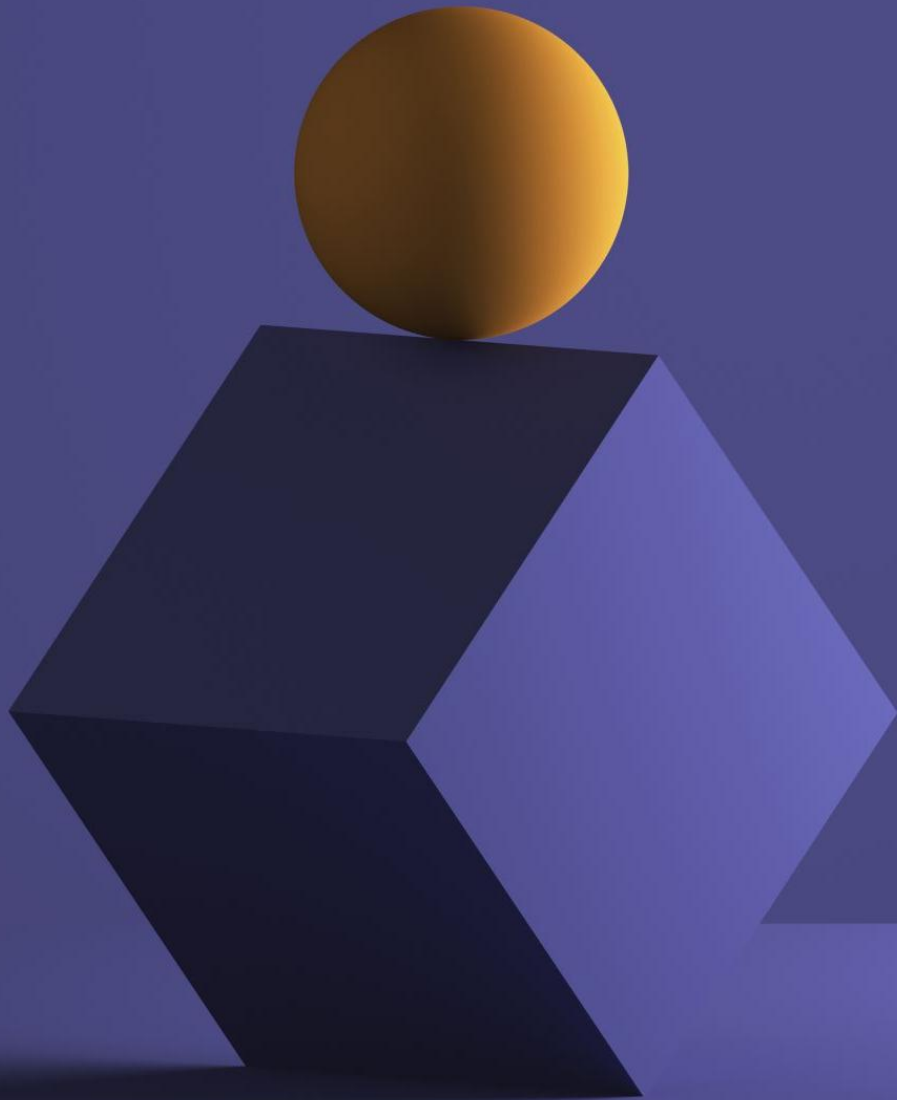




Ret. Det. C.T. Moulton

**SILENT WITNESSES
– THE IMPACT OF
DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE ON
CHILDREN**

Children and DV

NCD.V.ORG

1 in 15 children are
exposed to DV each
year

90% of these children
are eyewitnesses to
violence

Children and DV

Children who witness DV are 6 times more likely to commit suicide

50% more likely to be addicted to drugs and alcohol

74% more likely to commit a violent crime.

