

Reviews for "Mommy, What's Abuse?"

Barry Carver said: "Un-abused does not mean un-affected. The problem with so many social injustices is, those who suffer most have little voice (never mind power) to do anything about it.

Here CJ has taken the aftershocks of such horrors and turned them back on the source - by substituting affection for affliction. Unable to fight this demon head on ... she informs the next generation (and us along the way) of a much healthier way to think, instead of react, to such stimuli.

It is a model that can be used against so many perils. Exposure, education and kindness are the most effective weapons against hate, bigotry and abuse. And here, CJ arms a little girl to take up the battle and move us one more step toward the people we wish we'd been all along. Brava!"

Marc said: "When an Eskimo teaches his child how to make a canoe, he teaches him two things: how to make a canoe, and how to teach a child to make a canoe.

CJ's take on the issue of domestic abuse is so clear, so well defined, it's almost tactile. It will make the child not only understand what her friend is going through but also enable her to console and advise that friend -- but that's not all. She makes the problem understandable AND she offers the solution -- a two for one. All this she does with gentle poetry and sweet images that make the reading a delectable experience.

All parents of young children should keep this story handy for when they have to explain this unsavory fact of life to their tender young ones. Thank you C.J. Heck for a lovely story and a salutary lesson."

sports shorts said: "No better way! That has got to be the best way a child learns about anything. The conversations, coupled with teaching and learning are perfect. Plan on sharing it with my students this week. Thank you!"

Mommy, What's Abuse?

by CJ Heck

When Hannah Hobbes got home from school, she looked for her Mommy. Mommy was putting clean dishes away in the kitchen cupboard, so Hannah plopped herself into one of the four chairs at the round oak table. "Hi Mommy. I'm home."

Mommy stopped what she was doing. She looked over at her pretty six-year-old daughter. Hannah was usually a bright and bubbly little girl -- almost *always* wearing a cheerful smile which brought the cutest two dimples right along with it. Today, Mommy could see right away that there was something wrong. "Hello Hannah-Banana. Everything okay today at school?"

With all that had happened today, Hannah couldn't help it, she started to cry. Her jumbled words all came out at once. "I was talking to Janie at school today. Mommy, Janie was so sad. It made me feel sad, too. She's staying with her grandma and grampa because her mommy is in the hospital. Oh, Mommy! Janie said policemen came and took her daddy to jail! When the policemen took her to her grandma's house, she heard them whispering the word 'abuse'."

Hannah stopped talking and took a deep breath. She was feeling just awful and the tears wouldn't stop making little rivers down her cheeks. To make things even worse, her nose was crying, too, and she swiped at it with her sleeve.

Mommy sat down in the chair next to Hannah at the table and handed Hannah a tissue for her nose. Then slowly, Mommy patted her lap. Hannah saw and climbed up on mommy's lap. She really needed one of those special Mommy-hugs right now.

Feeling safe inside her hug, Hannah asked, "Mommy, what's abuse?"

Mommy gave her a gentle squeeze and laid her cheek on the soft brown hair. Slowly she answered Hannah. "Well, honey, abuse is a very bad thing. That's when someone who is bigger or stronger or older hurts someone else. It can be with words that hurt, or with actions that hurt. Sometimes it's someone they love, and that makes it hurt even more."

Hannah might have felt safe, but she still felt confused. She just didn't understand, and so the tears kept coming. "Janie's very upset. She told me her mommy and daddy might get a divorce. Mommy, I've been over there lots of times. Her daddy and mommy act happy. Don't they love each other any more?"

Mommy thought for a moment. This was a grown-up situation and she wished it had not touched Hannah's life in any way, but it had. She had to find a kind way to explain this to Hannah. "Hannah, people can love each other and still not be good for each other. Do you understand?"

Hannah sniffled and shook her head in a great big 'NO'. "This is too *hard*. I don't understand! Janie said they get angry and shout a lot. She said sometimes her daddy hurts her mommy, but then he's *always* sorry. Then

things are okay again. Janie says they're happy and she doesn't want them to get a divorce."

