briere & Elliot, 2003). One in three girls and one in seven boys are sexually abused during childhood (Finkelhor, Hammer, & Sedlak, 2008).

Many of these children will tell no one what happened to them, often because of threats or manipulation by the perpetrator (Finkelhor, Hammer, & Sedlak, 2008). Most cases are not reported to the police.

Robbie- Ann finds no place of comfort, as she attempts to overcome sexual abuse at home and outside of home. Her attempts to fend off her attackers lead her deeper into despair and hopelessness.

In the discussion and outcry after every reported case of child sexual abuse, three interventions are omitted:

- Parenthood Programs
- Responsibility
- Physical Protection

Parenthood Programs

These programs offer parenting education and support to parents and parental figures. Eligible people include caregivers who play a significant role in a child's life.

Eligibility should extend to families who are expecting a child or have at least one child age 0-17. The entire family unit should benefit from the services provided.

The goal is to help good people to become great parents. Parents are assigned to someone who can answer questions, give advice and recommend services.

Depending on the parenting needs, the assigned person can be a nurse, an experienced parent, or another trained professional or volunteer.

Parenting can include discussions on:

- Taking care of more than one child;
- Learning new ways to keep children happy and healthy;

- Getting children ready for school; and
- Parents having an understanding their child's learning and well-being.

Services should include discussions on:

- pregnancy outcomes;
- child health and development; and
- family economic self-sufficiency and stability.

Responsibility

Changing the behavior of adults and communities, rather than the behavior of children, is the way to prevent child sexual abuse. The burden of prevention should be distributed across community members, organizations, and social structures.

The traditional child sexual abuse prevention programs are of little value. These programs target children and place the burden of prevention on the child. Child sexual abuse occurs because of many factors working together that are beyond the control of the child.

Child sexual abuse prevention programs that target children have three main goals: to teach children to recognize child sexual abuse; to give them the skills to avoid abuse; and to encourage them to report abuse they have experienced, are experiencing, or may experience. (Kenny et al., 2008; Repucci & Herman, 1991; Topping & Barron, 2009).

It is unrealistic to expect a child to exercise power over someone whom they may trust and who is in power, older and stronger than them (Hazzard, 1993). It is the responsibility of individuals to not violate children in any way and for communities to prevent child sexual abuse and safeguard the well-being of children.

Prevention programs designed for children are only one of many components of the effort to prevent child sexual abuse.

Physical Protection

Children should go to school on a school bus. The more fortunate in society can drop off and pick up their children with private transport. Most people do not have that luxury.

Allowing children to roam the streets unattended is the greatest opportunity for abusers to pounce on their prey.

Do not allow children to go to parties that begin at 1 am and end with the rising sun. This is another opportunity for predators to lay their hands on unsuspecting children. Child sexual abuse is a crime. A core element in the commission of crime is opportunity.

Children must never be left alone. Particularly, in lonely places, dark unprotected areas, spots not traversed by people, near bodies of water, swimming pools, lakes, waterfalls, rivers, beaches, ponds and drainage ditches.

Watch children when swimming or playing near water. They need a certified lifeguard or responsible adult within reach.

When a pool is in use, remove pool covers and cleaning machines. When the pool is not in use, remove pool toys and secure access to the region using alarms and gates.

Do not allow children to swim in any water after heavy rains or flooding, since swollen water can hide hazards below the surface.

Conclusion

The community must agree to allow children to be children.

Robbie-Ann is part of the series of short stories "Tales From My Caribbean Crypt" published on Amazon.