Homicide Victims

1

Seeing the
violent act –
most direct
exposure

2

Hearing the
violent act

3

Seeing
injuries from
violent act

4

Being told
about the
violent act

Most common types of exposure to DV

Children Learn From Violence

Abuse is normal and acceptable

Short term reinforcement behavior: victim is compliant, abuser gets their way

Power and control influence loved ones

It is dangerous to try to stop the violence

Identify with the abuser and lose respect for the victim

Factors Impacting Children May Vary

Seriousness and frequency of violence or threat

Potential danger to child

The relationship with Child and victim/abuser

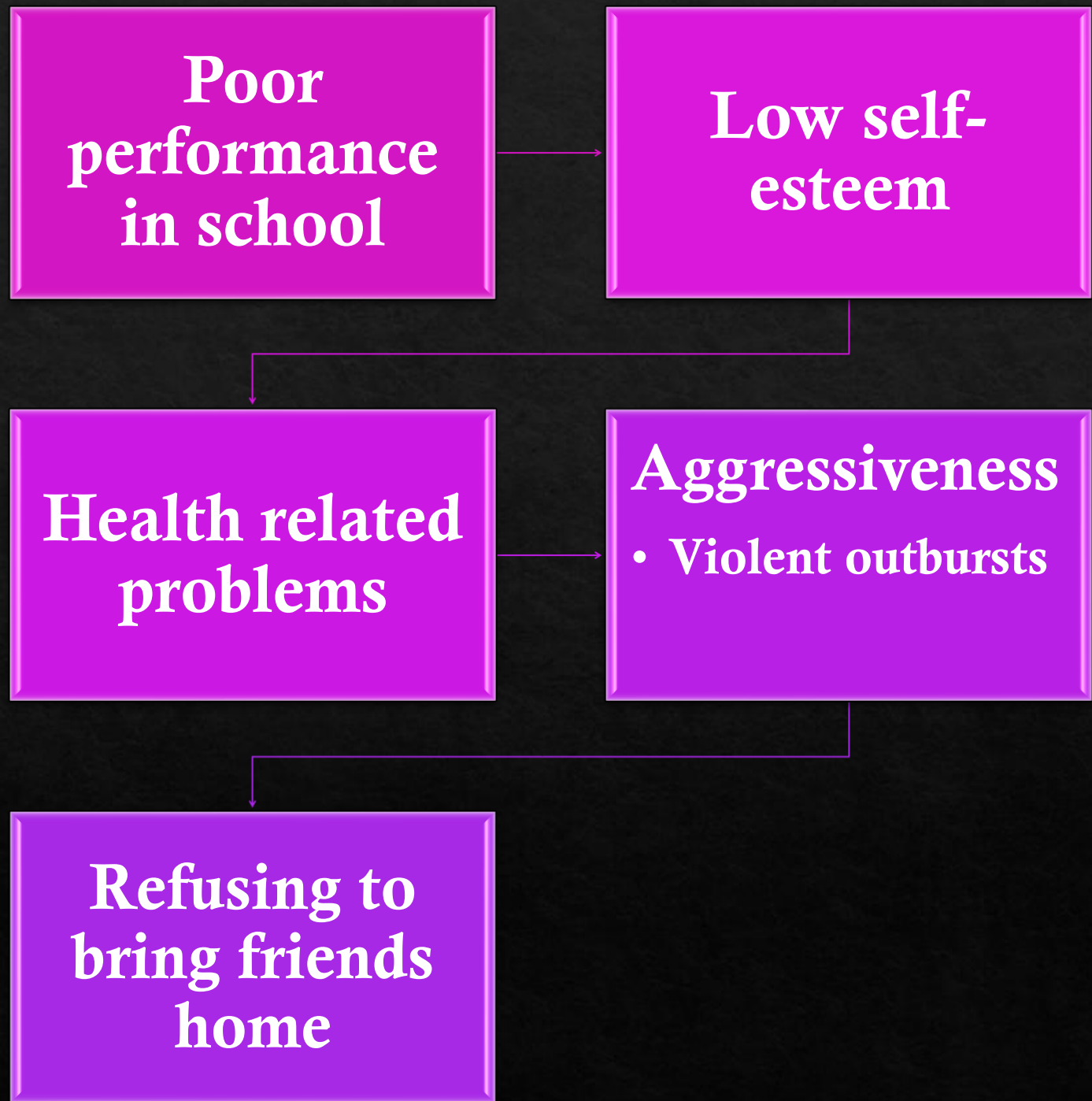
Age of the child

Other life stressors

Positive relationships and activities in child's life

How the child usually copes with problems

Direct Effects of Exposure



Direct Effects of Exposure

Withdrawal/depression

- **Unwilling to play with others**

Bed-wetting

Distrust of relationships

Eating disorders

Sleep disorders

- **Insomnia / nightmares**

Anxiety/fear/dependency

Effects of
Exposure

Children
under 4 YOA

Excessive irritability

Regressed behavior

Fear of being alone

Emotional distress

Common Effects of Exposure School age Children

Social difficulties

Physical health problems

Compromised learning potential

Difficulty with emotional regulation

Diminished capacity for empathy

Inability to verbalize thoughts and feelings

Symptoms of PTSD

Common Effects of Exposure Adolescents

**Higher rates of
sexual risk taking**

Dating violence

Aggression

**Antisocial
behavior**

PTSD

**Substance
experimentation**

Anxiety/depression

01

**EXPLAIN
ORDERS OF
PROTECTION –
COURT
PROCEDURES**

02

