Signs of Abuse and Neglect

A person who has been abused and/or neglected tends to behave differently from someone who has not been abused and/or neglected.

Learning to recognize the signs will help you prevent abuse and neglect.

**Signs of Abuse**

Unexplained bruises or injuries, such as small cuts or bruises, especially in unusual locations (on face, in vulnerable locations, etc.) or in unusual shapes (in the shape of a ring or a belt, or a human hand, etc.)

Welts, bite marks, or other markings. Blood or other body fluids in underwear. .

**Acting Differently:** Acting differently, seeing things that are not typical like nervous tics and actions (such as forms of stimming that were not present before)

**New Fears:**

Fear of a specific *person or place*, especially repeated attempts not go to a location or place like laundry area, garage, storage area at day or work site. (note that this can be one reason autistic people get lost and leave an area without warning more often than non-autistic people because the area is a trigger)

**Sudden Changes**:

Attempting to alter behavior to conform with what they believe someone else wants. In a nonspeaking person, this can include a sudden unexplained change in behavior around someone that is working with or around them.

Repeatedly double-checking to see where people are.

Avoidance of tasks they used to enjoy

Sudden, dramatic onset of depression or anxiety when there is no history of anxiety or depression

Night time changes; New or dramatically increased nightmares, panic attacks, wetting the bed, self-injurious compulsive behavior, or other actions that indicate distress that are out of the ordinary

Avoidance- The person starts avoiding you and other people who normally support them, and doesn’t explain why. This could be a sign that someone else is trying to isolate them from their support network especially true with sexual abuse.

The person starts saying bad things about themselves that they never said before. They may be repeating what others have said to them, ex, you are stupid.

**Trauma Responses:**

Sudden bad health, weight gain, or weight loss that is not well explained. Although this may be caused by something other than abuse, it can also be a response to stress.

Any sign of post-traumatic stress , such as reliving the same painful memory over and over or repeating phrases that occurred during the abuse.

**More signs:**

Someone is trying to convince you that the person supported is a liar and cannot be believed when they talk about their experiences, even though this does not match your experiences.

A relative or close friend or support staff start acting indifferent to one’s accomplishments, successes, or actions or dismiss anything good that they do.

**Emotional abuse:** Being called cruel names, belittling them, or convincing them that their experiences aren’t real (this is also called “gaslighting”)

Be alert to changes around indirect triggers like smells, sounds, certain types of clothing,