MYTHS AND TRUTHS ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

- **Myth:** It always includes physical contact.  
  **Truth:** Includes non-physical as well, like intentional exposure to pornography.

- **Myth:** Abusers are usually strangers.  
  **Truth:** 90% of children know their abuser.

- **Myth:** Abuse is usually reported.  
  **Truth:** Fewer than 10% of abuse cases adults know of are officially reported.

- **Myth:** Survivors become abusers themselves.  
  **Truth:** Children can return to healthy living.

- **Myth:** Sexual abuse only happens to girls.  
  **Truth:** 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before age 18.

- **Myth:** Occurs in odd places like cars and dark alleys.  
  **Truth:** Occurs anywhere children are, like homes, schools, and churches.

- **Myth:** Sex trafficking doesn’t happen in my community.  
  **Truth:** Trafficking happens in every community, including yours.

- **Myth:** I can’t do anything to stop abuse.  
  **Truth:** Educated caregivers provide a defense that significantly reduces the likelihood of abuse.

*References available on request.*
**FACTORS THAT INCREASE RISK**
- Lack of information about healthy sexuality
- Unsupervised access to tech
- Feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and low self-esteem
- Special needs and disabilities
- Exposure to sexually explicit material and media
- Unsupervised time with others

**TOOLS THAT MINIMIZE RISK**
- Parents’ Intuition
- Showing affection on child’s terms
- Right to say, “No!”
- Ongoing and age appropriate conversations
- Appropriate names for body parts
- Safe touch
- Discussing secrets and surprises
- Monitoring digital interactions
- Being in the know about outings like sleepovers
- Clear and safe boundaries

**GROOMING PATTERNS**
- Form relationships
- Test boundaries
- Experiment with touch
- Intimidate
- Share inappropriate material
- Communicate secretly

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”
— Nelson Mandela

**BECOME A DEFENDER**
1. Invite us to give a presentation.
   - Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality
   - Sexual Abuse Prevention and Awareness
   - Recognizing and Responding to Sexual Abuse
   - 5 Key Strategies for Healing from Sexual Abuse
   - How Trauma Impacts the Brain
     (Email: mhartvigsen@youuniquefoundation.org)

   - Commit to defend innocence.
   - Act on your commitment.
   - Share your experience at defendinnocence.org.

3. Connect with us on social.