



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

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How to respond to a Disclosure of Abuse

When a child discloses that he or she has been abused, it is important to respond in a kind, gentle manner. Here are some suggestions:

- Listen
- Avoid expressing shock, outrage, or disappointment
- Tell the child that he/she did the right thing by telling
- Assure the child that the abuse was not his/her fault
- Avoid asking a lot of questions; this is best left to professionals
- Do not promise to keep the abuse a secret
- Remember that the child may have been threatened; assure the child that you will help keep him/her safe and that he/she is not in trouble
- Do not threaten or condemn the perpetrator
- Avoid questions that make the child feel guilty or responsible such as, “Why didn’t you say anything sooner?”
- Follow reporting requirements as soon as possible