



Impact of Sexual Abuse

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Chapel Workshop

Impact of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a profoundly disruptive, disorienting and destructive experience; the long-term aftermath can last a lifetime. One in seven (1-7) men and one in four (1-4) women have been sexually abused. The victim has experience a degree of physical and emotional stimulation beyond a child's capacity to understand. The confusion about feelings, boundaries, trust and identity interfere with the child's accomplishment of normal developmental tasks.

The abused victim will feel:

- Frustrated by the contradictions surrounding the abusive relationship
- Burdened with a secret that cannot be shared, this leads to feelings of alienation and separation
- ***Harbors guilt over feelings of enjoyment during the sexual contact***
- Feelings of remorse and sorrow, along with blame and responsibility for what has happened
- Feels used
- Feels dirty and damaged (physically & emotionally)
- Has difficulty trusting others

Symptoms of Sexual Abuse:

- Withdrawn, less verbal, depressed or apathetic
- Self-mutilation (cutting, over-dosing)
- Retreat to fantasy world, dissociate reactions – loss of memory, imaginary playmates, child uses more than one name
- Fear, clinging to parent, requires reassurance (or if older clinging to boyfriend/girlfriend...has to be "with" someone)
- Sudden increase in modesty
- Lack of trust
- **Active hostility and anger toward formerly trusted person (refusal to be left with potential offender – used to like going to grandpa's house, but now begs not to go)**
- Touchy to either extreme
- Onset of poor personal hygiene, attempts to make self appear unattractive
- Precocious, provocative sexual behavior
- Seductive, indiscriminate display of affection
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares
- Continual, unexplained fear, anxiety
- Self-conscious about use of bathroom, reaction if intruded upon or self-conscious about changing in front of others for a class like PE
- Onset of eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia, compulsive eating
- Denial of problem with lack of expression or feeling
- ***Usually will hate a certain holiday or be a perfectionist in the holiday***
- Guilt
- Depression
- **Fear of men**
- Fear of being alone
- Anger
- Poor self-image
- Lying and manipulation
- Fear of failure

Facts of Sexual Abuse:

Among the findings of a study titled The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico:

- Family members -- fathers, stepfathers, uncles, older siblings -- commit 47% of all reported sexual assaults against children in their own homes.
- 49% of all sexual assaults against children are committed by persons known either by the child or the child's family -- teachers, coaches, physicians, ministers, priests, neighbors, youth leaders.
- 4% of sexual assaults against children are by strangers (persons unknown to either the child or the child's family).
- 325,000 children are reported as being sexually exploited in the United States annually. Of that figure, 121,911 ran away from home and 51,602 were thrown out of their homes by a parent or guardian.
- Child abuse is the least frequently reported form of abuse.
- 40% of the girls who engaged in prostitution were sexually abused at home, as were 30% of the boys.
- 67% of victims of sexual assault are under age 18.
- 34% of sexual assault victims are under age 12.
- One out of every seven victims of sexual assault is under age 6.
- 40% of offenders who victimize children under age 6 are under age 18.

Types of sexual abuse: Contact and Interaction

Contact

Least Severe: Sexual kissing (forcible or non-forcible); sexual touching of buttocks, thighs, legs or clothed breasts or genitals

Severe: Unclothed genital contact, including manual touching or penetration (forcible or non-forcible); unclothed breast contact (forcible or non-forcible); simulated intercourse

Very Severe: Genital intercourse (forcible or non-forcible); oral or anal sex (forcible or non-forcible)

Interactions

Verbal: Direct solicitation for sexual purposes; seductive (subtle solicitation or innuendo; description of sexual practices; repeated use of sexual language and sexual terms as personal names).

