

that one of your own family members is abusing your child under your roof. And yet, for many families, that is the horrific and shocking truth.

I know. I work with many of them.

There is a great deal to say on this subject, but at the very least, I wanted to share some thoughts on how to protect our children from this horror as we enter into Yom Tov and many family members return home. It is not my goal to cause panic, but if only one child will be saved as a result of this letter, it will have been more than worthwhile to discuss the unspeakable. It is always better to prevent the problem than to treat it.

Although familial molestation can occur anytime, typically it happens at night when the house is quiet. After everyone has settled in and all your children and extended family are in their rooms, choose an unexpected time at night and just check that your children are where they are supposed to be. It is heart-breaking to hear children sobbing in my office, saying, "I wish someone would have walked in just once ... just one time ... and it would have stopped." And the sad truth is that they are probably correct.

Pay close attention to the following flags:

Do any of your children spend more time in their rooms when their siblings come home or when other family members come over?

Do you notice any unusual behavior changes in your child when family comes over — e.g., she is usually talkative but becomes withdrawn?

Do any of your children avoid certain

family members, preferring to stay in the kitchen when everyone is in the living room or vice versa?

It is also important to trust your own feelings and parental instincts. If you suspect something is not right or a little off, look into it. Your intuition is telling you something.

The above flags do not necessarily mean that there is a problem, but they are excellent opportunities to talk to your children. You can say "I noticed there seems to be some tension between you and Chaim" or "you seem to want to spend more time in your room when your cousin Moshe comes over."

The safer it is to speak with you, the more comfortable your child will feel if they are desperately looking for an opening to talk.

May Hashem protect all of His children and grant us the wisdom and ability to do our part to keep them safe.

*A Concerned Therapist*

## Red Flags at Home

[Playing it Safe / Issue 450]

As I read your excellent article "Playing it Safe," I was left with the impression that although almost all abuse occurs at the hands of someone the child trusts, that person is usually not a member of the child's family. I wanted to weigh in on the insidious aspect of molestation at home by siblings and family members.

It is unquestionably easier to accept that an outsider is an abuser rather than believe

### Mishpacha

thanks all of our readers for their letters and comments. Due to printing deadlines, most letters can only be published two weeks after they are received. The editor reserves the right to edit and shorten letters. All letters will be considered for publication unless otherwise indicated. We urge our readers to keep their letters as brief and to the point as possible. Letters

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