

Finding Help

You deserve support in healing from childhood sexual abuse. You have the right to be believed and listened to, and to express your feelings about the abuse. Remember:

- You are not alone, and you can get help finding support for all of the ways that childhood abuse impacts your life.
- Local rape crisis centers have information on how to begin healing from your trauma. You can talk to someone over the phone or the center may offer individual counseling and support groups to assist you on the path to recovery. They can offer you referrals for social services or for legal help, too.
- There are many ways to heal from childhood abuse. A counselor can help you create a healing plan that meets your individual needs.
- Help is also available for the important people in your life. Your spouse or partner, friends, family members, children or others may want to seek information so that they can understand your needs and challenges.
- There are people who will listen to you, who understand, and who will help you on your recovery path. You are not alone.

There is help... you can talk with someone who will listen, who will understand.

You don't need to hide your feelings or pretend they are not there.
You are not alone.

**For more information,
contact your
local rape crisis center.**



Florida Council Against Sexual Violence

1820 E. Park Avenue, Suite 100
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Information Line: 1-888-956-RAPE

Office: (850) 297-2000
email: information@fcasv.org
www.fcasv.org

This project was supported by Contract No. LN965 awarded by the state administering office for the STOP Formula Grant Program. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the state or the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.



**Adult
Victims of
Childhood
Abuse**

R A P E

VICTIMS OF ABUSE



The sexual abuse of children spans all races, ethnic groups and economic backgrounds. Sexual abuse is any kind of unwanted or inappropriate sexual behavior with a child, whether or not there is actual physical contact. Tragically, this kind of abuse is not rare; studies estimate that one in four girls and one in seven boys is sexually abused as a child.

Abusers can be family members, friends of the family, authority figures or strangers. It is impossible to tell if someone is an abuser by simply looking – an abuser may be someone who is highly respected in the

community and who has a good reputation. Most child victims knew and trusted the people who abused them.

Children are absolutely dependent on adults for their physical and emotional survival, and abusers have many ways of wielding this power over children. Abusers may use threats to coerce children, such as the threat of harm to them or their loved ones, and the withholding of love and affection. They may tell a child that he or she is special, that the abuse is a way to show love for the child, or that the child is responsible for the abuse.

If you are a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, it is important to remember that no matter what you may have been told, the abuse was not your fault and you are not alone.

Common Reactions to Victimization

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse may experience a range of emotions and effects that impact many aspects of their adult lives:

- Anger
- Shame
- Guilt
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Denial and minimizing
- Difficulty in trusting others
- Sexual difficulties
- Difficulties with relationships
- Flashbacks
- Memory disorders
- Self-blame and self-doubt
- Physical health problems
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse

Adult survivors may also experience other difficulties, such as not having anyone available to corroborate memories of the abuse. If the abuser was a family member or someone close, the possibility of repeated contact with the abuser can make family relationships stressful, and a history of child abuse in a family can hurt other relationships as well.

Any or all of these after-effects can combine to produce feelings of depression, isolation and hopelessness. All of these feelings and reactions are normal responses to traumatic experiences. Acknowledging the pain can be the first step in working through the abuse.

What Do Victims Feel?