Visual: Exposure to or use of pornography; intentional (repeated) exposure to sexual acts, sexual organs, and/or sexually provocative attire; inappropriate attention directed toward boy (clothed or unclothed) or clothing for purpose of sexual stimulation

Psychological:

Physical/sexual boundary violation: Intrusive interest in menstruation, clothing, pubic development; repeated use of enemas;

Sexual/relational boundary violation: Intrusive interest in child's sexual activity, use of child as a spouse surrogate (confidant, intimate companion, protector, or counselor)

Definitions:

1. **Rape** – Vaginal, anal or oral intercourse.
2. **Molestation** – inappropriate sexual stimulation of a child, when no family relationship exists.
3. **Fondling** – sexual stimulation with or without clothes to thighs, buttocks, legs, breasts or genitals.
4. **Incest** – any sexual approach, including exposure, genital fondling, oral-genital contact, and vaginal or anal intercourse between relatives by blood, marriage or adoption.
5. **Sexual misuse** – situations in which a child is exposed to any type of sexual stimulation considered inappropriate for his or her age, level of development, or role in the family. Showing a child a pornographic magazine, touching a child's body inappropriately, or allowing a child to view an X-rated movie can be considered sexual misuse.

Degrees of Sexual Assault of a minor:

3rd degree sexual assault – Sexual contact with or without consent in genital areas or breasts. This includes touching with or without clothes on.

2nd degree sexual assault – intercourse with or without consent (oral, anal or vaginal)

1st degree sexual assault – all of the above with force threat

Maximum penalty in Wisconsin just changed to life in prison, previously it was 40 years in jail.

Legal Steps to Take in Reporting Sexual Abuse:

If you know of a child that is being sexual abused you should contact the proper authorities and report the abuse. The penalty to those who don't report the abuse could be a minimum of 6 months in prison and a \$1000 fine. In the State of Wisconsin there is some leniency to religious leaders and parents for reporting abuse. Catholic priests are protected under the confidentiality law, so they do not have to report sexual abuse (note: Baptist pastors do not take the same oath as priests, so in a court of law the same rules may not apply). Parents also are given some leniency, but if the abuse continues to happen and the parent knows about it, they will most likely get in trouble legally.

Child Protective Services – Check your phone book for local listings, under Department of Protective Services, Social and Rehabilitation Services or Department of Child and Family Services.

Police Department – Check your phone book for local listings

Christian Law Association
P.O. Box 4010
Seminole, Florida 33775
Phone: (727) 399-8300

National Child Abuse Hotline
(800) 422-4453

COUNSELING A SEXUALLY ABUSED VICTIM

During counseling the victim will experience: Victims of abuse don't need homework, they need time, listening and teaching on forgiveness.

- Guilt
- Feeling of being out of control
- Crying, broken heart (need time, one step at a time)
- Emotional roller coaster
- Nightmares become more severe thru the recovery
- Building walls and barriers (these are often symptoms: anger, withdraw, overeating)

As the counselor:

- **Don't rush the victim**, healing needs to come when they're ready – it took them several years to get like this; it will take several years to get back to normal.
- Take time to save time (Be sure they understand what's happening to them)
- Be a good listener. It takes time and commitment, but it's worth it. Not everything has to be told at once or at all.
- Remember they will not tell you everything the first time: (1) they won't remember it all at once. (2) They don't trust you.
- Remember the "place" we are going is not negotiable; but, the "pace" is.
- Because biblical truths may not sink in right away, be ready to be repetitious in your counseling.

Biblical Solutions to help for healing:

- Let the victim talk to other victims who have gone through similar situation. If you know another victim let them talk to each other. At least it will start the process of talking about the abuse.
- Use God's Word – hope verses and the Psalms. Most abused victims have pushed God away inwardly even if outwardly they look "spiritual." Their view of God is often incorrect.
- Have the victim write things down. Keep a journal.
- Read books: "The Wounded Heart"

Purpose for healing:

- To work on symptoms – removing barriers
- To give them a better understanding of God. You want them to understand that "God is not punishing me" by allowing these circumstances to take place.
- To give hope – you can have victory over this.
- To fellowship with others who understand.

Incorrect ways to counsel an Abused Victim: Don't tell them to

- "Just pray about it"
- "Stop thinking about it, it's a sin" – this heaps more guilt upon them and doesn't deal with the problem.
- "Stop feeling sorry for yourself" – You wouldn't say that to a cancer victim – there is a real problem.
- "You must have not really forgiven him if you're still not over it by now."
- "You must enjoy the attention of it if you're talking about it."
- DON'T put time restraints on them...this will only hinder their healing process.

