



UNVEILING THE TABOO: DAYS OF DIALOGUE TO PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE. IF WE CAN LEARN IT,
WE CAN UNLEARN IT.

VIOLENCE IS NOT HEALTHY FOR PEOPLE
AND OTHER LIVING THINGS. IF WE CAN SEE IT,
WE CAN STOP IT.

SILENCE IS VIOLENCE. IF WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT,
WE CAN CHANGE IT.

— *POV's Prevention Call to Action*

WELCOME

Thank you for joining us for this important Dialogue. Today is a day to talk about the often silenced and stigmatized issue of child sexual abuse, and perhaps most importantly, why we have not been able to eradicate this violence from our lives.

You have the opportunity to give voice to your experience and perspective. You are a valuable part of the solution to prevent child sexual abuse and protect our children. This is the first step—shedding light on the issue and sharing our expertise and experience in how to address it at all levels—for each person, family, neighborhood, and society at large.

Through honest and maybe sometimes tough dialogue, we can begin to prevent child sexual abuse through raising awareness, educating ourselves and our community, and owning the issue as each of ours. Only through your leadership can we really forward a unified voice and mobilize to end child sexual abuse in Los Angeles. Thank you for being here and committing to unveiling the taboo for the next four hours... and beyond.

*Emily Austin
Peace Over Violence
Child Sexual Assault Prevention Project Director*



DAYS OF DIALOGUE
The First Step...

NOVEMBER 2012

This opportunity, “Unveiling the Taboo: Days of Dialogue to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse,” has taken far too long to manifest.

We can do far better than continue the gut-wrenching lurch from scandal to scandal. We can do better than the perpetuation of trauma, shame, blame and recrimination without movement to a day when child sexual abuse is no more.

The vulnerability of children is, indeed, our most significant challenge. The statistics stagger the mind: 1 in 6 boys and 1 in 4 girls experience sexual abuse by age 18.

The ramifications unsettle the soul: Child sexual abuse delays and distorts physical, emotional, social and emotional development.

These Days of Dialogue aspire to lay the foundation to eradicate this epidemic of child sexual abuse by engaging our brightest minds, our best talents and our strongest voices. Too much time has passed; too many lives have been compromised.

Today we bring the subject of child sexual abuse out of the shadows and to the table.

These Days of Dialogue are a first, long overdue, step to tackle child sexual abuse. You are joining the chorus of voices to face this most intractable challenge. What are the dimensions of our challenge? What do we do? How do we move forward?

These Days of Dialogue reverberate in locales near and far. We call upon our community to be engaged, unsettled, and involved in creating a future where no child anywhere is sexually abused.

You are congratulated for your participation in helping take the first step...

In dialogue,

*Avis Ridley-Thomas, Convener
Days of Dialogue*

GROUND RULES

- Speak from your own perspective (use “I” statements)
- Listen carefully and respectfully to each person
- Keep comments brief and stay focused on task
- Explore difference respectfully and look for common ground
- Trust that the facilitator has the best interest of the group at heart
- Turn off your cell phones and remove them from the table
- Respect the deeply personal and sensitive nature of the issue of child sexual abuse, acknowledge that some information can trigger other survivors and limit personal disclosures
- Maintain confidentiality
- See yourself as a valuable contributor in preventing child sexual abuse



ISSUE OVERVIEW

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious and complex social issue that affects a wide swath of intersecting areas: public safety, health, criminal justice, human rights, child development, mental health, and education to name a few. This abuse has ripple effects in our society, families, places of worship, institutions of learning, parenting strategies, and future relationships.

Child sexual abuse is sexual contact with a child/minor and often is the exploitation of trust in an intimate relationship. It is estimated that 1 in 6 boys, and 1 in 4 girls experience child sexual abuse by age 18.¹

Child sexual abuse is connected to vulnerability. In some ways this abuse is an equal opportunity assault on the soul. It happens in our most privileged, rich households, and our poor households. All children are vulnerable given the dynamics of adult-child relationships, authority, and rights. Some youth populations are especially vulnerable—due to cultural/language barriers, physical isolation, repressive gender norms, lack of family support structures, and lack of empowerment, opportunity, and hope.