"I know -- I'm sure Janie doesn't want them to get a divorce. Please listen to me, honey. Hurting someone you love is *always* wrong. Janie has lived that way all of her life. To Janie, that is what's normal. She doesn't have anything else to compare it with."

Mommy could see that Hannah was hurting inside. She just *had* to find some way to help her understand. Then Mommy spotted Hannah's dog, Jeffie, all curled up in a ball and fast asleep on the rag rug over by the kitchen sink. She thought and thought and at last, Mommy had an idea.

"Hannah, let's talk about Jeffie. We've had Jeffie for a *long* time -- even longer than we've had you. You really love that old dog, don't you?"

Hannah sniffled, but she couldn't help but smile, too. Jeffie was a great dog! He was her best friend in the whole world. She told him all of her secrets -- and she knew *his* secrets, too. (He didn't like broccoli or spinach either)

Mommy interrupted her thoughts by asking, "Hannah, how would you feel if you came home from school one day and Jeffie didn't run up to you and lick your face, wagging his tail and his whole body along with it? What if Jeffie bared his teeth and growled at you?"

Hannah stopped crying just long enough to giggle a little at the silliness. "Mommy, Jeffie loves me. He would NEVER do that." Hannah tried to sniff her nose tears back inside and Mommy handed her a clean tissue from the green box on the table.

Mommy went on to ask, "But what if he did show his teeth and growl at you? What do you think you would you do?"

Hannah's big blue eyes looked up at the ceiling. Why is Mommy asking such silly things about Jeffie? "Mommy, If he did THAT, I would tell him to stop!"

Mommy was thinking about Hannah's answer. Now she knew what to ask her next. Then she said, "And what if that didn't work? What if Jeffie growled some more, maybe even louder? What if he even tried to bite you?"

Hannah couldn't believe what she was hearing. "Then I would yell at him! I would yell at him and say 'JEFFIE, NO! STOP!'"

Then Mommy asked Hannah, "What if that only made him even madder and he DID bite you?"

Hannah answered, "Then I would want to hurt him for biting me, but I know you're not supposed to do that. We would probably have to put him in a cage so he couldn't bite any more. Or maybe, we could take him to a place where people teach dogs that biting is **bad**."

Mommy smiled. This was working. "Excellent answer, Hannah. How long do you think that would take?"

Hannah thought for a minute. "Well, until he stopped biting, I guess."

Then Mommy went on to ask, "What if he decided *never* to stop biting? What if Jeffie hurt you very badly? What if he hurt you so bad that you had to go to the hospital?"

"I don't know, Mommy!" Hannah yelled. "I don't want to think about that! He WOULD stop biting. He WOULD. I know he would!" The thought that Jeffie would ever hurt her *that* bad brought fresh tears to Hannah's eyes and she mopped at them with her already damp tissue.

Mommy gave her another hug and then said, "Yes, Hannah. He could *learn* to stop biting, but he would have to be *willing* to learn how very wrong it is to hurt someone you love."

Suddenly Hannah's eyes opened very wide. She understood what Mommy was trying to say. It was all making sense to her now. What happened with Janie's daddy was like Mommy's story about Jeffie. "Mommy? When Janie's daddy hurt her mommy, the jail is just like Jeffie's cage, right?"

"That's right, Hannah," answered Mommy.

"And Mommy, Janie's daddy really could go somewhere and learn how not to do that any more, right?"

"Right again, Hannah."

Hannah nodded her head in understanding. "Well, I hope he decides to learn. Then he won't have to be in jail and he could go home. Then they wouldn't have to get a divorce. I don't want Janie to live like that. Janie's my friend and I want her to always be happy."

Mommy smiled and wiped the last of Hannah's tears off with her apron.

"I love you, little Hannah-Banana," she said with another Mommy-hug. "You're a very smart little girl."

"I love you, too, Mommy," and with a smile, Hannah wiped her nose with her sleeve and hopped down to go wake up Jeffie.