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ERICA project

Module 3: Recognising early signs of child maltreatment within the family



Recognising signs of maltreatment and neglect: aims and objectives

- *To build knowledge about the **signs** of maltreatment and neglect within the family*
- *To acquire the ability to **identify signs** of maltreatment and neglect within the family*



Different types of child maltreatment:

(WHO, 2007) [1]

1. **Physical abuse**
2. **Sexual abuse**
3. **Emotional abuse**
4. **Neglect**

Remember!

Children can be victims of more than one type of abuse at once.

Each type of maltreatment is a risk factor for the onset of another type of abuse.



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Part One

Physical Abuse



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Physical abuse

- Any intentional use of physical action against a child that causes or is likely to cause harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity
- Including beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangulation, scalding, burning, deliberate poisoning and suffocation, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) [1]



Signs to look for when suspecting physical abuse

Skeletal Injuries

Suspicion should
be raised by:
facial fractures,
multiple
fractures,
lesions not
cared for

Skin Signs

**Bruises and lesions in
the face are suspicious**

**Bruises and lesions for
which nobody called a
doctor**

Remember!

**Every kind of physical abuse is linked to
emotional abuse.**



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PHYSICAL ABUSE

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Part Two

Sexual Abuse



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Sexual abuse

- The involvement of a child in sexual activity, either by adults or by other children in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the child, that the child does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to or is not developmentally prepared for, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society [1]
- 18 million children and adolescents worldwide are victims of sexual abuse [1].



Child Sexual Abuse

Risk Factors

- Female Sex
- Disability

Common characteristics:

- The victim knows the perpetrator
- Very difficult to find proof

Remember!

Distinguish *normal behavior* among children from that resulting from abuse

(e.g. playing doctor is a normal form of sexual exploration among children)



Signs of sexual abuse

Excessive knowledge on
sexual topics, self-harm,
misusing drugs or
alcohol, regressive
behaviors

Pregnancy, sexually
transmitted infections,
physical injuries,
nightmares

Changes in mood,
eating habits,
interest in daily
activities



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SEXUAL ABUSE

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Part Three

Emotional Abuse



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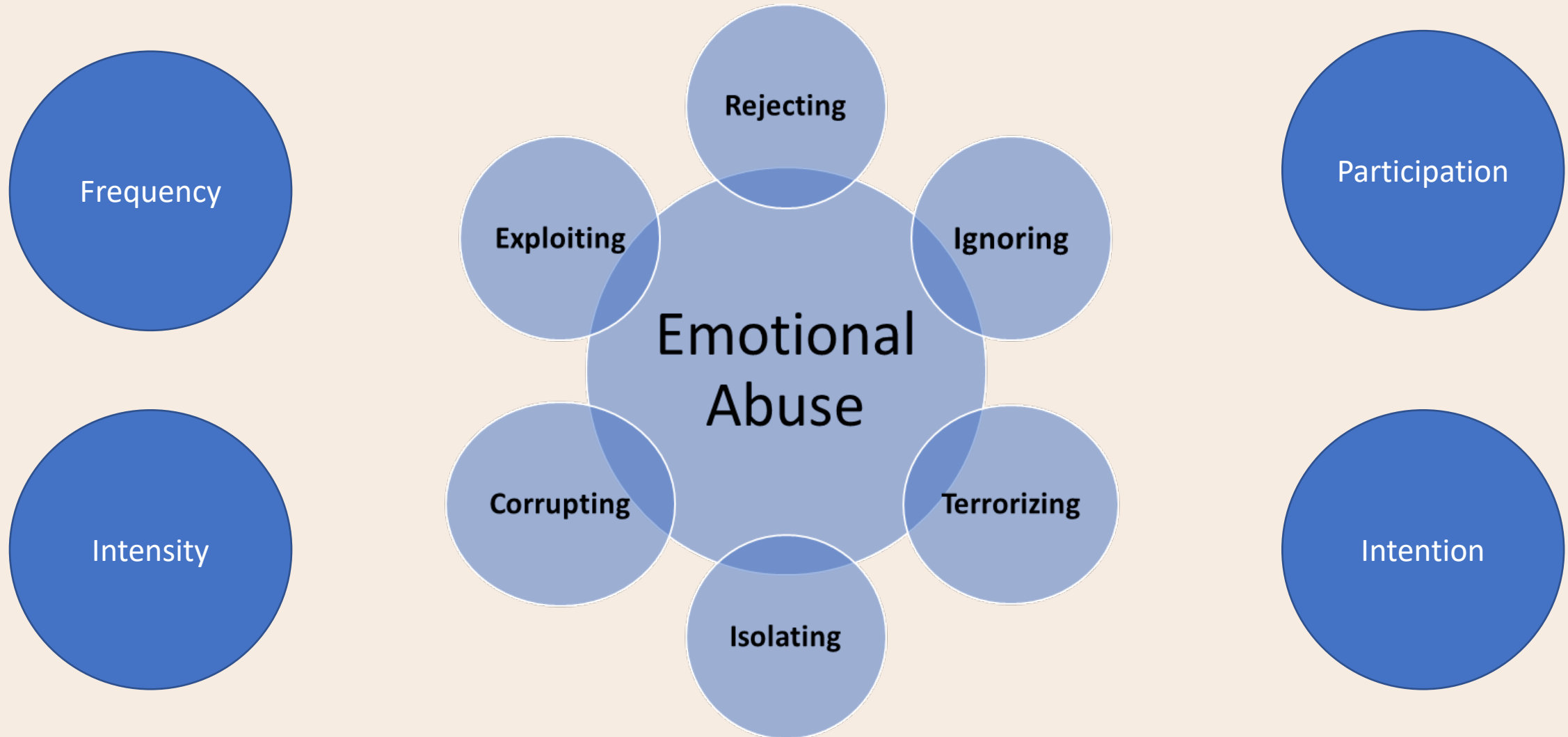
Emotional abuse

