## Case Study #1

Child abuse can be difficult to spot in real life. Wounds that look like physical abuse may just be signs of a very active child who is perhaps a little clumsy at times. Children playing doctor may just be exhibiting signs of normal imitation play as opposed to signs of sexual abuse. Here are two studies that may make it easier to determine if child abuse is occuring.

Billy

**The Situation**

Billy is in the third grade and his sole parent is his mother, Kelly. She is 27 and Billy is 8. When Billy comes to school, he’s extremely chatty with his teacher and the other adults at the school. He’s extremely compliant and goes out of his way to please them. Billy often comes to school late, his hair is rarely washed, and his teeth are always dirty. When asked why he’s late, he states that his mother didn’t wake him up for school. When Billy is observed with his mother, he tends to keep his eyes trained on the floor.

Billy also seems to have a difficult time seeing the board, but he’s never had an eye assessment to determine whether he needs glasses. His mother comes to parent-teacher meetings, but when she does, she is often distracted by her own thoughts and feelings. When confronted with Billy’s behavior and physical state, she states that the school is making too big a deal of Billy’s supposed issues. She says that he’s a normal boy who refuses to take a bath or brush his teeth. She states that he’s sometimes late because she works late and is busy trying to make money to support her family. She does not appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

**The Assessment**

Billy is exhibiting strong signs of neglect at home. The lack of medical care, dirty hair and teeth, and consistently tardy record are all indicators that his mother is not providing the care that he needs. This may seem confusing at first glance because her attitude toward the situation could be considered reasonable to some parties. After all, if she’s not making money then she can’t provide for her son, and she certainly wouldn’t be the only parent who had a difficult time getting her child to take a bath or brush their teeth. However, her indifference toward the teacher’s concerns is consistent with the apathy that neglectful parents exhibit with their children. Billy could reasonably be considered as a case of child abuse and would benefit from having a caseworker to intervene, so Kelly can provide a more appropriate standard of care.