INSTITUT UNIVERSITAIRE JEUNES EN DIFFICULTÉ

SYNTHÈSE VISUELLE • Novembre 2026

Disclosure of Child Maltreatment in School Settings

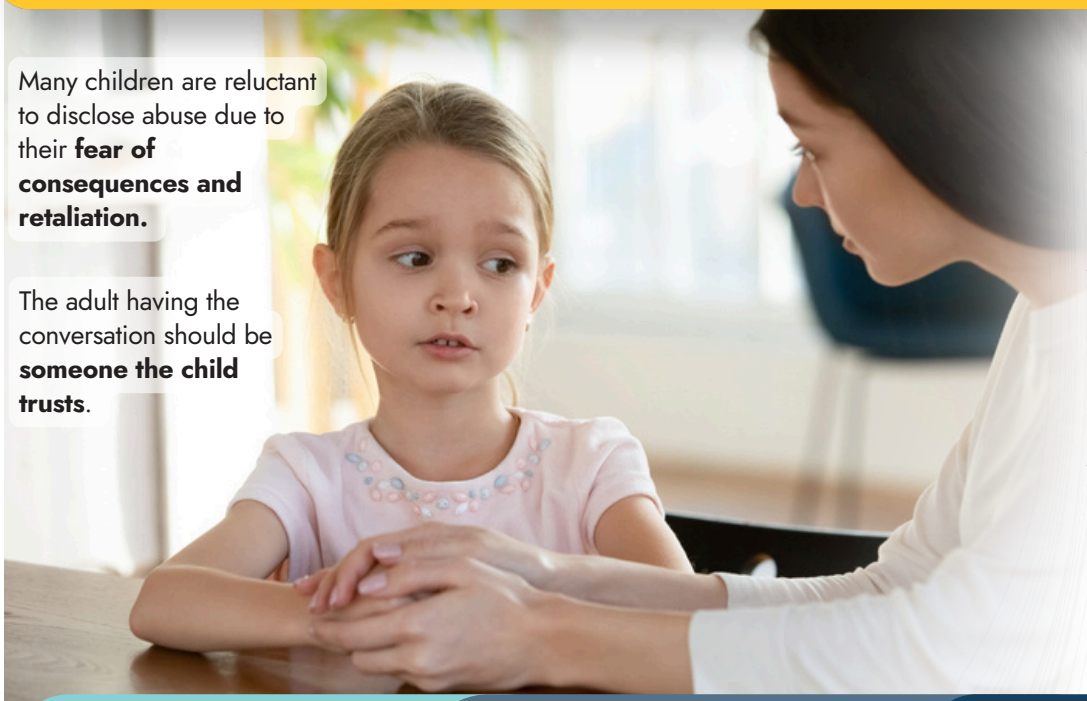
How Should We Respond?



Text
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Infographic
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THE CONVERSATION SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN PRIVATE

All the same, to avoid any subsequent feelings of betrayal, the child must not be led to believe that everything disclosed will necessarily be kept secret.



Many children are reluctant to disclose abuse due to their **fear of consequences and retaliation.**

The adult having the conversation should be **someone the child trusts**.

Examples of what to say:

« Flavie, tell me about what happened at home.

« It's good that you confided in me. You're safe at school. Remember that this isn't your fault.

« What you're going through isn't easy... You don't have to tell me everything right away... I'll do what I can to help you.

It's normal for adults to feel angry, powerless or saddened by a disclosure, but adults must always **regulate their own emotions and show compassion.**

The role of school staff or other adults is not to investigate the situation but, rather, to **give the child a voice** and to share this information with the authorities, if necessary.

Even if a child doesn't immediately disclose what he or she has experienced, the **fact that adults care about the child and share his or her concerns is a first step in building trust**, which may eventually allow the child to talk about what he or she is experiencing.

