

## The Pink and Blue Child Awareness Campaign

privacy but along with rights there are responsibilities.”

For example it's right that other people should respect your body but you're also responsible for not interfering with your friend's body. You have the right to be believed and trusted but you are responsible for telling the truth. Discussions about these issues promote emotional maturity.

### BE CONCERNED IF ...

Children don't always have the vocabulary to explain what has happened to them so keep an eye on them and be aware of what's happening when they're playing.

“Kids don't always show they're having a rough time. Sometimes trauma reactions take weeks or months to appear,” De Jager says. But children do often open up with post-traumatic play. They may tie up a doll or enact a car accident, for example.

“Kids have their own way of telling you something traumatic has happened,” De Jager says. “It's important to meet them at an age-appropriate level.”

A little girl who had been abused became preoccupied with TygerBear's toy kitchen. Her therapist couldn't tear her away and she tried to cut the plastic food with play cutlery. When the therapist started asking questions she discovered the child hadn't eaten in two days.

When the therapist gave her a sandwich she used the toy cutlery to cut it into pieces, which she gave to her brother and sister waiting outside with their mom before she would eat. “She first had to act out her need in play,” De Jager explains.

Abused children's behaviour provides important clues about the circumstances that result in them ending up in a criminal's clutches. One of the southern Cape criminal Johannes

Everyone is excited when a baby is born. Sometimes pink or blue flags are hoisted to announce the arrival of a girl or boy. But the joy sometimes ends and the baby becomes a burden, says Manette de Jager of the TygerBear Social Work Unit for traumatised children and families.

**This is what TygerBear is all about – making children aware of their rights and supporting children in need.**

**A glitzy fashion show in aid of the TygerBear Care Centre takes place on 7 November and promises to be a social**

highlight. The event will feature model and TV personality Minki Visser and several top fashion designers including, for the second year running, Bellville's Charlene Sauerman, a favourite among the city's fashionistas. The dress Sauerman designed for Minki to wear to last year's J&B Met will also be on display.

It's an evening not to be missed and YOU is proud to be the media partner for this excellent cause. For info about tickets for the event call 021-938-5231 or e-mail [info@ats-africa.co.za](mailto:info@ats-africa.co.za).

Mowers' young victims drew painfully neat pictures and sought approval for them. It was this character trait – the desire to please everyone – her abuser exploited.

An observant teacher once noticed a young girl insisted on sitting on the floor while her classmates sat in chairs. Further investigation revealed her mother hit her with a chair.

“Beware of raising the alarm unnecessarily when it's only a suspicion that something is wrong,” Dhansay says. “And when you ask questions reassure the child you're not blaming anyone and that you're just concerned and willing to listen. Overreacting will make the child feel guilty and withdraw.”

Alarm bells should ring when small children play inappropriate sexual games that make other children uncomfortable. Listen when young kids talk to one another. If a four-year-old talks about condoms all the time it could be a cause for concern.

■ **This article forms part of the writer's project for the Rosalynn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism.** □

It's a  
mistake  
to think a  
child is  
too young  
to be  
trauma-  
tised



POSED PICTURE: GALLOIMAGES/GETTYIMAGES.COM