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse are mostly likely acquaintances (31% for female survivors, 33% for male survivors) or family members (29% for females, and 11% for males).² Perpetrators are predominately male, but male victims experience higher rates of female perpetration (39% to 17%).³

Child sexual abuse impacts physical, emotional, social, and neurological development, during a critical time of growth--childhood. "Because abuse never happens in a social vacuum, at the very least abuse delays and distorts emotional and social development. And without skillful, effective intervention — intervention that restores psychological and somatic functioning to high levels — that early overload can echo and reverberate across the canyons of our lives forever."⁴

¹ Dube, SR, Anda, RF, Whitfield, CL et al. (2005). Long-term consequences of childhood sexual abuse by gender of victim. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28, 430-438.

² Finkelhor D, Hotaling G, Lewis IA, Smith C. (1990) Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: prevalence, characteristics, and risk factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 14:19-28.

³ Grayston AD, De Luca RV. (1999) Female perpetration of child sexual abuse: a review of the clinical and empirical literature. *Aggressive Violence Behav.* 4:93-106.

⁴ Brady, M. Childhood Sexual Abuse: How NOT to Heal From It. [December 11, 2011] Blog post available at <http://committedparent.wordpress.com/> [accessed December 20, 2011].

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Phase 1: Who are we? — Introductions and Ground Rules

Phase 2: What are the barriers to preventing child sexual abuse?

Phase 3: Where do we go now?

PHASE I: WHO ARE WE?

Get to know the members of your small group and learn about their connections to the issue of child sexual abuse.

Introductions:

What is your

- Name
- Organizational affiliation, if any
- Length of time as a member of the LA community
- Connection with the issue of child sexual abuse

Expectations

- Why are you here?
- What do you want to see come out of this dialogue?

PHASE 2: WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS WE FACE IN PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Discuss why child sexual abuse is such a difficult violence to prevent, and explore what prevents people from seeing the abuse, seeking services, and/or asking for help.

- Even though child sexual abuse is socially abhorrent and not accepted behavior, we struggle to prevent this abuse—Why?
- What stands in the way of seeing child sexual abuse?
- What prevents us from reporting and acting on what we may see?
- What keeps us from talking about this issue?
- Consider the following barriers:

- Stigma and shame associated with CSA
- Fear, confusion and secrecy
- Disbelief / avoidance
- Family or relationship barriers
- Institutional barriers (ie; law enforcement, prosecution, child protection, schools, religious institutions, etc).

PHASE 3: WHERE DO WE GO NOW?

Discuss how we can improve our prevention of CSA on all levels. Think about what we can do separately and together as a community to eventually end CSA.

- What have we done well in preventing CSA?
- What can we do better?
- What needs to change at each of the below levels to end child sexual abuse?
 - Individuals
 - Families
 - Communities
 - Institutions
- What are you doing to prevent child sexual abuse? And what can you do in the future as an individual, professional, and community member?
- In what direction do you want to see the movement to end child sexual abuse go?

CALL TO ACTION—WHAT YOU AND WE CAN DO

- Pledge to prevent CSA. Fill out a commitment card to be part of the movement to prevent CSA in Los Angeles.
- Be willing to engage in dialogue about CSA.
- Acknowledge that everyone knows a survivor, even if you don't know who in your life is a survivor of CSA.
- Speak up when you see warning signs or behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Listen to and look out for the children in your life.
- Educate and reach out to others about CSA and how to prevent CSA—debunk the myths and unveil the secrecy around this issue.
- Work together to insure institutional response to and prevention of CSA.
- Participate in Denim Day in LA 2013, during April's Sexual Abuse Awareness Month, visit www.denimdayinla.org.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Unveiling the Taboo: Days of Dialogue to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse would not be possible without the dedication and expertise of the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Advisory Council:

- Alva Moreno, YWCA of Greater Los Angeles
- Amita Swadhin, Peer Health Exchange
- Ava Rose, Women Helping Women, National Council of Jewish Women
- Cathy Friedman, Peace Over Violence
- Deborah Kanegsberg, Home-SAFE, Vista Del mar
- Emily Austin, Peace Over Violence
- Heather Carmichael, My Friend's Place
- Jessica Romo, Valley Trauma Center
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- Kimberly Hundley, YWCA of Greater Los Angeles
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- Sue LaVaccare, Children's Hospital Los Angeles
- William Bedrosian, Olive Crest
- Xiomara Flores-Holguin, Department of Child and Family Services
- Yvette Lozano, Peace Over Violence

Thank you for all your time and partnership!

PARTNERSHIP



The Institute for Nonviolence in
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Making peace one
mediation at a time...



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