General Definition
- Failure of parents/caregivers to provide minimally adequate care and attention to the basic needs of the child
- Tempered by the notion of community standards of care
- Consistent omission of care is considered neglectful in all communities.

General Definition
- Fostering delinquency and lack of adequate supervision are generally viewed as more serious forms of child neglect.
- Failing to bathe a child regularly or change a child’s clothing are viewed as less serious forms of neglect.

Legal Definition
- Inadequate physical care
- Absence of or inadequate medical care
- Lack of prenatal care
- Cruel or abusive treatment

Legal Definition
- Improper supervision
- Exploitation of the child’s earning capacity
- Unlawfully keeping the child out of school
- Exposing the child to criminal or immoral influence

Incidence of Abuse & Neglect
- Emotional: 49.9%
- Physical: 22.3%
- Sexual: 13.6%
- Other: 5.1%
Socio-Economic Status (SES)
- Negative correlation between income and neglect (low income = higher probability of neglect)
- Low income
- Low educational and employment levels
- Poor housing and living conditions
- Larger, multi-problem families
- Minority families
- Families requiring public assistance

Selective Neglect
- Any combination of medical, nutritional, physical, or emotional neglect of a child in comparison to other children in the family or to children in equivalent circumstances
- In some cultures, girls and later borns receive a lesser standard of care.

Parental Investment
- Crucial to the child’s survival
- Total maternal rejection will lead to infant death within hours.
- Rejection makes the child more vulnerable to dying from disease, accidents, or violence.

Parental Investment
- One or both of the parents must invest a considerable amount of energy in the child to keep it safe.
- All parents will have a certain amount of choice in how they channel their resources.

Maternal Deprivation
- Of all the forms of neglect, maternal deprivation has the most devastating effects on children’s emotional well-being.
- Early separation from the mother results in widespread behavioral and psychological consequences that may endure for years…or life.

Features of Maternal Deprivation
- First – Inconsolable crying
- Second – Withdrawal
- Flat Affect
- Constant, relentless rocking
- Developmental delays
- Unable to initiate or join in social interactions
Profound Neglect
- Attachment disordered
- Incapable of loving
- Incapable of empathy
- Physiological changes in the brain that appear to be irreversible for the most part

Non-Organic Failure to Thrive
- Primary cause is emotional neglect
- Below the 5th percentile in height and weight after having been in the normal range
- Delay in psychomotor development
- Apathetic – flat affect
- Anorexic – not interested in eating

Psychosocial Dwarfism (Developmental Dwarfism)
- Symptoms of non-organic failure to thrive
- Behavior problems
- Bizarre eating patterns
- Hyperactivity
- Sleep walking
- Bed wetting and soiling

Developmental Effects of Neglect (Infancy)
- Back of head flattened
- Poor motor skills
- Delay in language development
- Symptoms of malnutrition

Developmental Effects of Neglect (Childhood)
- Poor performance in school
- Poor social skills
- Inability to delay gratification
- Hoarding

Developmental Effects of Neglect (Adolescence)
- Leave home at an early age
- Drop out of school
- Associate with those in similar circumstances
- Start the cycle again
Parental Factors

- Lack of knowledge
  - Unskilled at parenting
  - Mentally disabled
- Lack of judgment
  - May be due to immaturity
- Lack of motivation
  - May be due to depression
  - May be due to substance abuse
  - May reflect their own background

In a Word

- If we were to describe neglect in a single word, it would be “indifference.”