**HELP VICTIM
FEEL SAFE**

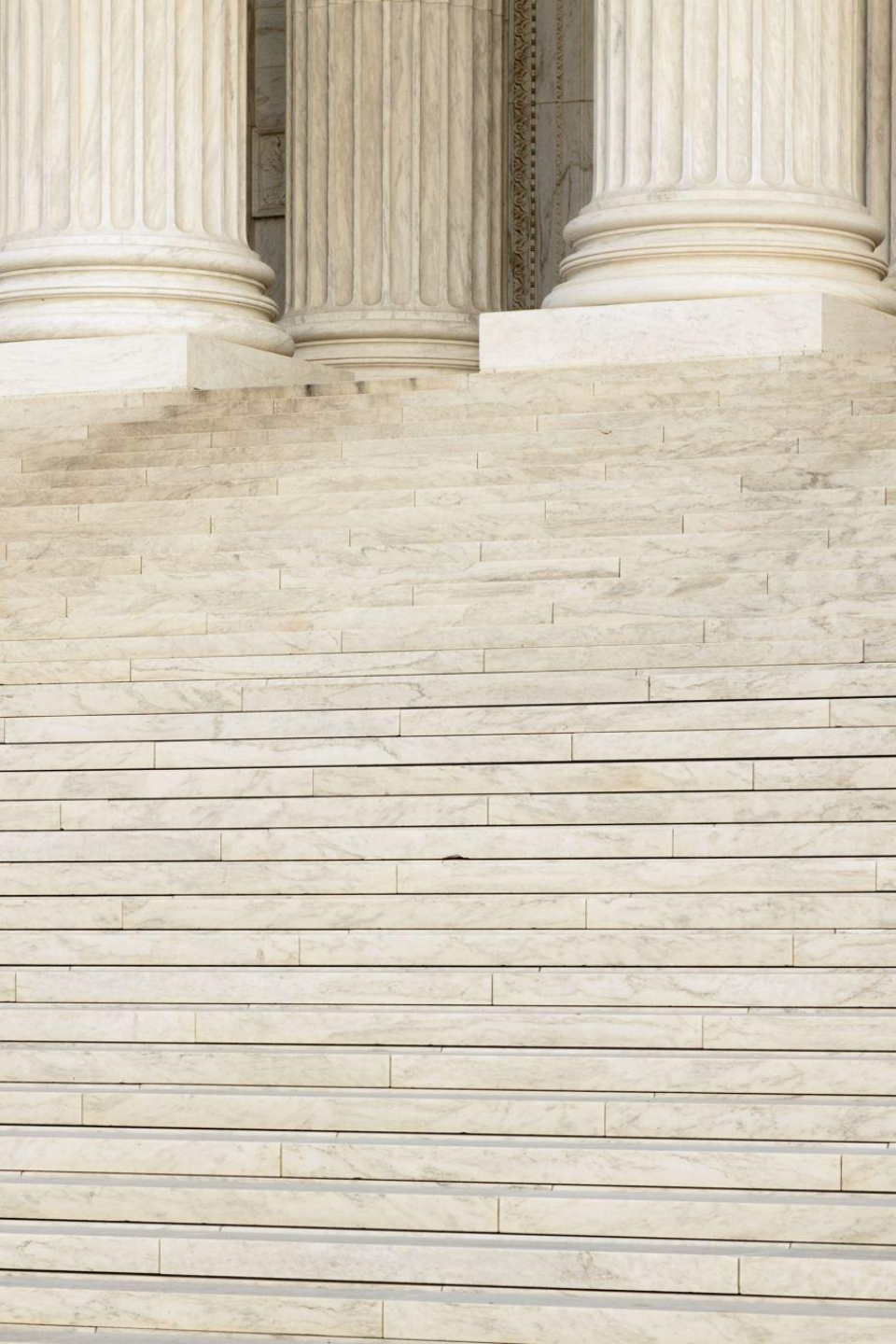
03

**PROVIDE
INFORMATION
ABOUT
SERVICES OR
SHELTERS**

LEO Response Best Practice

LEO
Response
Best
Practice

Discuss	effects of family violence on Children
Assess	needs of Children
Assist	with creating a safety plan
Follow up	after initial contact



Law Enforcement Response - Best Practice

Required training and directives

Be aware of Child's presence

Realization of continued care for the child

Recognizing how children respond to trauma

Law
Enforcement
Response -
Best Practice

**As a first responder – unique position
to intervene on child's behalf**

Limit Chaos

Re-establish Order

Restore sense of safety

Benefits to Improving Police Response

Victims more likely to seek help when their children are in danger or witnessed an event

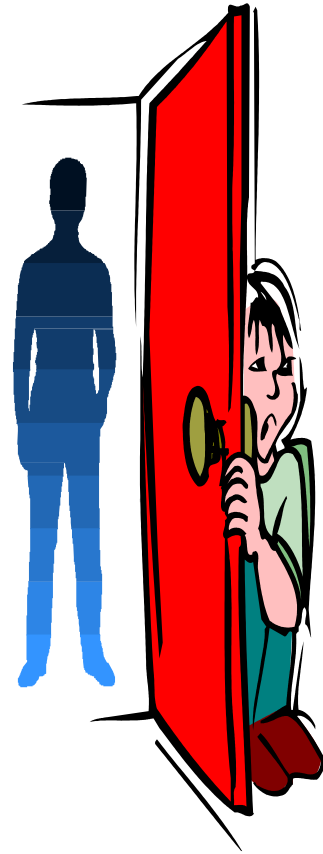
LEO interaction with child at scene sends powerful message

LEO interaction with child could improve quantity and quality of information gathered enhancing evidence for prosecution



"It shouldn't
hurt to be
a child."

Interviewing Children About Domestic Violence





MINIMAL FACTS INTERVIEWS

Goals of the minimal fact Interview

Establish	Collect	Assess
contact with child	preliminary case information	safety (including access to alleged offender)

Goals of the Minimal Fact Interview

Assess risk of imminent danger

Assess need for immediate medical care

Are there other victims or witnesses?

Set the stage for next steps

Considerations

Is a first responder interview necessary or can a forensic interview be conducted instead?

What information can be collected from a trusted adult (parent, peers)? Collect only minimal information from child.