Call attention to their pain: Victims usually do not see their progress- show them how things are getting better; help them see their sin (carefully)

- Why does that subject make you so angry or emotional?
- What's going through your mind when in this situation that makes you upset: does a certain smell, situation etc

Victims are often afraid they are crazy and abnormal. Their response may not be right but reassure them that "this is a normal response for working through the healing process." It's a lot easier to **not** deal with the pain and to keep it **bottled in**. Remember victims have spent most of their life trying to hide this secret. They are feeling a loss of control when they start talking about it. They don't understand or know how to deal with all the emotions that have been numbed or bottled in.

When you first start counseling - be honest with them:

- Things (nightmares, feeling insecure, anger etc) will get very bad and worse before it gets better.
- Onset of more vivid nightmares as the abuse is talked about.
- The victim will almost feel like there are 2 persons in 1. Doing things they never did before...not acting like themselves. Sometimes even feel demon possessed.
- The victim will feel so "crazy" or "insane" that often they will think they should be put in a mental ward.
- Certain sights or smell will often trigger "anger reactions, self-mutilation or fear"

Survival Techniques (Walls or Barriers) Abused Victims use to keep safe

1. Defenses (survival techniques) against victimization

- Trust
 1. Because abuse comes from those who were to be trusted and often involves the misuse of trust, trust is an early casualty of abuse.
 2. Trust is almost always non-existent and never unconditional.
 3. Trust in many ways in the number one problem requiring time and effort to win and restore.
- Anger
 1. Anger is a universal characteristic of abuse victims. Wherever there has been abuse there will be anger.
 2. Their anger is initially directed against the abuser.
 3. Their anger is ultimately directed against non-supportive parent (and God).
 4. Their anger is regularly expressed against innocent mates and children.
- Cover up
 1. Abuse never occurs without the explicit or implicit instruction to keep it secret.
 2. The victim must keep it a secret because of the abuser or the parents or the child or the family or etc.
 3. The weight of keeping secret the abuse rests fully on the shoulders of the victim.
- Emotional numbing:
 1. Feeling nothing is better than feeling pain, humiliation, disgust, etc.
 2. Feeling nothing helps eliminate having to deal with the abuse and its effects.
 3. Often significant dimensions of emotional development are stunted in relationship to the time of (age at) the abuse.
- Withdraw/isolation/entrapment
 1. Part of the abuser's method of operation involved isolation – physical, emotional etc.
 2. The abuser will often keep themselves at "arms-length" from people. Won't let anyone get too close.
 3. Often even when the victim knows that other family members are being victimized, they still feel isolated.
- Abusive/Manipulative behavior
 1. I'll act, dress, etc. in such a way that no one will want to be around me and then I'll be safe.
 2. I'll act, dress etc. in such a way to get guys so that I'm in control since this is the only thing I'm good at.
- Boundaries:
 1. Physical, emotional, etc.
 2. I won't let anyone get close to me.
- Eating disorders
 1. I'll eat any sexual features into oblivion so that he doesn't find me attractive and will leave me alone.
 2. I'll starve myself back into childhood features like before he abused me and he will leave me alone.
- Manipulation
 1. Play a mind game to keep safe.
 2. Usually learn to be aware of surroundings and to manipulate people, activities etc to keep the abuser out of life.
 3. I won't let anyone manipulate me, so I have to become a better manipulator.
- Perfectionism
 1. Often being a perfectionist is so mentally, emotionally and physically demanding, victims turn to this to keep their mind and day occupied.
 2. If their world can't be perfect at least they can make another part of their life perfect. (ie. Clean-freak, body has to be perfect-over exercising, hobbies, homework, work)

2. Explanations of victimization:

- Fear/anxiety
 1. Fear becomes the pattern and habit of life.
 2. Fear of people, places, emotions and/or things.

- Guilt/shame
 1. Sometimes the victim figures they are to blame.
 2. Sometimes they are simply told they are to blame.

- Dirtiness/worthlessness:
 1. If they weren't guilty/dirty they wouldn't have been victimized – they deserve it because of their guilt.
 2. Because they are “used” they develop the sense of being worthless.

- Denial and/or memory suppression
 1. This didn't happen (to me). This wasn't abuse.
 2. Complete chunks of childhood memories are blank.

