

Top Five Ways To Stop Child Abuse In A Public Place

(NAPS)—It's an all-too-familiar scene. You're standing in line at a grocery store as the young parent in front of you tries to calm an impatient child while at the same time monitoring the check-out process and digging for a wallet. Too often, the scene ends in harsh words being spoken or physical force exerted on the child. As an observer, you're left feeling embarrassed for not having intervened and frustrated for not knowing what to do.

According to Prevent Child Abuse America, 30 percent of Americans report having witnessed physical abuse of a child and 75 percent report observing verbal abuse. Yet, nearly half of these Americans also report having done nothing to intervene, in large part because they did not know how to respond.

"With more than three million children reported to child protective service agencies as alleged victims of child abuse or neglect each year, there is clearly a need to educate the public on how to respond to these incidents," said A. Sidney Johnson, III, president and CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America. "People often feel helpless when they witness child abuse in a public place because they don't know what to do. Fortunately, there are several effective and safe ways people can help."

Prevent Child Abuse America offers the following tips on how to stop child abuse in a public place:

1. Start a conversation with the adult to direct attention away from the child. For example:

- "She seems to be trying your patience."
- "My child has gotten upset like that, too."
- "He has beautiful (eyes)"—to get the parent in a positive mood.
- "Children can wear you out, can't they? Is there anything I can do to help?"

2. Divert the child's attention (from misbehaving) by talking to the child.

3. Look for an opportunity to praise the parent or child.

4. If the child is in danger, offer assistance. For example, if the child is left unattended in a grocery cart, stand by the child until the parent returns.

5. Avoid negative remarks or looks. These reactions are likely to increase the parent's anger and could make matters worse.

Prevent Child Abuse America is the leading organization working at the national, state and local levels to prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation's children. Headquartered in Chicago, Prevent Child Abuse America has 40 state chapters and is supported by private and corporate donors. The organization is widely known for its public awareness, education, prevention programs, advocacy and research.

For more information on child abuse prevention, you can call 1-800-CHILDREN.