

The background is a painting of a landscape. In the foreground, there is a sandy, light-colored path that curves from the bottom left towards the center. The middle ground features a row of red, low-rise buildings or structures. The background is a vast, open landscape with a blue sky and a horizon line. The overall style is somewhat impressionistic or painterly.

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention & Education: Best Practices, Children's Voices & Future Directions

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A Masterclass for IPSCAN in Calgary
Aug 28, 2016

Overview of presentation

- Key questions about child sexual abuse education:
 - What are our prevention options?
 - What are the core principles of CSA programs?
 - Do children learn the information?
 - Are children harmed by the programs?
 - What are children's impressions of the programs?
 - Challenges to implementing CSA programs
 - What of the future?

Caveats

- I am a researcher, not a program developer.
- Worked as a clinician with preschool-aged children.

What we know

- The sexual abuse of children remains a serious concern especially with increased access to potential child & youth sexual targets through the internet.
- The short & long-term consequences are serious (PTSD, depression, suicidal ideation).
- CSA often leaves children vulnerable to other violence such as sexual exploitation and intimate partner violence.

- Finkelhor & Browne's 1985 conceptualization of the trauma as not only reflected in sexual distress, but in difficulties with trust, feelings of stigmatization and powerlessness, highlights the pervasive nature of the consequences of CSA.
- As early as the 1970s, CSA prevention became a focus.
- Reviews of programs: i.e. Tutty et al. (2005)

Range of Prevention Options (Tutty, 1991)

Finkelhor's Preconditions	Primary Prevention
1. Offender's Motivation	sex education
2. Offender's Inhibitions	-public awareness advertisements -legal deterrents -ban child pornography
3. External Impediments	-parent programs -target information to step families, single parent moms
4. Child's Resistance	-school-based programs -public awareness ads -self-esteem workshops -informal sources-books, videos, T.V. shows. -challenging traditional male-female stereotypes

School-based CSA Programs

- Over the past 40 years, school-based CSA prevention has become the mainstay to educate children about the CSA & strategies to potentially interrupt or stop the abuse from occurring.
- Most are for elementary students.
- About 45 published studies on child-directed CSA programs (about 1/3 on preschool programs; 2/3 on elementary school-aged).
- All found statistically significant gains in knowledge, attitudes and/or skills.

Key CSA Prevention Concepts

- 1. Body ownership
- 2. Good touch versus "bad" touch
- 3. Private parts
- 4. No secrets
- 5. Who is a stranger?
- 6. Tricks
- 7. Permission to tell
- 8. Familiar people (relatives), may touch children in inappropriate ways
- 9. If you are sexually abused, it's not your fault
- 10. Boys are at risk of sexual abuse

Long-term Maintenance?

- Do children remember the prevention concepts over time?
- Most children retained their knowledge of abuse prevention concepts for up to a year:
 - Body Safety Training Wurtele, preschool); Children Need to Know Personal Safety Training Program, Good Touch-Bad Touch, ESPACE, Feeling Yes, Feeling No, Project Trust, Learn to be Safe with Emmy, Red Flag Green Flag People; Touch (part of Project Trust), Touching, Who Do You Tell™.

Negative Side Effects?

- Only a minority of children show negative reactions after a child abuse prevention program (Hébert, Lavoie, Vitaro, McDuff, & Tremblay, 2008; Nibert, Cooper & Ford, 1989; Taal & Edelaar, 1995, Tutty, 1990, 1997; Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1987).
- However, these concerns persist.

Who Do You Tell

- The “Who Do You Tell” program (WDYT) was first introduced by the former Calgary Sexual Assault Centre in 1983 and updated in the early 1990’s by the Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse.
- Educates children, parents and teachers.
- Works with schools to develop procedures for disclosures.

- Typically, two trainers offer the program in small groups (15 to 30) to children from Kindergarten to Grade 6.
- More recently, teachers have be trained to deliver WDYT.
- The program is delivered in 2 sessions of 45-60 minutes apiece on consecutive days.
- Different age-appropriate materials & videos are used for the youngest children, middle grades (3 & 4) and older Grades 5 and 6 students.

- Previous research on WDYT with 231 children (Tutty, 1997) showed that students learned the key prevention concepts to a significantly greater degree than students who had not yet participated.
- Only 17% of the children had previous exposure to prevention materials about sexual abuse.
- Parents noted virtually no negative effects in their children's reaction to the program.

What Do Children Think?

- Children are seldom asked about their impressions of the programs (Tutty, 2014).
- 116 elementary school-aged children (51 boys & 65 girls) from grades 1 through 6 who had participated in the “Who Do You Tell” child sexual abuse prevention program.
- Focus groups were held in two Calgary schools, one in a high needs area

Prior exposure to CSA concepts?