- Control
 1. Can't handle being out of control of situations.
 2. Need to be in control of someone else (usually husband or children) by criticizing, nagging, yelling or controlling their lives by anger or threats until you get your way.

QUOTES

- “You are not responsible for what happened to you in the past. You are only responsible for what you choose to do today.”
- “Victims can't cover up forever. It takes too much energy. The façade wears thin.”
- “You didn't lose your virginity, you lost your innocence” – Miss Westphall

VERSES

- ***Fear & Hope:*** II Timothy 1:7, Ps. 56:3, Matt. 11:28, Heb 13:6, Ps 55:5-8, 16-18, II Cor. 12:9
- ***Depression:*** Psalms 2:10 & 103:4-5, Jer. 30:17, Rom 8:1, II Cor. 4:16, Eph. 3:20, Phil. 4:13
- ***Guilt:*** Job 11:18, I Jn 3:20-21, I Tim 1:5, Acts 24:16, Rom 7:15-16, Rom 14:22
- ***Anger:*** Prov. 15:1, 16:24, 15:18, 14:29, 16:32, 21:23; James 1:19, James 3, Gal 5:31-32
- ***Control:*** Prov. 16:9, Phil 4:11, Phil 4:19, Gal 5:22-23, Prov. 3:5-6, Prov. 16:9, Prov. 31:30, Ps. 127:1, Prov 19:23, Prov. 21:2, Josh. 1:8-9

BOOKS

- “The Wounded Heart” by: Dr. Dan B. Allender
- “When Victims Marry” by: Don & Jan Frank
- “Secret Survivors, Uncovering incest and its aftereffects in women” by E. Sue Blume (secular: good with symptoms, terrible with solutions)
- “The Healing Path” by: John Splinter
- “When Forgiveness Doesn't Make Sense” by: Robert Jeffress
- “Trusting God When Life Hurts”
- “Surviving the Secret” by: Pamela Vredevelt & Kathryn Rodriguez
- “Pain and Pretending” by: Rich Buhler

**THE CHILD ABUSE PROBLEM:
DOES YOUR CHURCH KNOW WHAT TO DO IF AN ALLEGATION IS MADE?
By: Christian Law Association**

Anyone who listens to the news or reads the newspaper must realize that reports of the abuse and neglect of children are rising to epidemic proportions. The media is quick to trumpet tragic cases in which children are left in vans or buses by their caretakers to die horrible deaths in the vehicle's oven-like heat. Parents or babysitters who beat their children are filmed by security videos, tiny newborns are abandoned in city dumpsters, and young children are molested by stepparents, sometimes even with the knowledge of the biological parent. These are horrible crimes against the weakest and most defenseless members of our society. Everyone can agree that those who abuse or neglect children must be punished.

Inconceivably, these types of crimes can also be found within the religious community where, outside of their own homes, children should both feel and be the safest. Media attention in the last few years has been highly focused on particular churches where church leaders are alleged to have known about the abuse of children by priests, and yet conspired to hide this abuse from parents. Church authorities merely transferred the offending priests to other churches where they were able to continue their abusive conduct with other children. Many adults are only now feeling safe enough to report abuse at the hands of church officials that occurred many years ago when they were children. These victims report that, at the time of the abuse, trusted authority figures warned them not to tell their parents about the abuse. They have continued to suffer the tragic effects of their abuse over many long years.

Even if only one of the allegations made against priests proved to be true, the emotional and spiritual damage done to that child by a religious leader is incalculable. Even if the legal process were to ultimately prove that none of the recent allegations of abuse are true, damage to the reputation of the accused church and its leaders by media attention and the resulting widespread growth of distrust of church officials would still be immeasurable.

Child abuse in churches and in other religious childcare ministries is, unfortunately, not limited to any one church or denomination. The societal epidemic of abuse and neglect has reached into churches of all denominations, faiths, and sizes—rural and urban, rich and poor. Because of the nature of the personality of an abuser and the fact that such abusers target children, they are drawn like magnets to children's programs, including, and sometimes especially, to those operated by churches. No church that ministers to children is immune from the possibility that a children's worker will abuse a child in the ministry or that false allegations of abuse will be filed against a church worker who did nothing improper at all.