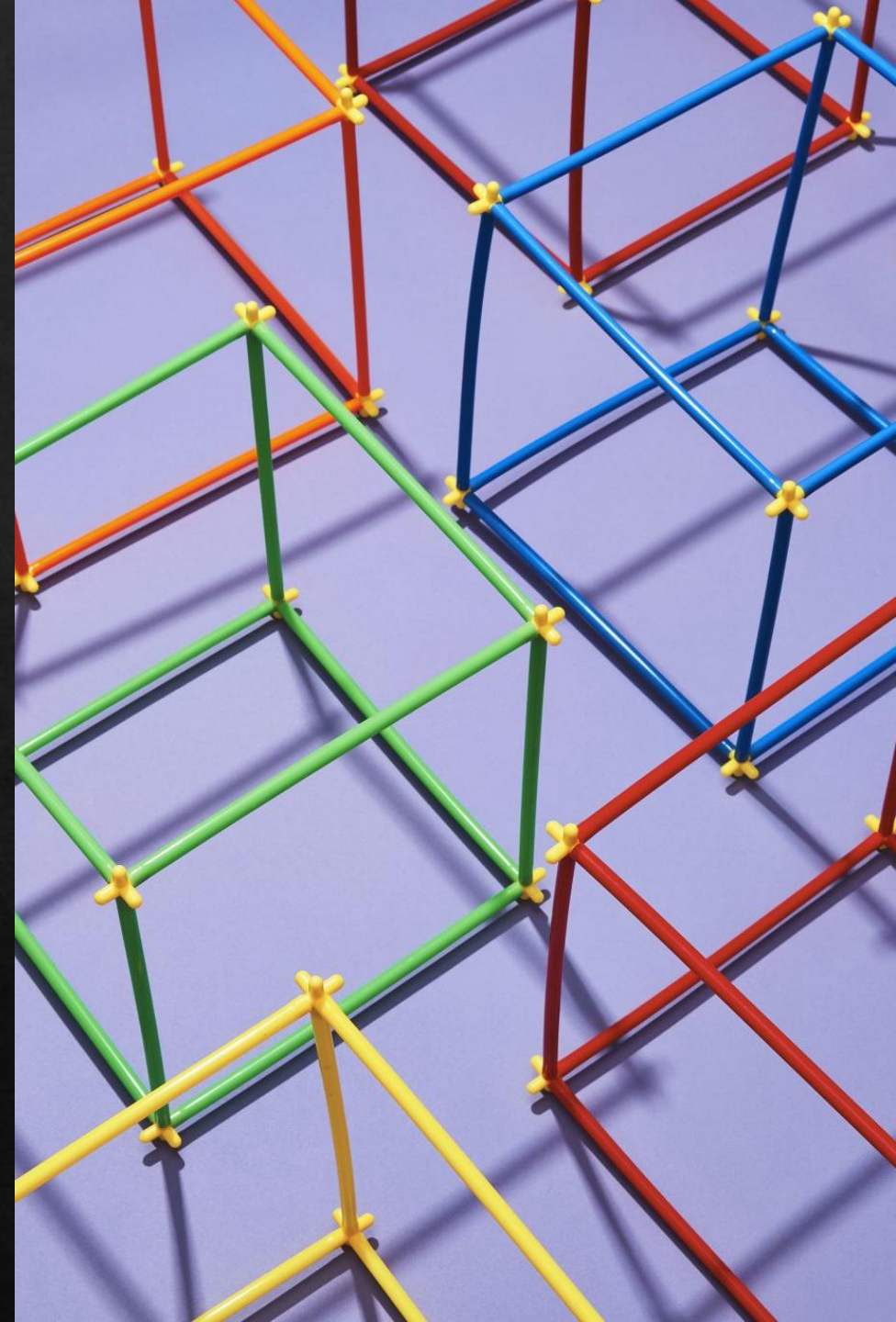
What is the emotional status of child?

How do I phrase my questions so that they are developmentally appropriate, non-suggestive, and non-leading?

How forthcoming is the child without probing questions?

CONSIDERATIONS

- ◆ Talk to children/youth alone in a neutral space.
- ◆ Timing
- ◆ Show interest in what the child is saying.
- ◆ Use open-ended questions.
- ◆ No value judgments.
- ◆ Let the child know he/she is not in any trouble with you



Elements of Minimal Facts Interview

What happened?

Where did it happen? Are there multiple jurisdictions?

**When did it happen? (depending on age)
Last time?**

**Who is / are the alleged perpetrator(s)
(with identifying info)? Access?**

Are there other victims/witnesses?

Immediate medical needs

Format

Introduction

Rapport

Transition to topic of concern

Limited questioning

Information and preparation (includes safety assessment)



Introduction

Introduce yourself
and your role

*“I talk to
kids / young people
about things that
have happened to
them.”*

*“I talk with kids
about things that
have happened.”*

*“I talk to kids to find
out how they are
doing / if things are
okay / if they feel
safe.”*

*“My job is to make
sure kids are safe.”*

*“My job is to listen
to what kids have to
say.”*

Rapport

Talk about neutral topics that interest child.

Show interest in what child has to say.

◆ ***“Tell me about yourself.”***

◆ ***“Tell me what you like to do.”***



Transition

Briefly acknowledge and summarize conversation and move on to topic of concern.

- ◆ *“Thank you for telling me about..... . Now I would like to talk about”*
- ◆ *“You told me about , , and Now I would like for you to tell me about what happened.”*
- ◆ *“Now let’s talk about”*

