

THERAPY SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

What is Abuse-Related Trauma?

- Trauma can develop from many kinds of overwhelming experiences, such as childhood sexual abuse
- Sexual abuse, especially in childhood, can affect the way a person thinks, feels, behaves and relates to others
- People who have experienced sexual abuse learn to cope in unique ways
Sometimes problems can arise when these ways of coping persist
- These problems are a result of the abuse rather than of something that is wrong with the person
- Many people do not realize that past sexual abuse can affect their lives as adults. Some of the long term effects may include:
 - Feeling depressed
 - Having feelings of shame or worthlessness
 - Experiencing flashbacks, nightmares or intrusive memories
 - Difficulty controlling feelings of anger and/or fear
 - Having problems trusting or being close to others
 - Having difficulty feeling calm or relaxed
 - Feeling emotionally numb or shut down
 - Having long term problems with sleeping
 - Using alcohol or other drugs to avoid feeling
 - Harming oneself
 - Developing eating disorders
 - Trying too hard to please others at the expense of one's own needs
 - Feeling withdrawn, isolated and different from others
 - Experiencing repeated episodes of sexual abuse or assault
 - Other effects

Our Philosophy About Therapy

The therapy we offer happens in a relationship of collaboration. Clients are not seen as people being treated for an illness, but as partners in their healing. Clients help set the goals and the pace of their therapy.

What Can I Expect in Therapy?

As you begin to learn about the effects that childhood sexual abuse has had on your life, you may learn new skills in maintaining supportive relationships, developing self care practices, learning to deal with strong emotions, building self-esteem and developing positive coping skills.

For some people, it is not necessary to share the details of the abuse. For others, it may be important to slowly look at the past abuse in the safety of the therapeutic relationship. Often this may involve mourning the losses you have experienced. Therapy can be

difficult work, as previously hidden or buried feelings often emerge. It is important to communicate any concern you may have with your therapist so she can help.

Many people have found that therapy has helped them to understand their past with new meaning and allowed them to have optimism and hope about their future.

How Long is Therapy?

Therapy for abuse related trauma can be a long-term commitment. Some people find it helpful to take breaks. This can provide an opportunity to practice what has been learned.

Therapy can help improve the quality of your life. Be patient and gentle with yourself. Healing takes time.

Our Therapy Services Are:

- For women and men survivors (over age 16) of sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse
- Free and Confidential
- Provided by professional therapists who are experienced and trained in trauma recovery

Accessing our Services

Reaching out for help, even making that first phone call, can be difficult. For more information or to make an appointment, please call our therapy line at 368-8055. A voice message will ask you to leave your name and contact number. One of our therapists will return your call and gather some basic information from you. From there, you will either be contacted directly by a therapist to schedule your first appointment or placed on a wait list until a spot becomes open. Our waiting room is private and your therapist will greet you at your scheduled appointment time.

What to Expect During Your First Sessions

During your first few sessions with your therapist, you and she will discuss the following:

- Your hopes about therapy and your reasons for coming
- Information about the process of therapy and the role of the therapist
- Confidentiality and its limits
- Information about the Centre and its policies
- Your rights as a client
- Any questions you may have