

Understanding Child Sexual Abuse

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Agenda

1. What is Sexual Abuse
2. Parenting Issues
3. Effects of Sexual Abuse
4. Discussion

The HURT that troubled children create is never greater than the hurt they feel.

Source: What Do You Do With A Child Like This? Tobin, L. 1998

What is Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the use of a child or adolescent for the sexual gratification of another person.

What is Child Sexual Abuse

- Forced or tricked sexual contact by an adult or older child with a child.
 - Usually in a position of power or authority over the child.
 - Physical force generally not used.
 - Weapon is trust.

What is Child Sexual Abuse

- Various types of behaviors
 - Open mouth kissing
 - Fondling (touching)
 - Manipulation of the genitals, anus, or vagina with fingers lips or object
 - May include sexual intercourse
 - Posing for or observing pornography

What is Child Sexual Abuse

- Does not require physical touch
 - Emotional incest
 - Vicarious sibling molest
 - Ritualistic and/or satanic abuse

Is Child Sexual Abuse Common?

- Prior to 18 years old...
 - 1 in 4 girls
 - 1 in 6 boys
- Foster Care and Adoption social workers believe sexually abused children are much higher than the general population, perhaps as high as 75%. (Source: National Adoption Information Clearinghouse)

Sexual Abuse

- 75% of molestation acts, the child molester sexually fondles the child, touches the child's chest and buttocks, fondles the genitals, and sometimes asks the child to his genitals. (Lanning, 1994).

Source: Abel and Harlow Stop Child Molestation Study and 1999 U.S. Census

Who Molests Children?

	Admitted Child Molesters	All Americans
Married or formerly married	77%	73%
Some College	46%	49%
High School Graduate	30%	32%
Working	65%	64%
Religious	93%	93%

Source: Abel and Harlow Stop Child Molestation Study and 1999 U.S. Census

What Causes Someone to Molest?

- **Most fit into one of the following categories:**

- They are children or teenagers who are sexually curious or experimenting.
- Medical or Mental problems needing treatment.
- Opportunists who lack feelings for others and who have a antisocial personality characteristics.
- Pedophilic interests – ongoing sexual interest in children.

Source: Abel and Harlow Stop Child Molestation Study and 1999 U.S. Census

Why Do Molesters Choose Boys?

- Consider this fact: some molesters of boys, when tested, have a higher sexual interest in girls. They say the molest boys because:

- More accessible, boys aren't protected as much by parents.
- Parents rarely suspect their sons are being molested.
- Boys try to be tough; they'll keep the secret longer.
- Boys are afraid of being called "gay" because of having a sexual experience with a male.
- Boys take more responsibility for sexual acts.
- Boys offer molesters the biggest advantage: They can molest hundreds of boys without getting caught.

Source: Abel and Harlow Stop Child Molestation Study and 1999 U.S. Census

SIBLING SEXUAL ABUSE

Why Might This Type of Abuse Be Unique

- ***Interacts with family dynamics***
- ***Victim and perpetrator will have ongoing relationship***
- ***There will be issues around family separation and family reunification***

SIBLING SEXUAL ABUSE

- often have experienced past trauma or maltreatment
- have not always been sexually abused themselves
- are very likely to have been physically abused
- may have experienced neglect and isolation
- may have access to pornography
- may be isolated and not relate well with peers
- average age of 15 ? (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998)

Behavior of Sibling Offenders

- Committed more acts of abuse over a longer period of time
- More likely to have penetrated their victims
- More likely to have 2 or more victims
- Less likely to have had court-ordered treatment
- O'Brien (1991) speculated that opportunity and the nature of sibling and family dynamics may have contributed to these findings

What We Know About Sibling Victims

- Average age of victim is 7 – 9 (De Jong, 1988; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998)
- Sexual abuse is likely to have been more severe and/or frequent (O'Brien, 1991)
- Consequences especially severe and traumatizing if force or aggression involved

What We Know About The Families

- *Provide poor supervision and little structure*
- *Tend to have had a history of domestic violence and physical abuse*
- *Secrets - Discourage open communication*

Problematic Families

- Deny the allegations of abuse
- Ignore or minimize the abuse
- Acknowledge the abuse, but blame and/or punish the victim
- Acknowledge the abuse, but fail to protect the victim and stop the abuse
- When abuse is disclosed, divide into teams, (victim versus offender) which compete for power resources, and support
- In the end, problematic families can leave the victim feeling unprotected, helpless, rejected, and further blamed as the victim begins to act out

Treatment Issues

- Resolving feelings about abuse
- Reducing acting-out behavior
- Decreasing fears, nightmares
- Increasing self-esteem
- Decreasing family problems
- Decreasing enuresis, encopresis
- Resolving sexual acting-out
- Resolving physical problems
- Decreasing regressive or pseudo-mature behavior

Physical Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Scratches, bruises, itching, rashes, cuts or injuries, especially in the genital area
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's)
- Pregnancy in (young) adolescents
- Blood or discharge in bedding or clothes, especially underwear.