Limited, Open-Ended Questioning

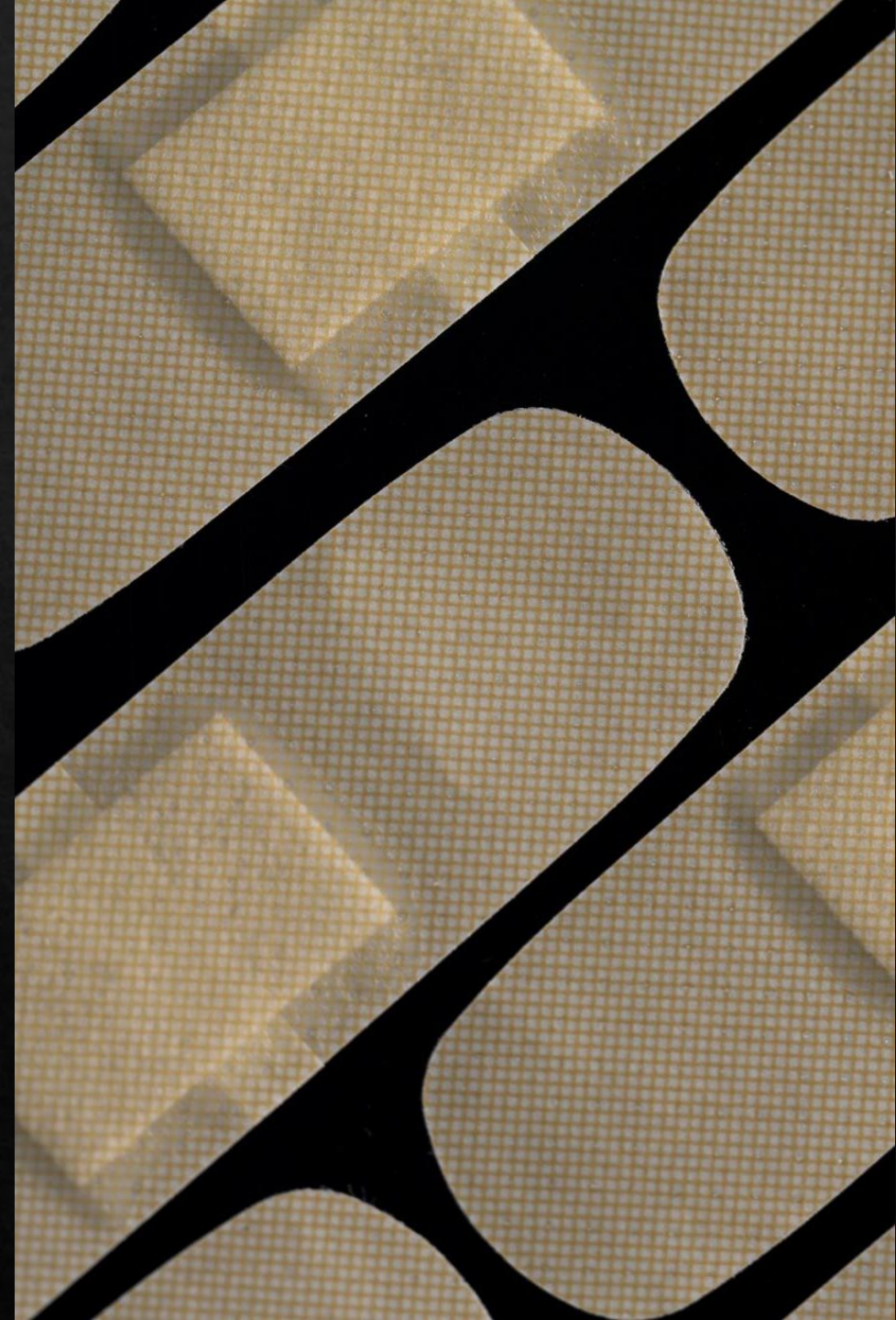
“You told me aboutTell me more.”

“I notice (behavior)..... .Tell me where you learned that.”

“I understand you told.....that something happened. Tell me about what happened.”

Limited Questioning

- ◆ *It is okay to be direct when something is evident or externally verifiable. (“I see you have a bruise on your cheek.” “Tell me about the bruise.”*
- ◆ *“I understand you went to the doctor. Tell me about going to the doctor.”*
- ◆ *“Where were you when that happened?”*
- ◆ *“Did it happen outside of Arlington ?”*



Limited Questioning

“When did that happen?” “When was the last time that happened?”

“Where is (alleged offender) now?” “Will be there when you get home ?”

“Have you ever heard about or seen do this to someone else?”

*“Who else knows about this / what happened?”
“Who else have you talked to.” “What did say?”*