Every ministry must sharply increase its efforts to prevent any child from being harmed while in its care. Ministries must also protect the church and its workers from false allegations of abuse, and to properly respond to allegations of physical or sexual abuse of a child by a ministry worker. Church leaders and workers alike must clearly understand the duties imposed upon them by Scripture and by law. Ministries must implement and enforce programs that will protect everyone from civil lawsuits and the resulting harm to the name of Christ and His church. Protection is needed for the vulnerable children, for the childcare workers who might be falsely accused, and for the church itself whose reputation might be ruined no matter what the eventual outcome of an accusation.

PROPER PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

The government imposes a duty of care on all programs that minister to children. Churches and ministries are obligated both legally and spiritually to properly respond to any allegations of child abuse. Ignoring abuse allegations, or blaming the child for causing the abuse by frustrating or enticing the staff member, or leaving the accused in place to commit abuse again—these are all improper responses that will subject a ministry to liability for "negligent retention" of a childcare worker who the ministry knows or should have known either might abuse or has abused a child.

INTERNAL RESPONSES TO ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

If allegations of child abuse are made against a church or ministry worker, the ministry should immediately take the following steps.

- 1) The pastor or his designee should immediately contact the ministry's attorney. Christian Law Association attorneys will be happy to discuss any questions the pastor might have regarding child abuse reporting requirements for your state.
- 2) Inform the childcare worker of any allegations and discuss them with him. If he admits the allegations, inform him of your intent to report the matter to appropriate authorities and, if possible, obtain a signed statement from the accused regarding the incident. If he denies the allegations, inform him that you will be conducting an investigation of the claims.
- 3) Immediately remove an accused childcare worker from his position with the ministry. For his own protection as well as for the protection of the children, the accused worker should be removed from any contact with or access to children, at least temporarily until the matter is resolved. A worker who admits the abuse should be immediately terminated if he is a church employee. An employee who denies the allegation should be suspended with pay while a confidential investigation is conducted.

4) Contact the church's insurance company immediately. Do not wait for a lawsuit to be filed or criminal charges to be brought before you notify your carrier of the claims being made. As one insurance carrier explained, notifying your insurance carrier immediately is important for several reasons:

- Your policy may require you to provide immediate notification if coverage is to apply to any resulting lawsuit.
- You will need a determination of coverage applicability should your church be brought to court. Not all insurance policies provide coverage for lawsuits resulting from alleged acts of sexual abuse, molestation, or misconduct.
- You may need legal advice, especially if this is your first exposure to a sexual abuse case. Your insurance company has dealt with many such cases, and may be able to give you helpful advice.
- Early involvement by your insurance company can help to minimize the civil consequences to your ministry, and speed up healing treatment for the child.

5) Administer appropriate discipline consistent with your church or ministry bylaws, such as suspension or termination of church membership for an admitted abuser.

6) To the best of your abilities, keep the victim and the victim's family informed of the state's investigation. Express the church's concern for the child and the family. Offer the services of the ministry to them, including religious counseling for the victim and his family.

7) Keep church members informed of allegations and incidents of molestation that occur on church or ministry property or in the course of church or ministry activities. However, do not express the ministry's opinion as to the truth or falsity of any allegations. Comments should be limited to factual information.

8) If you are a mandatory reporter under your state's child abuse reporting law, report the matter to the appropriate law enforcement agency and file a child abuse report with the appropriate state agency. Otherwise, encourage the accused or the victim to do so. If you do not know whether you are a mandatory reporter, contact CLA immediately to obtain this information. Time limitations may apply.

9) Cooperate with child protective services or law enforcement officials in the investigation of an allegation.

10) As permitted by your attorney or the attorney for the accused, the ministry should also reach out to meet the needs of the family of the accused, whose members are also victims of repercussions from the allegations. Treat the accused with dignity while the investigation is underway. If he is charged, continue to show him support as an individual, while never condoning the sin he may have committed.

REPORTING THE ABUSE

Many states require that everyone who has a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect must file a report with the appropriate state agency. Reporting the suspicion of abuse to a superior at the church or ministry does not necessarily relieve the mandatory reporter from also reporting his or her suspicion to the appropriate government officials. In a Christian school situation, for instance, both the teacher and the supervisor should make the report. The teacher should keep a record of when she first had a reasonable suspicion of abuse, when she reported it to officials, and to whom she spoke. Speaking with the parent of the child about one's suspicions does not absolve a mandatory reporter from the duty to also make a report to the appropriate government officials.