The Words of Kevin

Seated in the back of the class, I remove myself from this world. I pile my books high on the front of my desk. I am a fortress, strong and impenetrable. No one sees me. Now I no longer wonder why no one reaches out to me. Look at me, I am a fortress, untouchable. Not even you, Teacher, ask me to take down my fortress walls – though often I wish someone would.

–Kevin

Source: What Do You Do With A Child Like This? Tobin, L. 1998

Behavioral Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Aggressive behavior against younger children
- Advanced sexual knowledge
- Seductive or sexual behavior toward adults or other children
- Regressed behaviors – bed wetting
- Poor relationships with peers

Behavioral Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Excessive masturbation
- Fear of a specific person, location, or situation
- Sudden changes in behaviors
- Self destructive behaviors
 - *Eating too much or not enough*
 - *Self-Mutilation*
 - *Drug/Alcohol use*
 - *Suicidal ideations*

Behavioral Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Fire-setting
- Lying – Stealing
- Running Away
- Isolating Self
- Bizarre nightmares
- Sadistic play
- Hyper vigilance on certain dates or seasons
- Fear of being alone
- Avoids sexuality
- Pseudo mature – acts older than biological age

Does Sexual Abuse Affect Children the Same

- Age of the child when the abuse began
- Relationship of the perpetrator to the child
- Duration of the abuse
- Emotional Development of child
- Male sexual abuse vs. Societal Myths
- Involvement of violence or potential violence
- Support system of the child at the time of the abuse

SEXUAL ABUSE
Development Stages Effects

Infancy

- No empirical research conducted
- Possibly overly sexually stimulated
- Can have major medical trauma

SEXUAL ABUSE
Development Stages Effects

Childhood

- Sleep disturbances
- PTSD, impaired concentration
- Anxiety, fearfulness
- Inappropriate, aggressive sexual behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Somatic complaints

SEXUAL ABUSE
Development Stages Effects

Adolescence

- Depression
- Suicidal gestures, acts
- School problems
- Social isolation
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Frequent, indiscriminate sexual activity

COPING STRATEGIES FOR FEAR AND ANXIETY

- Relaxation/controlled breathing
- Thought stopping
- Pleasant imagery
- Reassuring self statements
- Recognizing triggers/reminders
- Anticipate/practice for anxiety producing situation
- Environmental support

Do These Kids Sexually Abuse Other Kids?

- Some sexually abused children go on to abuse other children **NOT MOST**.

Sexual Reactivity **versus** Sexual Offending

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

1. Most offenders are strangers to the victim.

Most offenders know their victims. Under the guise of a trust relationship, the offender uses deception and manipulation as a mode of assault.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

2. Most sexual assaults do not involve physical force.

Few offenders use force to gain compliance from their victims.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

3. Only men commit sexual assault.

A minority of sex offenders are female.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

4. Child sexual abusers are not attracted to adults.

Most offenders are attracted to people their age.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

5. Children rarely make up stories of abuse.

Often children recant due to guilt, shame and fear caused related to the outcry.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

6. Victims of sexual assault are harmed only when offenders use force.

The sense of betrayal and violation can leave long-lasting injuries.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

7. If children don't tell, they must have consented to the abuse.

Children do not tell for many reasons.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

8. It is common for victims to wait before telling someone about the abuse.

Many victims tell some time after the abuse occurred.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

9. It helps the victim to talk about it when they are ready.

Supportive listening helps healing.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

10. If someone sexually assaults an adult, he will not target children as victims; and if someone sexually assaults a child, he will not target adults.

Research shows that while some sex offenders chose only one type of victim, others do not. Make no assumptions.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

11. Sexual gratification does not motivate rapists.

Many offenders seek power and control over another person.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

12. Offenders could stop perpetrating sexual victimization on their own if they wanted to.

Offenders generally need the help of others to control their behavior.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

13. Most child sexual abusers find victims in schoolyards or playgrounds.

Most offenders assault children with whom they have a relationship.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

14. Men rape because they can't find a consenting partner.

Many offenders are in relationships at the time of the assault.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

15. Drugs and alcohol cause sexual offense.

Alcohol and drug use is seen as a disinhibitor for offenders, however it is not a cause of sexual abuse.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

16. Some victims are also to blame for provoking sexual assaults.

Victims are never to blame.

Facts About Sex Offending Behavior

17. If a victim does not fight back it was not truly forced.

There are a variety of reasons victims may not fight back or say 'no.'

Parenting Sexually Abused Children

- Be honest with yourself
 - Your own history of sexual abuse
 - Your own sexual comfortableness level
 - Capable of being different and/or embarrassed
 - Willingness to wait for reciprocal relationship from the child
 - Must have a sense of humor