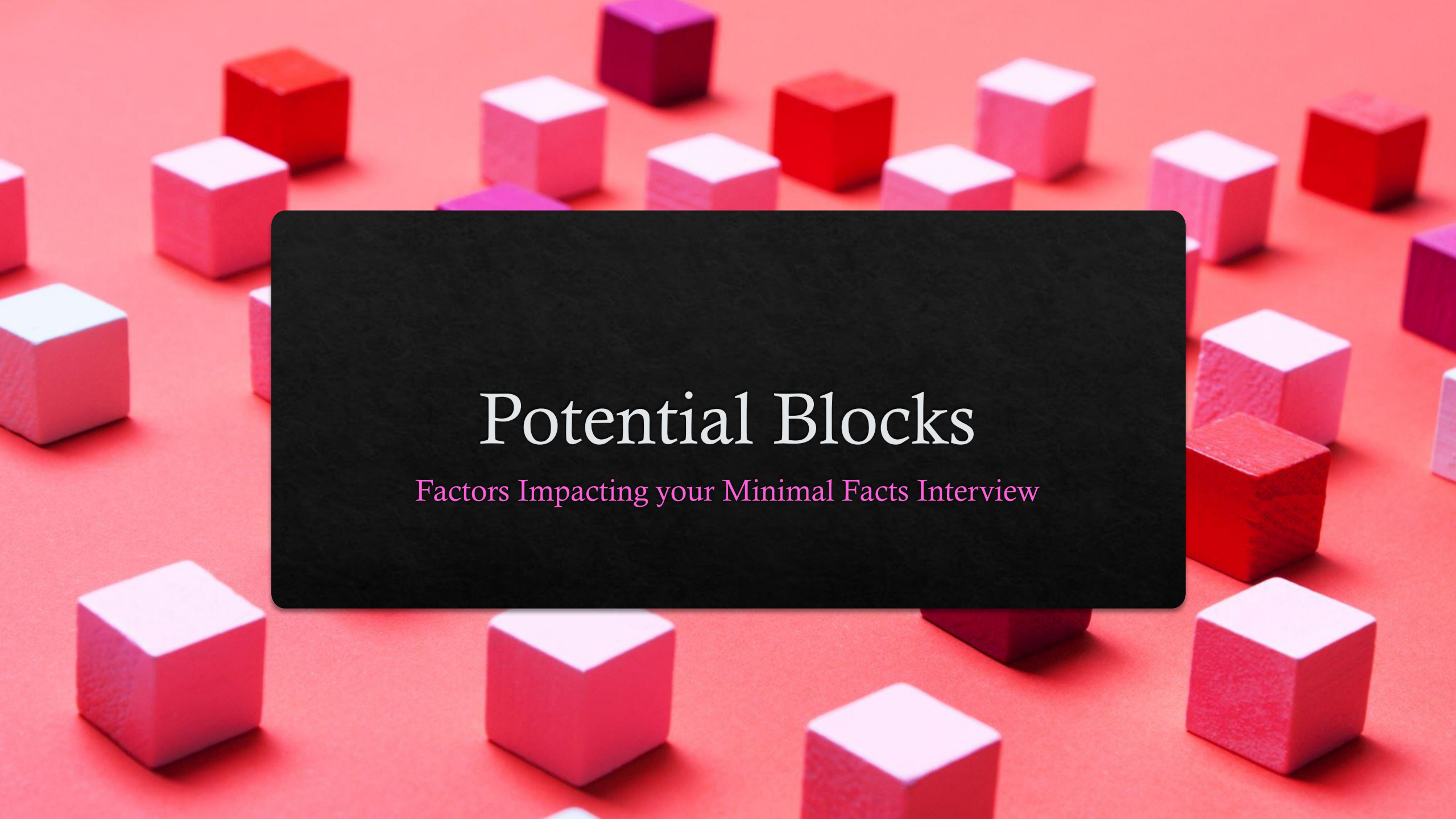
“Does something hurt on your body?”

Concluding your interview

End on a respectful note, safety planning, address concerns, talk about next steps

“Who are the people that keep you safe?”

“There is a place where kids / young people go to talk about these things. Let me tell you about it.”

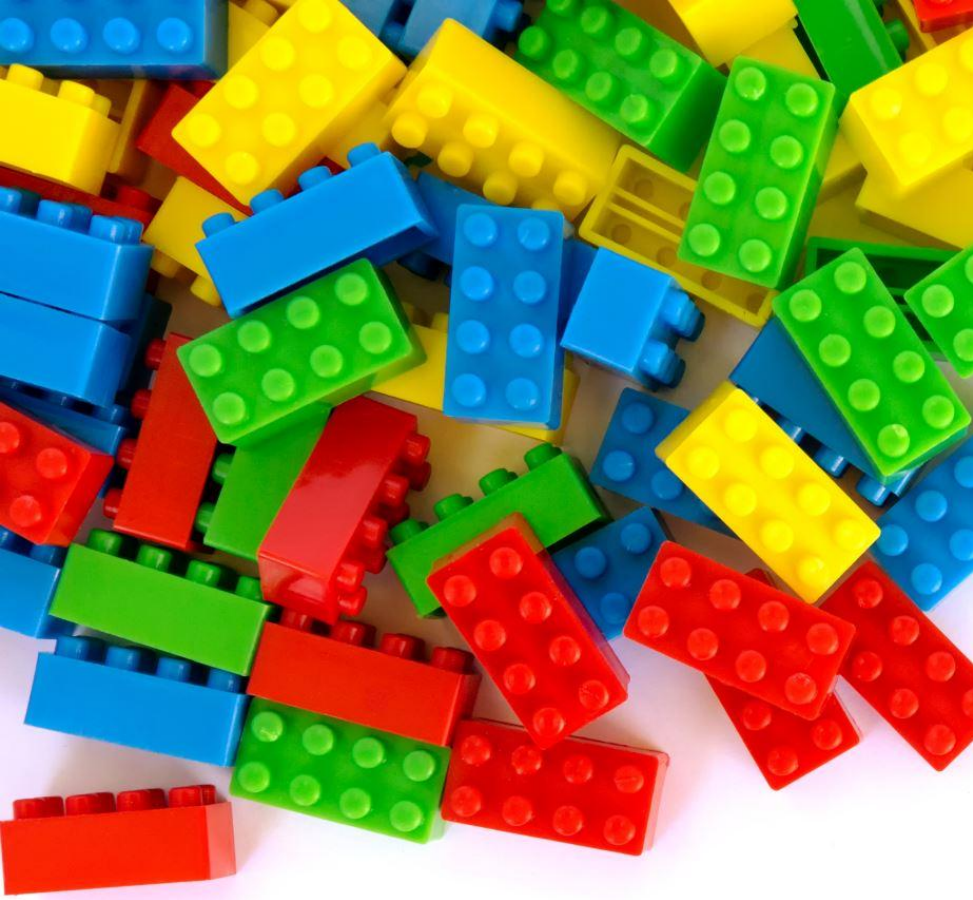


Potential Blocks

Factors Impacting your Minimal Facts Interview

Institutional/Motivational/Linguistic Blocks





Institutional Blocks

- ◆ Barriers that are generated by the systemic or institutional response to allegations of abuse
 - ◆ Environmental factors
 - ◆ Systemic failures
 - ◆ Inappropriate systemic response
 - ◆ Appearance of authority
 - ◆ Distrust of authority
 - ◆ Inappropriate setting

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three cubes on a reflective surface. The middle cube is illuminated from within, glowing with a bright orange light, while the cubes on either side are dimmer and greyish. The background is a dark gradient.

