*Unlike grief that unfolds in stages, a caregiver’s reaction to an allegation of child abuse or assault is chaotic and a different challenge. You may feel one or more of these common reactions. You may feel them for lengthy or short periods. Your feelings may shift in any order.*

1

**DENIAL**  
Parents often experience denial because it is overwhelming too accept that abuse happened, that after-effects will continue to be felt, and that the suspect could commit such an act.

2

**ANGER**  
At times you may feel angry with yourself for somehow not being able to stop the abuse or protect the child. You may even feel angry with your child, perhaps for not telling you sooner.

But remember to be honest about your feelings. Know that your child is still a child. Talk with a therapist or close friends or family.

A child is burdened with more trauma if they fear you, think you are angry at them, or worse: think that you don’t love them anymore.

3

**HELPLESSNESS**  
You may not know what to expect during the investigation, or what your child needs next. You may feel things are out of your control.

You might be afraid your child may be taken away from you. A law enforcement of Department of Child Services caseworker will be able to address these concerns now and in the future.

4

**GUILT & SELF-BLAME**  
You may feel what happened to your child is your fault, or there was something you could have or should have done to prevent the abuse from happening. You may feel like you should have sensed what was happening.

But you are not responsible. The convicted perpetrator committed the crime and is responsible, not you or your child.

5

**HURT & BETRAYAL**  
It is normal to feel hurt by the loss of your child’s innocence.

You may have lost a spouse, friend, or relative, too, if they were the perpetrator.

It is natural to feel betrayed because they did betray you by causing serious injury to your child and family.

6

**SEXUAL INADEQUACY**  
If your spouse or partner is the perpetrator, you may feel they turned their attention to the child because of an inadequate sexual relationship.

Research is clear that sexual relations with an adult partner do not affect a person’s likelihood to abuse or not to abuse children.

7

**FEAR OF VIOLENCE**  
You may fear that the offender will try to harm you, your child, or your family again. If you have concerns, please talk to the police or your Victim Advocate. They can help you take steps to protect yourself and your child.

A person posing for the camera

Description automatically generated

8

**LOSS OF PRIVACY**  
You may be concerned everyone will hear about what happened to your child. But child abuse investigations are performed in a confidential manner.

Court records that are public obscure the name of the child and other identifying information. Information is only shared among team members.

Your child’s name will not appear online or in the newspaper. You should be careful when talking to others to prevent complicating or confusing matters.

9

**CONFUSION**  
Perhaps the biggest emotion is wondering why your child didn’t tell you, or tell you sooner. It is common for children not to tell their parents about the abuse.

The abuser may have threatened the child with harm, or by saying they’ll be in trouble. The abuser may tell the child their parents will be mad or angry with them.

They may claim they’ll be “taken away” if they tell anyone. Abusers often claim a parent or loved pet will be harmed or killed.

Even young children feel protective toward their parents and refrain from doing or saying anything that will upset or anger the parent. Reassure your child they were brave for telling someone and it was an important thing to do.

“I have to be brave for my child because I know I *am* brave.”