



Childhood Sexual Abuse

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is any kind of sexual behavior that an adult, or someone who has power over a child, directs toward that child. Both girls and boys can be victims of child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse is against the law

Most of the time when a child is abused, she or he knows the person who is abusing them. That person could be a family member, a neighbour, a family friend or any other person in the child's life.

Many children never tell anyone when they are being abused. Here are a few reasons why children might not tell:

- They are afraid
- They blame themselves
- They worry about getting someone in trouble
- They have been bribed or threatened to keep quiet
- They are afraid that by telling they will break up their family

How Do Children Survive?

When children feel they cannot tell anyone about the abuse that is happening to them, they will find other ways of dealing with such a serious, hurtful situation.

Some children try to forget about the abuse or they stop feeling anything. Sometimes children blame themselves for what happened. Others pretend they are not in their body when they are being abused.

There are many other ways that children learn to cope. Each child will find her or his own way to survive abuse.

Sexual abuse is never the child's fault.

How Can Childhood Sexual Abuse Affect Adults?

Children who survive sexual abuse may continue to blame themselves as they grow older. Childhood sexual abuse can affect a person for a long time. Adults who were abused during childhood may experience:

- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Flashbacks or nightmares
- Health or sexual problems

They may:

- Feel bad about themselves
- Find it hard to trust people
- Find it hard to say no to people
- Have a difficult time with relationships
- Feel guilt or shame

Sometimes they:

- Hurt themselves
- Use drugs or alcohol
- Eat too much or too little

Each person finds his or her own way to deal with childhood sexual abuse. As they move on with their lives, Survivors may look to find other, more helpful ways to deal with their past.

Sexual Abuse is Never the Child's Fault

The person who abused the child is always responsible for the abuse. It does not matter what the child did or did not do. It is not the child's fault.

Child sexual abuse is always wrong.

Child sexual abuse is a crime.