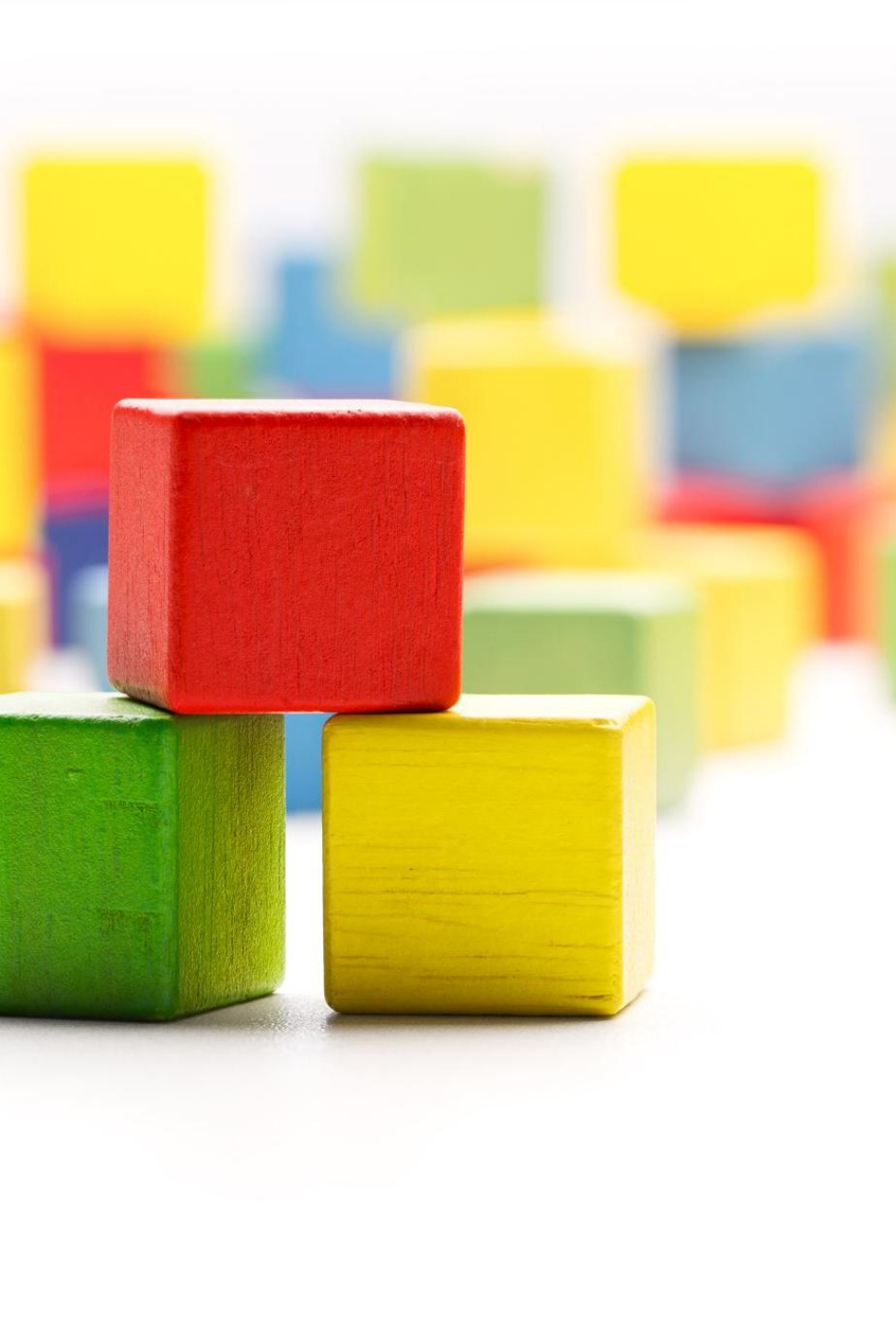
Motivational Blocks

- ◆ Motivational blocks are **factors, traits, or incidents** that may inhibit or impact a **child's willingness** to disclose
 - ◆ Poor interviewer skills
 - ◆ Severity of abuse
 - ◆ Family privacy
 - ◆ Culture/religion
 - ◆ Relationship with the perpetrator



Motivational Blocks

- ◇ Protect perpetrator
- ◇ Protect family and self
- ◇ Other forms of maltreatment and violence in the home
- ◇ Attempts to please the interviewer
- ◇ Response to previous disclosures
- ◇ Inducements
- ◇ Bribes/rewards
- ◇ Fear
- ◇ Threats
- ◇ Lack of support
- ◇ Guilt and shame



Developmental/Linguistic Blocks

- ◆ Developmental/Linguistic blocks are **traits or characteristics** that affect the **child's ability to communicate or disclose**
 - ◆ Developmentally inappropriate questioning
 - ◆ Disabilities
 - ◆ Lack of understanding that abuse has occurred



