



# **Beyond Child-focused CSA Education: Reviewing the Focus of Sexual Abuse Prevention**

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# What is child-focused CSA education?

Most widely used tool in child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention.

Programs delivered in schools and pre-schools.

- Recognise
- Resist
- Report

Child behavior change unique to CSA prevention



# Why child-focused?



Sudden, high  
public & political  
concern



Self-empowerment &  
self-defense from anti-  
rape movement.  
Children to protect  
themselves



New & untested  
interventions,  
preceding  
knowledge and  
theory

# What do we know about CSA knowledge for children?



Learn prevention concepts



Disclosures



Help children prevent abuse

# Research



**Finkelhor et al., 1995:** 1457 10-16 year olds. Programs did not reduce victimisation incidence & did not prevent injury as result of a victimisation.

**Finkelhor et al., 2014:** 3391 5-17 year olds. Even high quality programs did not reduce the incidence of sexual victimisation, or disclosures.

**Ko & Cosden, 2001:** 137 teens. No effect. Majority used recommended prevention strategies: 46%: positive effect, 43%: negative outcomes, 11%: combination.

**Pelcovitz et al., 1992:** 22 6-10 year olds. Longstanding abuse. No disclosure. All attended a CSA program.

**Gibson & Leitenberg, 2000:** 825 Undergraduates. 8% and 16%: Significant difference.

# Criticisms of CSA Education programs

Burden of responsibility

Unrealistic expectation



Assumptions:

1. Determine if a touch is abusive
2. Understand labels for touches
3. Resist abuse/Challenge adult
4. Report/disclose

“Tom made me feel good about myself and I quickly grew to love him. When the holiday came to an end I missed him dreadfully” (Briggs, 1995, p. 19).



“I thought he was kind of funny, he was really nice. Someone I could talk to, someone who cared about me. Cared enough to ask the questions nobody else did” (Berliner & Conte, 1990, p. 32).



# Criticisms of CSA Education programs

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Unrealistic expectation



Assumptions:

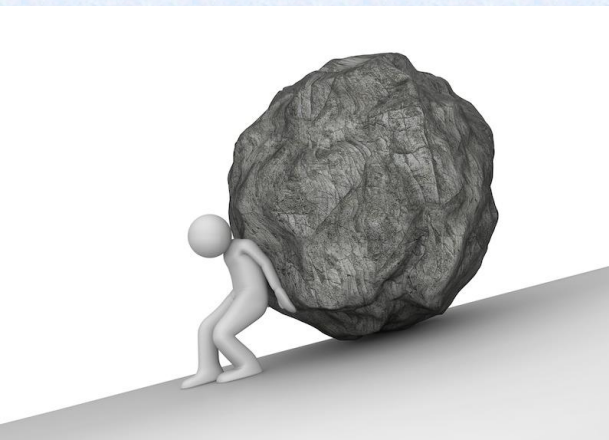
1. Determine if a touch is abusive
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**“Over two-thirds of young women are experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace today. Eighty per cent of them felt unable to report it. It is unrealistic and inaccurate to expect this to be stopped by the people it’s happening to” (Guardian, 2017)**



**“When you chastise victims for not speaking out sooner, you’re asking women to suffer a double punishment. Practically if not explicitly, it’s not much different from saying it’s their fault” (Guardian, 2017)**



**“But not everyone is quick enough on their feet or feels secure enough to speak up - we should not be asking students and junior faculty to do that. We need to be training [senior] people to [intervene],” (Guardian, 2017)**

“I didn’t want them to grow up with no Dad . . . I felt like I was taking their Dad away from them. .I knew that was the right thing to do but at the same time I felt like What am I doing? It’s their Dad . . . I can’t let them live without their Dad” (14-year-old girl abused by her uncle. McElvaney, 2014, p. 937).



# Criticisms of CSA Education programs

Unintended consequences: Worry  
Fear of adults/strangers  
Wary of touch

Generalised  
Anxiety Trust  
Hypervigilance



23% more wary of touch - reported by parents  
16% more anxious - reported by teachers  
10% upset by the program – reported by children  
(MacIntyre & Carr, 1999).

53% worried about being abused  
20% were scared of adults  
(Finkelhor et al., 1995)



# Parenting and CSA Protection



Measure of parental protectiveness:

Discussion of CSA and protective behaviours

Parent-led education liable to the same criticisms as school-based programs.

# Where to from here?

## Finkelhor's (1984) Precondition Model of CSA Offending

- 1) A motivated perpetrator (e.g. sexual arousal, inadequate social skills, poor relationships)
- 2) Who is able to overcome internal barriers (e.g. taboo, alcohol/drug use to decrease inhibitions)
- 3) And overcome external barriers (e.g. absence of supervision, poor relationships)
- 4) A victim who is unable to resist (e.g. emotional insecurity)

# Parents as protectors

## Two Pathways of Parental Protection:

1. Directly, through strong external barriers afforded by parent supervision, monitoring and involvement
2. Indirectly, by promoting their child's emotional well-being, confidence and self-esteem, which on the balance of evidence, suggest they will be less likely targets for abuse and more able to respond appropriately and disclose when it occurs.