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### PRESS RELEASE FROM THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

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### THE UNSPOKEN HORROR: CHILD ABUSE – PART TWO

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Last week we began a series of articles concerning this topic and provided a definition of child abuse, signs of an abused child and of an abusing adult.

This week we will continue this series by giving you additional information on how you can recognize and prevent child abuse and help our children **‘BE SAFE’**.

Child abuse can occur at any time in any socioeconomic level and in any ethnic group.

Factors *for parents and caregivers* that may increase the risk of becoming abusive include, but are not limited to:

- Low self-esteem and a need to seek approval from another source. This can be through acting out at home to get the attention of a spouse or sexual activity with another person to obtain approval and love from that person and to escape the current situation
- Poor impulse control and a lack of thinking things through completely. This can easily lead to the areas denoted above.
- Depression and/or anxiety concerning any personal situation such as the loss of a job, financial issues, marital problems, etc.
- Marital conflict within the family, either their own or that of other family members such as parents or children.
- Domestic violence within the family that they have personally experienced while growing up; due to a spouse or another child, or between spouses.
- Financial stress within the family. This can range from losing a job, credit card debt, decline in savings and investments due to the recent economic issues or medical expenses that are not covered by insurance.
- Social isolation through either living situations, lack of friends or contacts outside of a marriage, living distance from neighbors or other adults, or simply choosing to limit outside contacts.

- Alcoholism or other forms of substance abuse personally, within the family or with other children.
- A history of mistreatment as a child either mentally, physically or emotionally.

Child abuse of any type carries a number of short and long-term complications that range from physical to psychological. Some of these are:

- Physical and/or learning disabilities while in school as a child or as an adult on the job. Inability to stay on task, stay in school, hold a job.
- Low self-esteem as a child and carried into adult hood. Always believes that they are not “good enough” or “deserving”.
- Depression and/or anxiety in child hood and adult hood.
- Difficulty establishing or maintaining any kind of relationship. There may be very few, if any close friends. The person may not be able to stay in a committed relationship with another person and may experience multiple breakups including divorce in adult life.
- Challenges with intimacy and trust can carry from childhood thru adult hood and range from their immediate families to friends, personal relationships and marriages.
- Substance abuse towards alcohol and/or drugs. The use of either to regularly “escape”, “deal with” or “relax”.
- Eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia.
- Post-traumatic stress syndrome which may come out in dreams, through nightmares, be triggered by any situation and include “flashbacks”.
- Personality disorders
- Violent behaviors including frequent loss of temper, acts of physical abuse, slamming or throwing items, threats, destroying property.
- Suicide, self-mutilation or other self-destructive behaviors.

Join us next week when “**BE SAFE**” will continue this series on child abuse and talk about how to cope with and support child abuse protection efforts.

This information is sponsored by the Marshall Independent and brought to you by the American Red Cross and taken from information provided by the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. If you have any questions or need further information on the topic covered in this article, please contact either your local chapter of CAPC (Child Abuse Prevention Council) or your local American Red Cross Chapter at 1-507-532-5565.