



# Care House News

Volume 9, Issue 2

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## CARE HOUSE MISSION

*“To prevent and reduce the incidence and trauma of child sexual and serious physical abuse in Macomb County through collaborative, multi-disciplinary and effective family services.”*



### Communicating Well with Your Child

**Good communication is a gift between parent and child. It’s the key to building a strong, loving relationship.**

As your child gets older, the ways you communicate with each other change, too. Learning to talk and listen to each other effectively will help you stay close now—and in the future.

**It also helps your child grow.**

Good communication skills help in the development of your child’s:

- Self-esteem
- Emotional and physical health
- Academic success.

As a parent, you play the leading role in helping your child develop good communications skills!

#### What gets in the way of good communication?

**A few common roadblocks:**

##### **Too much information**

If you talk too long or about many topics at once, your child can get confused or overwhelmed. Try to focus on one topic at a time. Be sure to let your child respond and ask questions.

##### **Too many distractions**

It’s hard to talk—and listen—if you are busy doing something else. When you want to talk, make a point to stop what you’re doing—and ask your child to do the same.

##### **Too many demands**

Try to avoid phrases such as, “Don’t do that!” Instead, try: “Please be careful with that—it could break.” When you explain the reason for a rule or request, your child is more likely to respond.

Remember, communication is a two way street. It means talking and listening.

Source: [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)

You can visit us on the web at  
[www.mccarehouse.net](http://www.mccarehouse.net)



### Three keys to being a good listener:

#### **1. Pay attention.**

If you’re not focused on what your child is saying, you’re not really listening. Instead, remember to:

- Stop what you’re doing.
- Make your child comfortable. For a younger child, that means getting down to his or her eye level. For an older child or teenager, it might be better to talk on a car or bus ride as you sit side by side.
- Concentrate on his or her words.
- Try to notice how your child is feeling

(That is, “look” for the feelings behind his or her words.)

#### **2. Don’t interrupt.**

Let your child finish his or her thoughts.

- Encourage your child to use his or her own words.
- Repeat what your child has said to make sure you understand.

#### **3. Show respect.**

Even if you disagree, listen to everything your child has to say.

- Don’t finish your child’s sentences.
- Don’t twist your child’s words to fit your own point of view.

Remember to show your love, too. Sometimes words are less important than a reassuring hug or smile.

#### **Help your child be a good listener, too..**

#### **Ask your child to repeat what he or she hears.**

For example:

- When reading to a younger child, stop mid-story and ask questions. For example: “What do you think is going to happen next?”
- Older children can write things out—phone messages, journals, to-do lists, etc. This helps them practice writing down what they hear. It also helps them learn how to summarize.

#### **Make time for family conversation.**

Avoid watching TV or listening to the radio while having meals. Instead, talk to each other! Car and bus rides are a good time to talk, too. Take turns sharing what you did that day.

Source: [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)



### Celebrating the Holidays

How do families prepare for fun times during the holidays while keeping in mind the reality that some relationships are more challenging than others?

**Make sure your expectations fit into the reality of your family situation.** Real life isn't like the movies. This is truly the beginning of enjoying time with extended family.

**Think outside the box.** Maybe time together could be shorter with more chances for successful interaction.

**Plan your time together wisely.** Careful planning of activities provides less time for bringing up negative family history to go over and over.

**Set boundaries ahead of time.** Even if other family members choose to go all out and spend a lot of money on presents, that doesn't mean you have to. Take time to plan how you will spend your time and money before the momentum of the holidays kicks into full swing.

**Don't try to control or change family members.** This only leads to frustration and disappointment. Give extended family members the gift of celebrating the holidays in their own way. If your family chooses not to be a part of that celebration, it is okay.

**Be intentional about being positive.** Every family has topics, activities, food or drinks that are known triggers for family conflict during the holidays. By stating your positive agenda for the family gathering in advance these "scenes" can be avoided.

**Don't take on more than you can comfortably handle.** There are many ways to skin a cat. Let other family members try their hand at helping to prepare the celebration. Even if it doesn't turn out exactly as you would like...so what? Adapt and adjust and make the best of it.

Source: Parenting Views, MSU Extension Newsletter, December 2005.



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### Need Help?

If you have a court case coming up and would like legal information, support or counseling services from Care House, please contact us at (586) 463-0123. We are here to help.