Sadly, allegations of child abuse are at epidemic levels. As million-dollar judgments are being awarded to many victims, there is a strong financial incentive for an even greater number of allegations to be seen in the future. Every ministry needs to be prepared with a plan of action for the unfortunate day an allegation is leveled against one of your staff members or volunteers. A proper response can have a tremendous spiritual impact and could potentially make a huge legal difference for the accused, the alleged victim, and the ministry in question.

What is sibling sexual abuse?

Sibling sexual abuse, like all forms of sexual abuse, is an abuse of power. If a more powerful sibling, who may be older or stronger, bribes or threatens a weaker sibling into sexual activity that is called sexual abuse. The abuser usually wins the trust of the victim first, and then violates that trust in order to commit the abuse. The abuser may use force, the threat of force, a bribe, the offer of special attention, or a gift to make the victim keep the abuse secret.

In sibling sexual abuse, the victim and the abuser are siblings. This may include such situations as foster or step-siblings. Also, as in other forms of sexual abuse, sibling sexual abuse doesn't necessarily involve sexual touching. The abuser may force two or more other children to engage in sexual activity with one another. The abuser may force the siblings to watch sexual activity or pornographic videotapes. The abuser may also abuse them by repeatedly watching them dress, shower or use the toilet when they don't want to be watched.

Trust is essential in families, but a sibling who has been given a lot of responsibility and power may abuse that trust. Sibling sexual abuse often takes place when parents fail to pay attention to the trust that they have placed in one of their children.

What are the effects of sibling sexual abuse?

Sibling sexual abuse is often very harmful for the following reasons:

- Because the siblings live together, **the victim may feel pressured** and trapped by the abuser over a long period of time. This pressure usually includes bribes, sexual stimulation or physical force. For example, when you allow your oldest son to use physical punishment when baby-sitting, he may continue to use both physical abuse and threats to make sure his younger siblings keep the sexual abuse secret. This kind of pressure can break down the siblings' self confidence.
- The victim usually begins by trusting the abuser because they are siblings. When this trust is violated, **the victim feels betrayed** by that brother or sister, because someone they expect to love and care for them is hurting them. In addition, your younger children would naturally trust you to choose a safe, kind person to take care of them. When the person you choose abuses them, the victims feel betrayed again, this time by you. They may even believe that you think the abuse is all right.
- **The victims usually feel powerless** to stop the abuse. They feel they can't stop the offender, because he has threatened them. They may also feel powerless if you don't believe them when they tell you they are being abused. This feeling of being powerless can stay with them and affect their adult relationships.
- The victims may be made to feel responsible, bad or dirty. If you accuse your younger children of doing something to encourage the abuse, or if you call them 'dirty' or 'slutty', they'll believe you, and **feel ashamed** as well. They may carry these feelings of shame into adulthood.
- Sibling sexual abuse **often causes more damage than abuse by a stranger**. This is because children are dependent for years on their families and parents to keep them safe. Studies of convicted teenage sexual abuse offenders show that the sibling offenders commit more serious abuse over a longer period of time than other teenage offenders. This is because the victims (brothers or sisters) are more readily available, they are available for a longer period of time and **the offenders are protected by family secrecy**.

Is sexual curiosity between siblings normal?

Yes. A four-year old girl who touches her baby brother's genitals while her mother changes his diaper is showing normal curiosity. She may never have seen a penis before and may want to know what it feels like. A five year old boy who sees his sisters genitals for the first time may wonder where her penis is, whether she's lost it and whether she's going to grow one. He may have to look a few more times, and ask questions to understand that boys and girls are born with different genitals. As a parent you can use opportunities like these to give your children some information about sexuality that is suitable for their age.

However, a fourteen-year-old boy who wants to look at his five-year-old sister's genitals is not showing normal curiosity. Normally, at his age, he would know what female genitals look like, so you would need to ask why he wants to do this. It could be that he's wondering what it would feel like to touch female genitals or rub his penis against them. But to satisfy his curiosity in this way with his younger sister would be abusive.

