

## Preventing Abuse

Be very careful with anyone who has one-on-one contact with your child. Drop in unexpectedly when your child is alone with any adult, even trusted family members. This conveys that there are no entirely private times where you are not looking after your child.

Abusers look for children who are compliant and respectful to authority. They often engage the child in conversation to determine the vulnerability of the child. Before actual abuse occurs the abuser often begins to desensitize the child by touching him in non-sexual ways.

### Teach your child:

- About privacy zones and the difference between good and bad touch
- To scream and run when they are not comfortable with what someone is doing. "This isn't my daddy." "I'm not allowed to do that."
- Not to keep any secrets from you.

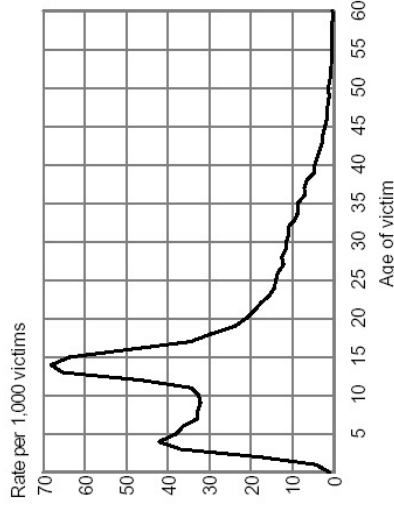
## Indications of Sexual Abuse

- Withdrawal, chronic depression or a high level of unexplained anxiety
  - Role reversal, overly concerned for siblings
  - Significant weight change
  - Inappropriate sexual play
  - Threatened by physical contact, or closeness
  - Appearing unusually clingy
  - Frequent nightmares
  - Fear or avoiding a particular person
  - Lowering of school performance
- Only 12% of children who are abused tell.<sup>4</sup>

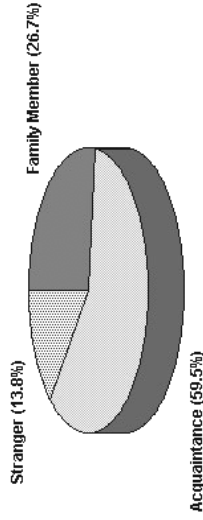
## What if it Already Happened

Get help for your child. Even if the child seems to be fine, it is likely that she has believed lies from the abuser that can follow her into adulthood.

## Sexual Abuse Age Distribution<sup>5</sup>



## Offenders<sup>6</sup>



## References

- 1 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families *Definitions, Scope, and Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse*. July 2004
- 2 John N. Briere, Diana M. Elliott, "Immediate and Long-Term Impacts of Child Sexual Abuse: The Future of Children" *Sexual Abuse of Children* 4, 2 Summer/Fall 1994 2 September 2003
- 3 *Children's Trust Fund* <http://www.mctff.org/sp.cfm?id=257>
- 4 Child Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet <http://www.stopitnow.com/csafacts.html>
- 5 Snyder, Howard N. *Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics* July 2000
- 6 *Ibid.*

For more information go to

[www.journeytohealing.homestead.com](http://www.journeytohealing.homestead.com)

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# What Every Parent Should Know



## About Childhood Sexual Abuse

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew 18:6

## The Problem

Childhood sexual abuse is a plague that is ravaging our country and our world. Current statistics show that one out of every three girls and one out of every six boys will be sexually abused before they reach adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

Most of these children will experience years of unnecessary pain either because their parents never find out about the abuse or because their parents do not know how to help them work through the thoughts and emotions that come from sexual abuse.

In past years the prevailing advice for parents was that they should downplay the abuse. The hope was that the child would forget about the trauma. Instead, these children learn that they have to cope on their own. They become vulnerable to picking up wrong thinking and lies.

## Some Possible Long-term Effects

- Low self-esteem
- Fearfulness and anxiety
- A tendency to enter into abusive relationships
- Depression & suicide attempts
- Sexual problems
- Some victims, especially boys may go on to become abusers if their abuse is not dealt with.

Studies have shown that if a child receives support from a caring adult soon after the abuse happens she will probably not have any long-term emotional problems from the abuse.<sup>2</sup>

## If Your Child is Abused

- Only ask open-ended questions, "Would you tell me about what happened? Start from the very beginning." If the child makes a statement like, "He hurt me." restating "He hurt you?" will often encourage her to elaborate. If possible, make an audio recording of the child as he tells you what happened.
- Affirm the child. Tell him that you are glad he told you and that you believe him. Tell him that he did the right thing
- Give the child lots of hugs and positive physical contact. She needs to know you still love her.
- Tell him you are very sorry it happened. Allow the child to mourn.
- Allow her to talk to you freely about the abuse
- Repeatedly assure the child that:
  - Telling you was the right thing to do. This takes the responsibility off the child and places it on you- the adult.
  - It is over now. This lets him know that he can stop being afraid.
  - You love her, and that she is fearfully and wonderfully made. She needs to be told that God has a special plan for her life. This helps the child combat the lie that she is bad and dirty.
  - It was not his fault. This helps to release the child from guilt.

## Talk To Your Pastor

Go to him for wise counsel about the steps that need to be taken as well as providing support, encouragement, and protection. If the abuser was a family member it is especially important to tell your pastor about the abuse.

Sin loses it's power when it is brought to the light.

## Why Report

At least 95% of those who abuse one child will go on to abuse others. The average pedophile abuses about 244 children in his or her lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

In some states reporting is mandatory for anyone who knows about the abuse.

Reporting sexual abuse is never an easy thing for a child or his parents but it is the right thing to do. Child abusers need to be brought to justice. It is important for the child to know that he has done everything he could to stop the one who hurt him from hurting others, even if the abuser is not convicted.

You can call 1-800-4-A-Child to find out where to report the abuse.

## What Will Probably Happen

The police department or Child Protective Services will want to be sure that the child is safe. They will probably want a statement from you and will want to interview the child. Often they also want the child to receive a medical examination. The amount of evidence will determine whether or not charges are filed against the abuser.