



Child abuse in public places

Whether you are at a doctor's office or in a shopping mall, you may witness parenting situations that make you uncomfortable. One of the main reasons for inappropriate parenting behavior is because a parent's expectations for their child is beyond the child's development level. Stress and lack of effective discipline methods are also possible causes.

You can play an active role in ending child abuse. The key is speaking up. When you see or suspect child abuse, don't look the other way. If an adult is losing patience with a child, intervene, but keep it positive. Intervening in the situation will help to de-escalate the situation for the child and the parent may realize that their behavior is not appropriate.

What you can do

1. Start a conversation with the adult to direct attention away from the child.
 - "She seems to be trying your patience."
 - "My child sometimes gets upset like that, too."
 - "Children can really wear you out sometimes. Is there anything I can do to help?"
 - "Kids at that age have so much energy and can really run fast. Sometimes it is hard to keep up with them."
 - "You seem frustrated. Is there anything I can do to help?"
 - "Sometimes babies cry and it seems like nothing calms them down. May I try...?"
 - "Sometimes the best thing to do is to make sure the child is safe and not respond to their behavior when they are having a temper tantrum."
 - "It looks like your child is having a bad day."
2. Divert the child's attention (if misbehaving) by talking to the child.
 - "I like your t-shirt. Did you get that on vacation?"
 - "That's a great baseball cap. Are you a Brewers fan?"
3. Look for an opportunity to praise the parent or child.
 - "She has the most beautiful eyes."
 - "That is a very nice shirt your little boy has on. Where did you get it?"
 - "Your child is very cute. How old is she?"
4. If the child is in danger, offer assistance.
 - If the child is left unattended in a grocery cart, stand near the child until the parent returns.

Avoid negative remarks or looks. Negative reactions are likely to increase a parent's stress or anger and could make matters worse for the child.