Developmental/Linguistic Blocks

Language facilitation

Attention span

Mental health issues

Lack of language skills to describe abuse

Interviewer assumptions of what child is saying

When a Parent Goes to Jail

Jail is like time-out for adults

When one person hurts another, they have to be separated to keep people safe

When adults make serious mistakes they have to be in jail, children are still learning and have more chances

If child called 911 – let child know it isn't their fault – validate them for making a safe choice

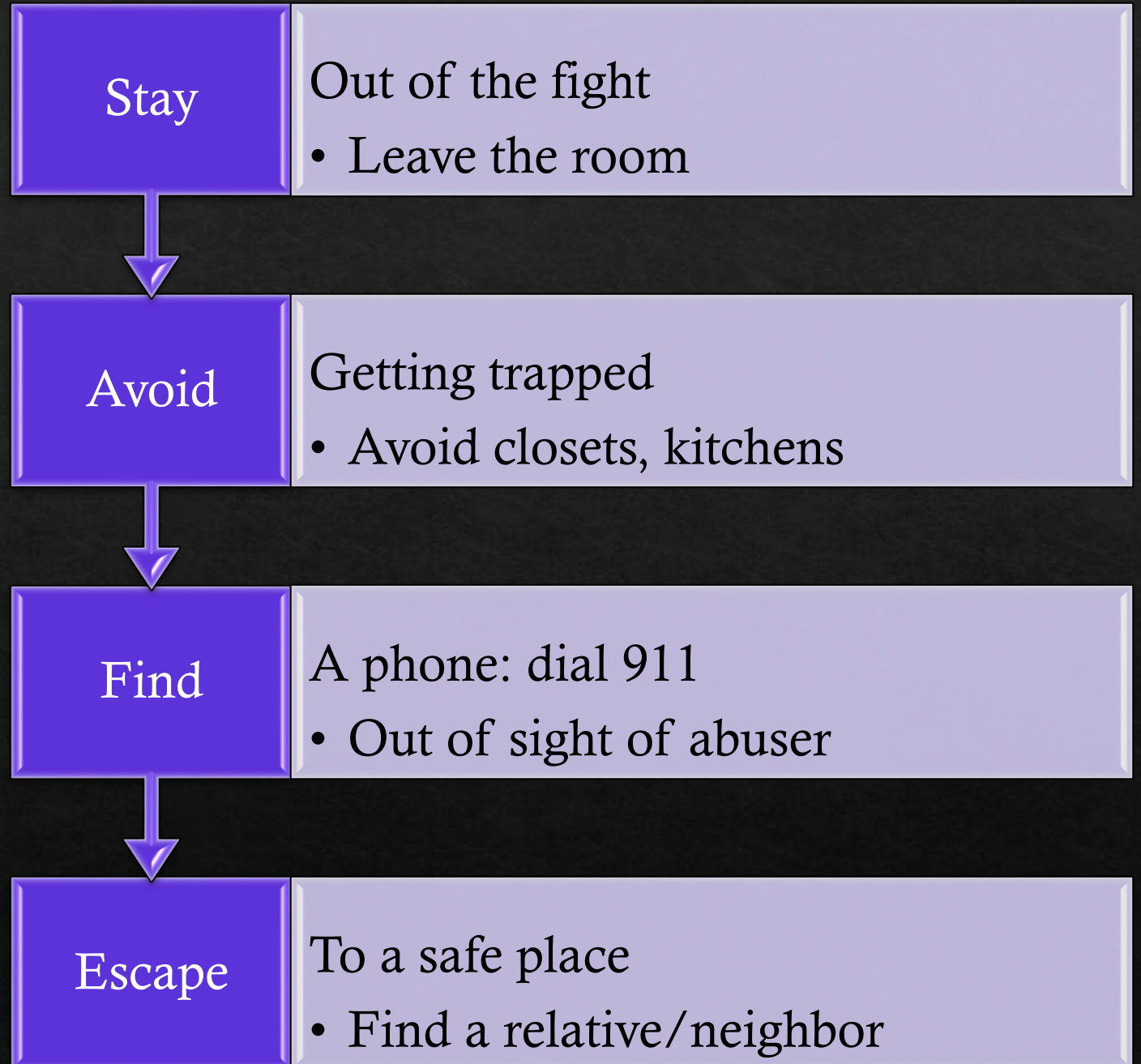
Keep explanations simple

Notify Child Protective Services (CPS) if a child has been assaulted, abused, or neglected by a parent or caregiver.

Notify CPS if child witnesses or is involved and abused by a domestic violence situation.

Remember... Mandated Reporting

4 SAFE Messages for Kids Who Witness Violence



QUESTIONS



References

- ◆ Kendall-Tackett, K.A. (2000). Physiological correlates of child abuse: Chronic hyper arousal in PTSD, depression, and irritable bowel syndrome. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 24(6), 799-801.
- ◆ Hamby, S, Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Ormrod, R. (2010). The overlap of witnessing partner violence with child maltreatment and other victimizations in a nationally representative survey of youth. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 34, 734-741.
- ◆ <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Fact%20sheet%20on%20Children%20Exposed%20to%20IPV%202013.pdf>
- ◆ Yuille J.C. (2000, May). The step-wise interview: Guidelines for interviewing children.
- ◆ 2017 National Children's Advocacy Center. Fact Sheet.
- ◆ A Typology of Domestic Violence