- Includes the failure of a parent or caregiver to provide an appropriate and supportive environment and includes acts that have an adverse effect on the emotional health and development of a child.
- All abuse involves some emotional maltreatment, including witnessing the abuse of others.

The impact of emotional abuse is just as harmful as the one caused by physical abuse [1, 2, 3]



Types and Factors of Emotional Abuse





Signs of Emotional Abuse

Babies and pre-school children might:

- Reveal developmental regression (like bedwetting or soiling after previously mastering bladder and bowel control)
- Exhibit such behaviors as rocking, sucking on clothes, hands, hair, biting self or others
- Make frequent complaints of headaches, stomach aches, or other somatic issues with no known cause
- Suffer from sleep or speech disorders
- Restrict play activities or experiences
- Often feel anxious, distressed or afraid of doing something wrong
- Try too hard to please or fail to connect with parents
- Be fearful of a parent
- Be withdrawn or have difficulty relating to others



Signs of Emotional Abuse

Older children might:

- Have low self-image, self-esteem and confidence
- Feel worthless, unloved or unwanted
- Evidence a decline in schoolwork
- Have difficulty making or maintaining relationships/have few or no friends.
- Experience increased fear, guilt and self-blame
- Lie or steal
- Lack trust in adults
- Exhibit extremes of behaviour, eg. very aggressive to very passive
- Avoid or run away from home
- Exhibit self-harming behaviours or suicidal thoughts
- Use drugs and/or alcohol



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EMOTIONAL ABUSE

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Part Four

Neglect



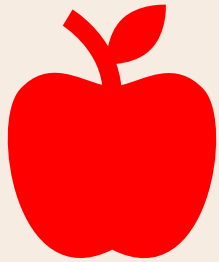
Neglect

- A failure on the part of a parent or other family member to meet the physical and/or psychological needs of the child through inadequate care or failure to protect the child from exposure to danger, either during isolated incidents or as a pattern of failure over time.
- Neglect can be associated with one or more of the following:
health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions [1]



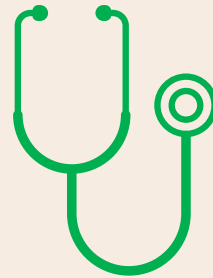
Signs of the main types of Neglect

Nutritional Neglect



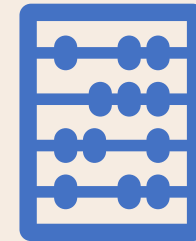
- Misuse of Alcohol or Drugs
- Obesity
- Excessive Skinniness
- Alterations in growth rate

Medical Neglect



- Untreated Injuries
- Missed health care appointments (e.g. vaccinations)
- Repeated accidental injuries from lack of supervision

Educational Neglect



- Failure to ensure that the child is receiving proper educational care and attention
- Allowing chronic truancy: child is allowed to continually miss school



Signs of the main types of Neglect

Prenatal Neglect



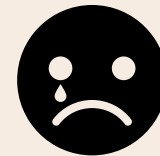
- Misuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco during pregnancy

The primary care Neglect



- Inadequate clothing
- Child has little or no space to play or study
- Limited toys and activities to learn new things

Emotional Neglect



- Limited acknowledgment of the child's interests, activities, schooling, peers, etc.
- Harsh parenting
- Lax discipline
- The lack of meeting emotional needs i.e. feeling of security



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NEGLECT

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Keep in mind these signs when doing Module 6!

- WHO to call and WHAT to do in case of:

(To be modified by each local trainer)*

- EMERGENCY/IMMEDIATE DANGER
- SITUATIONS CONCERNING THE SAFEGUARDING OF A CHILD WHICH ISN'T AN EMERGENCY
- SUSPICIOUS SITUATIONS THAT SHOULD BE MONITORED



References

1. World Health Organization (WHO). 2007. Preventing child maltreatment in Europe: a public health approach: policy briefing. Geneva, WHO.
2. World Health Organization (WHO). 1999. Report of the consultation on child abuse prevention, 29–31 March 1999. Geneva, WHO.
3. World Health Organization (WHO). 2002. World report on violence and health. Geneva, WHO.
4. Myers, J.E.B.(Ed.). 2011. The APSAC handbook on child maltreatment (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.



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Additional References

- Binggeli, N.J., Hart, S.N., Brassard, M.R. 2001. Psychological maltreatment of children: The APSAC study guides 4. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
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- World Health Organization (WHO). 2020. Global status report on preventing violence against children 2020, Geneva, WHO.



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