- Only one or two students per group had learned the concepts elsewhere, typically from parents (social workers, nurses or members of the police force).
- Several students had either participated in WDYT™ previously, or had been in a similar program.

What the children learned

- Students recalled learning about appropriate touches, private parts, strategies used by perpetrators (such as secrets & bribes) and that they could tell someone if touched inappropriately, all core prevention concepts
 - *They can trick you to touch your private parts, like give you toys or candy. Or ice cream. (Kindergarten)*
 - *I learned that our mouths are private parts; I didn't know that. (Grade 1)*

- *If someone touches a private part and then they say 'don't tell or something bad [will happen],' you can still tell. (Grade 1)*
- *Maybe a grown-up won't believe you because they know the person really well. [What would you do then?] Go to a different person. Tell somebody else. (Grade 6)*
- *Usually if someone touches private parts, it's someone you know. (Grade 2)*
- *Some people have to touch your private parts, like a doctor or a dentist. (Grade 1)*

Children's comfort with WDYT

- A few students felt uncomfortable about some aspects of the program (i.e. skits or videos that portrayed children being touched inappropriately).
 - *"I didn't like the movie when the boy and the coach said that he was going to help the boy change... [Did that feel uncomfortable? Did you feel worried for him?]. Oh, god yes!" (Grade 4)*
 - *"I liked being in the skits, but when they listed the people that might do that, that was really (surprising)."*

- Some felt better after learning the child could do something to either protect (say no) or support themselves (tell a trusted adult).
- Others believed that, even if they felt uncomfortable or embarrassed, they needed the information. One girl in Grade 4 simply stated, "We need to know".

- [Do you understand why WDYT does the plays?] *Yeahs. So we would know what to do if it really happened. [Is it helpful to know what you could say if it happened.] Yeahs. (Grade 6)*
- I kind of felt uncomfortable, but they said you don't have to feel uncomfortable because you could tell a grownup and they'll explain it to you. [It's not something people talk about much, is it?] *No's. (Grade 4)*

What Children Liked About WDYT

- [Was it a good program?] *Children – Yeah.*
[What did you like?] *Child – It teaches us to be safe. (Grade 1)*
- *I like the program. I like it (chorus agreeing). (Grade 2)*
- [Did you like WDYT?] *(Chorus of yeses.) Yes, it was very informative. I liked it because I learned some things I didn't know before. (Grade 4)*

Would You Change WDYT?

- [Would you change the WDYT program in any way?] *Chorus of no's. (Grade 2)*
- *I would separate the girls and the boys and talk to the girls about the girl's private parts, actually the boy's private parts and the boys about the girl's private parts.*
- *You don't really say things in front of the guys. [another girl] It's embarrassing.*
- *I didn't like it 'cause we had to sit down too long. (Kindergarten)*

Summary on WDYT

- Students provided strong positive feedback about WDYT.
- They learned the key abuse prevention concepts, enjoyed the program despite feeling embarrassed and mildly anxious on learning that someone they know might attempt to touch them inappropriately.
- The students saw the information as critical and recommended the program for children at other schools.

Current CSA Program Challenges

- Child sexual abuse very difficult to discuss. Backlash in 1990s meant less research conducted, CSA questioned.
- Most programs are externally offered by NGO's. Funding often precarious.
- Entry into schools can be challenging.
- Programs such as WDYT are competing against other violence prevention programs focusing on bullying or dating violence (easier topics to discuss).

What of the Future?



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Future Directions

- For decades we have been encouraging parents to talk to children about sexuality and abuse (Mendelson, 2015; Walsh, 2012).
- Even today, parents lack information on CSA (Wurtele, Moreno & Kenny, 2010)
- Perhaps parents would respond better to invitations to talk about internet protection that incorporate CSA basic principles.

- Need a continuum of programs across school levels.
- Better coordination across programs ie; much of “bullying” is sexual harassment.
- In elementary schools include information on sexual touching and assaults in dating relationships.
- Address sexting, pornography & internet luring with older elementary school children.

Newer Programs

- Learn to be Safe with Emmy (Dale et al.) Australian
- Safe Touches (Pulido et al., 2015) USA
- Cool & Safe (Muller, et al.2015) Germany
- My Body, My Boundaries (Baker et al., 2012) Hawaii
- Orbit (on-line game) (Scholes et al., 2014)

- Of these, only Cool & Safe added new concepts, teaching about internet safety

Conclusions

- We have decades of practice and research in CSA prevention/education programs. Most supports its efficacy.
- New interest from developing countries.
- The challenge to provide these programs continues.
- However, many continue to advocate for their importance.

- For any further questions or resources, contact me at: tutty@ucalgary.ca

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