

Let's Talk About It – Video Transcript

Everything seemed to be good up until that particular day.

We were cleaning the house one day and then he pulled me by my hand and told me "Come, come."

When I try to put a time to it, it feels like it's about age six.

They just said "Shhh."

He had the kids.

I went away for three days and when I came back, the day I returned, he said he wanted to divorce and he left.

And I never did say anything after that.

It always seemed innocent enough.

One child was crying and one child. . . had no emotion.

I guess it's a common thing.

It's Hawaii.

It's you know, we talked about How we're. . .

Everyone's family in Hawaii.

The typical case, especially with children and teenagers, and with some adults It's, it's somebody that they know.

It's a family member or a family friend.

One of the abusers in particular would always ask . . . my father. . . you know, if he could take us to the beach and . . . driving to the beach he would have us changing in the back of his camper and he wouldn't shut the curtain and then he would take us to a secluded area that you kinda had to swim far and being. . . being abused in the public where it, because it's secluded.

People aren't around.

That friend will ask to spend time with the kid by doing things like going to the beach.

Doing things that are special with the child or that the child has interest in.

So, they'll develop that interest with the child and then get access to the child that way.

My older sister experienced a lot of the same abuse.

And even with her sitting . . . 10 feet away from me, You know, if she's facing the other direction he's touching me and unfortunately, she had already experienced it so, she knew, in a sense, knew not to look.

I think the perpetrators have identified something that they want and I think in order to get that they realize that they do have to work at it.

So, they do work at it.

They, they develop. . .

It's not, it starts off by trial and error, but when the perpetrator finds out what works for them, they pretty much stick with it.

What happens after you get back?

What happens if the parent doesn't come and pick up the child right away?

You know?

What's going on during that time frame? if they get back to the house at 3:00 and the . . . the parent doesn't pick them up until nine o'clock.

You know, what's going on during that time?

If there are other adults or older maybe teenagers that are spending an unusual amount of time with a child or wanting to spend more time with the child for no real reason Um, you know where maybe they invite the child over a lot. You know?

Or out for activities and things like that.

I think initially those are just what we call red flags.

Well, every day after school would all get together and go down the street and play and . . .

It was actually one of my friends, her stepbrother.

We were cleaning the house one day and then he pulled me by my hand and told me "Come, come." and I didn't know what I would be doing in a bedroom with somebody like 8, 9, 10 years older than I was.

It was like I couldn't handle it but . . .

It wasn't only him it was another neighbor too.

So?

There's a lot of what-if questions, you know, what if I tell and my parents don't believe me or what if I tell and the abuser hurts me or my family?

What's gonna happen if I tell?

Will I get taken away from my family, you know?

Especially if the perpetrator is a family member.

Will I get taken away? I don't want to get taken away.

So, there's a lot of fear involved prior to a disclosure.

I guess I didn't, I didn't know how people would look at me?

You know, if. . . like because I felt very dirty.

You know, and that's the. . . that's the main reason why I never told.

Because I didn't . . . I was just shame.

We don't typically see the kids being threatened.

There is some of that, but a lot of times I think it's more the kids are ashamed.

Sometimes they don't even know it's wrong.

They may know it's wrong, but they don't know how wrong it is.

Especially if the perpetrator is somebody that they know.

It was a regular day.

I went to work.

Kids we're at school, came home.

As usual they do their homework, and normally my daughter's no problem with her homework.

But for some reason she was in a bad mood.

She was emotional.

She was not getting her homework done.

So, I kept, you know, prodding her to get it finished, get it finished and it dragged on into the evening.

So she ate her dinner and still had her homework left and I could see that it wasn't gonna be finished.

So, I told her just go take a bath.

I would say the first thing would be any significant changes in behavior.

So... you know If a child starts to become very withdrawn or not interested in the things that they used to be interested in or it's not necessarily indicative of something bad happening.

You know, you want to just keep those thoughts in the back of your mind and perhaps at that point ask.

You know? Ask. . . the child, you know, is there anything going on?

Is there something that is bothering you and open up the dialogue.

That's when . . . I realized something was really wrong, but she wasn't saying so I started to ask her questions.

Did I do something wrong?

No.

Did, did your brother do something wrong?

No?

And when I mentioned the stepfathers name she stopped.

You know, I think that's one of the scariest times because here your child is just about to tell you that something bad happened to him and it's probably one of the worst things that, one of the last thing that a parent wants to hear happened to their child.

I asked her.

I said did he touch your privates and She just let out a loud cry and sob and began to tell me the whole story.

Don't make them feel like they've been victimized.

Talk to them about what's happened, but let them do most of the talking and just do a lot of active listening.

I believed her.

I knew she couldn't have made that up.

And so I . . .

I just felt, and I don't know why, but I did tell her mommy believes you and . . . she sort of subsided crying a little bit and I went immediately to the phone and I called the police.

You know?

I think it's a good thing to have conversations with your with your kids when they're young about good touching, bad touching and private touching. And that some of the things that we go through in the interview process, you know?

It's. . .good touching is a hug from somebody that you like.

Good touching is, is a... is holding hands with your mom or your dad when they're not teenagers because teenagers hate holding hands.

Bad touching is, is the normal things you would think of the punching the hitting the pulling the hair

And then private touching would be something that if it, if that part of your body is covered by a bathing suit nobody should be touching that and if you have that discussion with your children and something does happen

I think it makes it easier for them to understand where the lines are and if somebody touches them in a way that they don't like that they can come and talk to you about it.

My daughter told me that particular day at school her teacher talked about safety and McGruff and talked about Touching. That good touching and bad touching.

That's when the light bulb went off in her head that what had happened to her was a bad thing.

I think that education is key in terms of preventing or helping a child to understand how to keep safe.

I think that it's. . . out there more.

The information is out there more so people are more aware of it and in particular

It's not, you know. . . people know that it's not just this creepy guy who's standing on the corner of a park watching children.

That it can be the family friend.

That it can be the parent even.

You know, I think one of the first things is it goes against almost our human nature.

But it's almost, trust no one with your kids nowadays.

I've seen grandparents.

I've seen stepfathers.

I've seen mom's boyfriend

Typically, we don't see too many women as suspects but we are seeing a few more of those coming up now.

As a father I'll tell you honestly, I have an 11 year old and a 9 year old and there's very few people that I trust with my kids.

I think that's the first thing is you have to be very careful who's around your children.

I think what I realized as an adult now is how important it is for the parents to be involved with their children.

You know?

To know where your children are.

To make sure that you're involved in their life and to make sure that you talk to them and let them know that. . . no matter what it is, that they're always able to come to you and talk to you about it.

Whether it's good or bad.

Keep that line of communication open with your children.

If, if. . . if you think that they're talking about something, let them talk.

Don't pressure them.

Let them know that they can come to you and talk about anything. Sometimes it's good to be a friend.

I don't typically say that with children.

I think kids want a parent but sometimes in order to be a parent, maybe you have to be a little bit more of a friend.

So they know they can come and they can talk with you.

Try not to. . . if they're, if they do talk to you about something that is happening.

Try not to freak out right away because they're looking to you for strength as a parent.

They came to you for help.

And once there is that disclosure, maybe you have to call somebody and that's when it's the time to call the police or call somebody else for advice.

(Slow piano music)