Four- and five-year-olds who take down their pants to look at each other's genitals are probably curious. But if they persist in doing it, or if they touch one another's genitals frequently over time, you should look at it carefully. If it seems like more than curiosity, consider the possibility that one of them might have been sexually abused, and could be acting out the abuse.

Here are some examples of behaviors in pre-school children:

Normal behavior-

- Rubs genitals before falling asleep

- Explores differences between boys and girls
- Is interested in watching adults go to the bathroom
- Plays 'doctor' with other children
- Plays house. Plays 'mommy' and 'daddy' roles

Behaviors that should cause concern-

- Frequently rubs genitals instead of playing
- Keeps asking questions about sex even after questions have been reasonably answered
- Persists in watching adults in the bathroom
- Forces other children to play doctor
- Pretends to have intercourse

Frank's Story

Frank was charged under the Young Offenders Act with sexually abusing his younger sister Kathy. His probation officer enforced the court order that he attend counseling.

Frank, who was 15, told his counselor that his classmates were bigger and more sexually 'successful' than he was, and that one of them had dared him to have sex with a girl.

He said that he was afraid to even talk to a girl, let alone ask for a date. He admitted that he made his younger sister Kathy have sexual intercourse with him one evening when he was babysitting her.

Then Frank's mother told the counselor that Frank's father had forced sex on her in front of the children on a number of occasions. She disclosed that he often beat her if his meals weren't ready on time. The counselor encouraged her to take Frank and Kathy to a transition house as a temporary measure, while she decided whether or not to stay with her husband.

There were several factors involved in Frank's becoming a sibling sex offender. His father abused his mother physically, emotionally, and sexually; he abused Frank sexually and emotionally by having forceful, abusive sex with his mother in front of him; and he taught Frank by his example that it was acceptable for a male in authority to use force on the rest of the family. Not only that, his rules for the family were so strict that Frank hadn't learned to socialize with other teenagers. Feeling pressure from his peers, he tried to get information and experience by forcing himself on his younger sister.

There are many benefits to court-ordered counseling for sibling sex offenders. In Frank's case he learned some social skills that helped him get along better with other teenagers, and he stopped copying his father's abusive behavior. He also learned to take responsibility for his own behavior and to control it. Other outcomes of the family crisis included his mother being able to leave an abusive relationship and Kathy starting to see a sexual abuse counselor. Following his conviction, Frank's father was charged by the court to seek counseling and to change the way he treats women and children.

What Factors contribute to sibling sexual abuse?

- An older sibling, usually a boy, is given too much responsibility

It's an important part of family life for older children to learn to take responsibility for the care of younger children. It's just as important for children to understand that this responsibility has limits. Responsibility allows older children to make decisions while taking care of younger children. But it doesn't give them the right to boss them, put them down or threaten them. As parents, you must help them see that having responsibility doesn't mean that they can do whatever they want. Frank's story is a good example of an older brother who is given responsibility and misuses it.

- Children who have witnessed or experienced sexual abuse

Children who have been sexually abused, either by family members or by adults or older children, sometimes react by coaxing, manipulating, or forcing younger children into the same kind of sexual behavior. Brothers and sisters may become the victims of this 'second hand' abuse. Sexually intrusive children who act out their own abuse in this way are sometimes called 'sexually reactive'. It's important for you to know that children who are being sexually victimized may become sexually intrusive.

- Access to pornography

Parents who leave pornographic videotapes or magazines where children can look at them run the risk of having their children imitate adult sexual behavior.

- Neglect

If children are neglected, either physically or emotionally, they might engage in a full range of sexual activities. They might try sexual activities they have learned from other children, or they might experiment, on their own, to learn how to get sexual pleasure. Part of their behavior might come from their need to give and receive comfort when they're getting none from their parents.

Sexual activity between siblings which begins in this way might, at first, appear experimental and mutual. However, because of the power differences between children, it rarely is. If the behavior continues, it can become abusive, especially if one of the children wants to stop and the other doesn't.

- Lack of sex education

Children and teens who are not taught in an age-appropriate way about their physical and sexual development are more likely to engage in sexually intrusive behavior.