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### Candy Cane Mouse

Hang these cute mice on the tree by their tails. Make them in all shapes, sizes and colors for mice with different personalities.



- Cut body and ears from desired color of felt.
- Cut the slits in body as shown in pattern.
- Glue wiggle eyes and black pom nose as shown in picture.
- Insert ears through double slits.
- Insert one end of candy cane through top single slit and other end between back of body and ears.

Source: Parenting Views, MSU Extension Newsletter, March 2004.



### Children's Trust Fund of Michigan

Children's Trust Fund (CTF) is the only statewide, non-profit organization in Michigan dedicated solely to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Since 1982, the CTF has raised over \$80 million and provided support to over 8 million children and families.

The CTF provides funding to 71 local child abuse and neglect councils, representing 81 of Michigan's 83 counties. Monies donated to CTF are also used to provide funding for prevention programs in the donor's own community.

Earlier this year, Public Act 160 of 2005 amended the Income Tax Act to reinstate the income tax check-off that allows taxpayers to contribute money to the CTF. Taxpayers can now designate on their annual return that a contribution of \$5 or more of their refund be credited to the CTF.

The Check-off is located on line 30 of the Michigan tax form. The donation can be deducted on the next year's tax form.





### Normal Stages of Sexual Behaviors

- 0-4 years old
  - Touches/rubs own genitals (random)
  - Shows genitals
  - Interested/asks about bathroom functions
  - Interested and explores the differences between genitals
  - Uses dirty language
  - Plays house and doctor (imitative, modeling)
  - May insert objects into genitals
  
- 5-8 years old
  - Touches self (specific)
  - Tells "dirty jokes"
  - Plays doctor while exploring with other children
  - Kissing, holding hands
  - Mimic dating
  - Writing letters about "sex" terminology
  
- 9-12 years old
  - Touches self and others genitals
  - Mooning
  - Exhibitionistic
  - Kissing/dating
  - Talks about sex with same sex peer
  - Interest in own organs and functions
  - Looks at pictures in books, writes letters and poems about sexual activity
  - Dry humping

Source: Adapted from The Children's Assessment Center, Grand Rapids, MI



**Wishing You and Your Family  
a Safe and Happy Holiday Season  
from All of Us at Care House!**



### How to Help Kids Stay Safe

Children and teens can be taught things that will help keep them safe when they are on their own both at home and outside of the home. Parent-child trust and open communication are essential.

Parents should give their children safety rules and explain why the rules exist. This can be done in a matter-of-fact way without scaring the child. Personal safety also involves teaching kids that they do not have to do everything adults-even parents or other authority figures-or other children ask them to do, especially if what they are being asked to do makes them feel uncomfortable, frightened, confused, or unsure. Children need a clear explanation with examples of potential situations so they understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate activities or requests from others.

Personal safety at home includes kids not letting anyone, even friends, in the house when they are home alone and not telling anyone who calls that they are home alone. Personal safety outside includes kids always letting a parent know where they are going, with whom, and when they will be home. It also includes not stopping at anyone's home on the way to or from school without permission. Perhaps the child can walk to and from school with a "buddy" to add another layer of protection.

Parents should discuss drug and alcohol use with children as well. Perpetrators of violence are frequently under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and tricking or coaxing youth into taking chemical substances provides easier access for abusers.

### Ask Children "What if..." Questions

A good way of discussing personal safety with children is to ask them questions beginning with "What if." An example might be: "What if someone you know well tries to touch you in a way you don't like?" Parents can bring up many situations with this approach and learn more about how children think and feel. This also allows parents to help children come up with different ways of handling real-life situations. Occasionally using the "What if..." approach further allows parents to learn how their children think and see different situations. Remember that children see things from their own perspective. Do not ridicule or reject a child's view; he or she may not be as willing to share it the next time. A common safe response for kids in confusing, uncomfortable, or frightening situations is to say "No!" and then try to get away and tell someone they trust about what happened.

Source: Excerpts from Parent's Guide to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse, Tips to Keep Your Kids and Teens Safe, by Catalina Herrerias, MSW, Ph.D

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If you know of anyone who would like to receive our newsletter or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact us at (586) 463-0123.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

*Serving Macomb County families since 1996.*