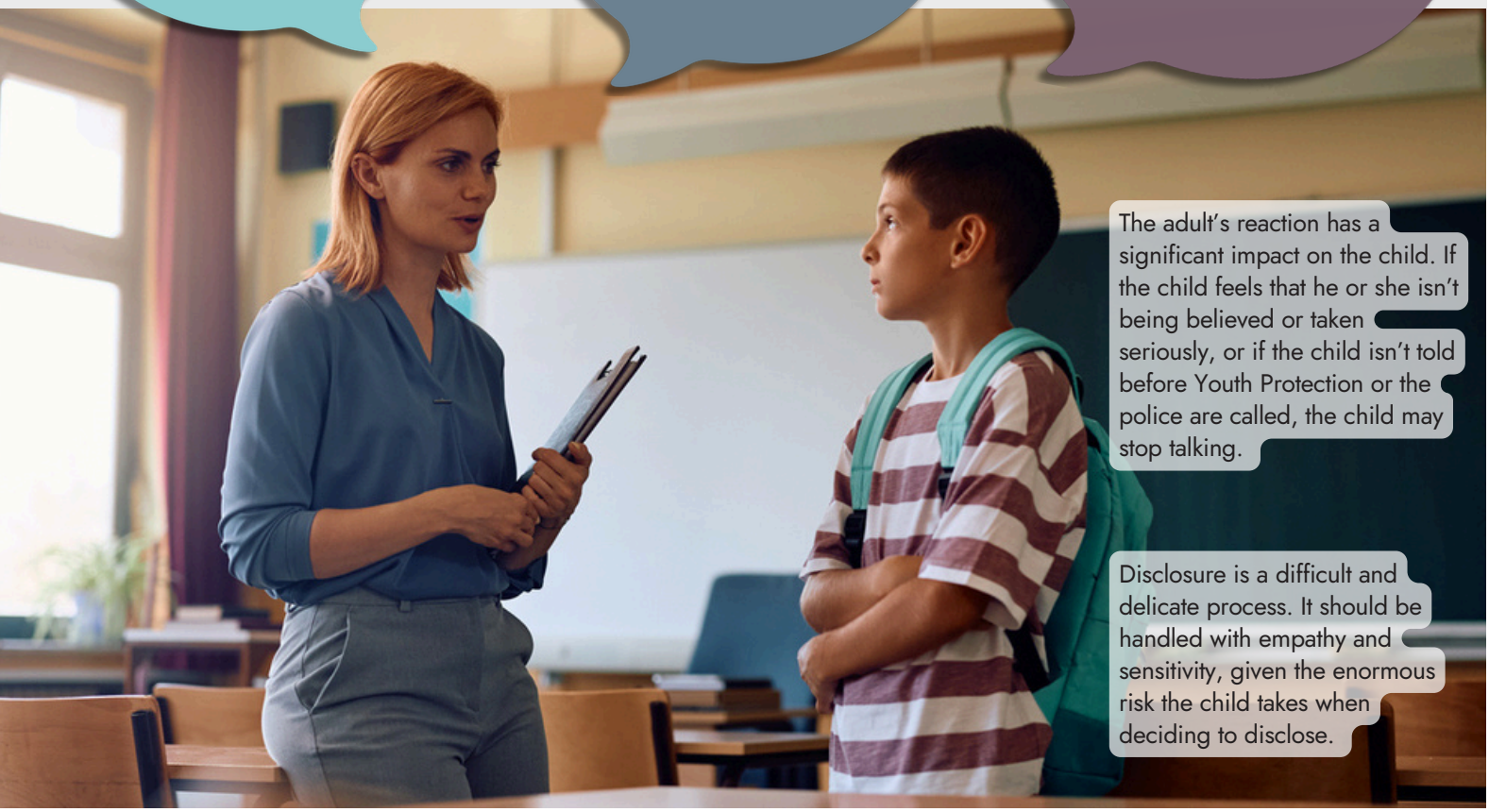
⚠ AVOID!

Leading questions!

For example: "Did someone at home hit you or touch you?"

Promising that "everything will be OK!" Because many of the steps that follow a report are no longer in the hands of school staff.

Openly expressing shock or negative judgment about the child's disclosure. This may give rise to feelings of shame and guilt and may slow down the child's disclosures.



The adult's reaction has a significant impact on the child. If the child feels that he or she isn't being believed or taken seriously, or if the child isn't told before Youth Protection or the police are called, the child may stop talking.

Disclosure is a difficult and delicate process. It should be handled with empathy and sensitivity, given the enormous risk the child takes when deciding to disclose.

IN SHORT...

Ask open-ended questions and avoid overly leading ones.

Use vocabulary appropriate to the child's age and development.

Respond with empathy and without judgment, while regulating your own emotions.

Be as honest as possible about the possibility of having to involve other people who will protect the child, if necessary.

This infographic is adapted from an article by Delphine Collin-Vézina (2020). Retrieved June 9, 2020, from: https://theconversation.com/retour-en-classe-comment-les-profs-peuvent-reagir-aux-cas-de-maltraitance-137652

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