- Inadequate socialization

Children who are not allowed to play with their peers, and teenagers who aren't allowed to date, dance or socialize outside the home, are more likely to sexually abuse younger siblings, just as Frank did.

- Denial

We often tend to see our own families as free from the trouble and tensions that other families have. When you do this, or try to explain away unusual behavior or pretend it isn't happening, this is called 'denial'. In some situations, parents may wish to deny that abuse has taken place because it brings back memories of their own abuse. While denial doesn't cause sibling sexual abuse, it may contribute to its continuation.

Why might it be difficult to recognize sibling sexual abuse in my family?

As a parent you might find it hard to see that one of your children is being sexually abused by a sibling. There are several reasons why parents of sibling sexual abuse victims have difficulty recognizing that it's happening:

- While the abuse is happening, the victim might be too young to know it's abuse. The victim may believe that the abuse is something that happens in all families.
- The abuse might be happening when the abuser is in a position of authority; for example, when an older sibling is the baby-sitter.
- The abuser may be enforcing secrecy by threatening the victim with physical abuse if he or she tells.
- Victims blame themselves, especially if they experience pleasure while they're being abused, so they may not tell you about it.
- Children may want to tell, but not know how to talk to you about what's happening. Also, many children are afraid to upset their parents.
- You may see some of the symptoms of sibling sexual abuse, but tell yourself it isn't happening.

Parents who talk to their children about what has happened during the day and who ask about their feelings may be more likely to recognize sibling sexual abuse than parents who don't.

If one of my children is abusing another child in my family, what should I do?

If your child is sexually abusing another child in the family, **you report the abuse to your local child protection agency**. The child protection agency in your province is responsible for helping both the victim and the offender. If your child is 12 or over, the child protection agency must report the abuse to the police. The police will decide whether or not to charge the child. **If your child is under the age of 12, he or she cannot be charged with a sexual offense.**

Admitting to yourself that sibling sexual abuse might be happening in your family can be hard. Admitting it to someone else can be even harder. The important thing is to get help. It is often helpful to get support from family and friends, but you might have to rely on others. Often these others are professionals. As a parent you may feel in a state of despair and confusion when you realize that one of your children, is abusing their sibling. You

may feel disappointed and may feel that you have failed as a parent. No matter what your child's age, there are options as to what happens after you make the report to your child protection agency.

Under 12

Many counseling centers that treat victims of sexual abuse also have programs for "sexually intrusive" children. These are children who have been acting in sexually aggressive ways towards other children, but are under the age of 12. In many cases these children are sexual abuse victims themselves. They need counseling for this as well as to change their behavior towards other children.

12 and Over

There are several advantages to involving the police and the criminal justice system when the offender is a child over the age of 12. By using the court system:

- We make a statement about how seriously our society views sexual abuse.
- The victim knows he or she is believed.
- The offender can get the help he needs.
- The judge can make plans for the offender's treatment.

Treatment can take many forms. One option could include placing a teenage sibling sex offender on probation with an order to have counseling while living at home. In this case the teenager will have a probation worker who will make sure the judge's orders are followed.

If offenses are serious enough, the teenage abuser could be confined for a period of time in a detention center. These centers are staffed by counselors and social workers who specialize in treating adolescent sex offenders. Treatment could include attending groups where the offender looks closely at his behavior, and receiving individual counseling to help him understand it. The offender may also be taught basic social skills, such as how to make friends his own age, or how to ask for a date and learn appropriate sexual behavior. Most important, compulsory counseling can help prevent the young offender from growing into an adult offender.

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

BOUNDARIES

SHAME

ABUSER



OVEREATING

WOMAN-TO-WOMAN

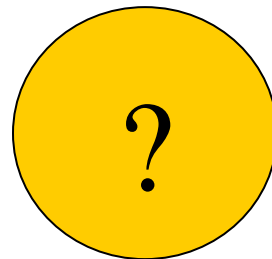
LACK OF SELF WORTH



VICTIM

ANXIETY

COVER UP



WITH DRAW

CONTROL

MISTRUST

GUILT

**FRIEND
DATE
HUSBAND**

ANOREXIA



Victim



Abuse Recovery

