



## Learning How to Tell - Discussing Sexual Abuse

1. (a) What is sexual abuse?
  - (b) Does sexual abuse happen to girls or boys?
  - (c) Is sexual abuse done by a man or a woman?
2. Why does Nam want to interview Joanne?

How does she react at first?

What makes her change her mind and decide to help Nam?
3. How did Joanne's Mom's boyfriend trick Joanne?
4. Len made Joanne promise never to tell.

How do you think that made Joanne feel?

What should a kid do if they are told not to tell?
5. How does Joanne's Mom react the first time she tries to tell?
6. What did she do when that didn't work? Did she give up?
7. How does Joanne's Mom react when Joanne and Mr. Konotos tell her together?

## **Answer Key: Learning How to Tell - Discussing Sexual Abuse**

**1. (a) What is sexual abuse? (b) Does sexual abuse happen to girls or boys? (c) Is sexual abuse done by a man or a woman?**

Sexual abuse happens when a grownup involves a child in any sexual act. Examples include trying to touch your private parts, making you touch their private parts, showing you their private parts, or putting anything into your private parts. Sometimes there are exceptions when someone may need to look at your private parts, such as for medical or health reasons. If a touch makes you uncomfortable, it is okay to tell an adult you trust. (b) Yes. Sexual abuse can happen to a boy or a girl. (c) Yes. Although sexual abuse is more often perpetrated by men, it can also be done by women.

**2. Why does Nam want to interview Joanne? How does she react at first? What makes her change her mind and decide to help Nam?**

Nam wants to interview Joanne so that he can write an article to help other kids. Joanne is shy at first, because her experience is hard to talk about. Talking about really personal stuff such as child abuse and sexual abuse can be really uncomfortable. Joanne finds courage when she realizes that the interview could help other kids.

**3. How did Joanne's Mom's boyfriend trick Joanne?**

Len was nice to Joanne and became her friend. Then he used that trust to trick her. Joanne now knows that sexual abusers use a child's trust to get close to them.

**4. Len made Joanne promise never to tell. How do you think that made Joanne feel? What should a kid do if they are told not to tell?**

Joanne was afraid that if she told, something bad would happen to her mom. Often an abuser will try to scare a kid into not telling. This is because the abuser knows what s/he is doing is wrong. Kids are encouraged to tell a trusted adult as soon as they have a safe, private opportunity to do so. If the abuser threatens a child, the child should be sure to tell that too.

**5. How does Joanne's Mom react the first time she tries to tell?**

Joanne's mom didn't understand what she was trying to tell her. Sometimes it is hard for parents to imagine that something bad is happening to their child. It is also hard for kids to explain what is happening to them. That is why Joanne had to keep telling, until someone understood her.

**6. What did she do when that didn't work? Did she give up?**

No. Joanne looked for another person she could trust. She told her best friend's Dad, Mr. Konotos. He listened to her whole story and helped her tell her mom.

**7. How does Joanne's Mom react when Joanne and Mr. Konotos tell her together?**

Joanne's mom believed them and was very sorry that she didn't understand what Joanne was trying to tell her the first time. Joanne's mom reported Len to the authorities and she made sure that Len never came near Joanne again. Now Jo's mom is very, very careful about who she dates and who gets to meet Joanne. Joanne and her mom talk often now and Joanne knows that she can tell her mom anything. Joanne and her mom went to counselling to help heal some of the bad feelings they experienced as a result of the abuse. They're doing well!

**8. Was the abuse Joanne's fault? What if she hadn't told? Would it be her fault then?**

No. Child abuse, including sexual abuse, is **never, ever, ever** the child's fault. It's hard to know what happened if Joanne had not told about the abuse, maybe it would still be happening. If Joanne had not told, she would not have been able to get help and support. Joanne felt a sense of relief after she told. Even if Joanne didn't tell, or even if she didn't try to stop the abuse, it would still not be her fault.