

## **PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Students who are physically or emotionally abused rely on the school to be a safe place. School counselors take a primary role in educating staff in identifying abused students, making appropriate referrals and assuring that the school is an emotionally safe place for students to thrive.

### **Symptoms**

1. Recurrent distress over recollections of abuse
2. Increase in aggressive behaviors toward peers and adults
3. Fear, anger, depression, irritability, anxiousness, apathy or disturbed sleep.
4. Loss of power and self-esteem. Allows others take advantage of them and doesn't stick up for his/herself.
5. Mixed feelings toward perpetrator. They love them but feel violated.
6. Appearance of regressive behaviors (thumb-sucking, baby talk, bed-wetting)

### **Cause**

1. Physical or emotional assault by an older person

### **Goals**

1. Terminate the physical/emotional abuse
2. Rebuild sense of self-worth
3. Remove fear, shame and sadness
4. Put the responsibility of the abuse on the perpetrator and allow the victim to be supported
5. Reduce aggression and keeping others at an emotional distance
6. Build sense of empowerment.

### **How to Help**

1. Report abuse to Child Protection or Police
2. Assist family to find family/individual therapist
3. Actively build a level of trust with student through eye contact, empathy and listening
4. Encourage student (when ready) to disclose account of abuse
5. Assist family to normalize home life
6. Use art or play to express anger
7. Explore thoughts and feelings student has toward perpetrator

8. Discuss or role-play situations where student stands up to others in a positive way
9. Confront the student about making excuses for the perpetrator
10. Assist student in identifying her/his talents and importance to others
11. Explore the student's loss of trust issues
12. Provide alternative ways to release anger and aggression
13. Create a plan to reestablish meaningful peer friendships