

## **MALE SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE**

The sexual abuse of boys and male youth is a reality. Some studies indicate that as many as one in five boys have experienced some form of sexual abuse. The long term consequences for male survivors of childhood sexual abuse may include:

- Anger
- Depression
- Guilt and self blame
- Eating disorders
- Addictions
- Suicide
- Fear of intimacy
- Nightmares and flashbacks
- Lost memories
- Low self esteem
- Trouble with the law
- Anger management issues
- Self injury
- Difficulty forming intimate relationships

Survivors of abuse remain silent about what happened to them for many reasons: they may be afraid of their abuser, who has threatened them to secrecy; they may be afraid that no one will believe them; they may be concerned that their relationships with family and friends will be adversely affected; they feel embarrassed about what has happened, and blame themselves. Male survivors of abuse may face additional issues:

- Society expects men to not show or express their feelings of vulnerability. Being a victim may be seen as a sign of weakness. They may think that they should just forget about it and move on.
- Society expects men to be powerful and in control. Men are expected to fight back, so there is an expectation that they should be able to stop or prevent assault.
- Some men worry that their sexual orientation will be questioned. Most perpetrators are male. If a heterosexual boy is assaulted by a man, this does not make him homosexual.
- It is a sexual myth that boys and men always want sex, and cannot be raped. If the perpetrator was a woman, some males think they will be laughed at if they claim that they were assaulted.
- If a boy or youth had an erection or ejaculates, it is still sexual assault. Bodies react to stimulation, and this does not mean that the act was consensual.

Things for a male survivor of sexual abuse to know:

- You are not alone
- You are not to blame
- Healing and recovery is possible
- Your thoughts and feelings are normal reactions to sexual trauma
- It may be helpful to see a counsellor to talk about what happened. You can call the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre.