

What Acts Are Included In Child Sexual Abuse?

- Sexual assault
 - Rape
 - Sodomy
 - Any penetration
 - Enemas
 - At bath-time, “to get you clean.”
- Sexual Molestation: Non-penetrative activity
 - Masturbation
 - Pornography
 - Voyeurism
 - Indecent Exposure
- Sexual Exploitation
 - Even if the abuser doesn’t touch the child sexually himself
 - Prostitution
 - Pornography

Child-on-Child Abuse

- Don’t assume that sexual contact between two children is consensual, just because both participants were children.

Sexual Abuse of Teens

- “Love affair”
- Statutory Rape

Factors Influencing the Effect of the Abuse on the Victim

- More damaging:
 - In a younger child
 - Perpetrated by a parent or trusted adult
 - Intercourse or more serious intimate contact
 - Violence or humiliation
 - Threats or force
 - Long time, or multiple abusers
 - Child told and was not believed, was blamed, shamed, or not protected by the person he told.
- Less damaging if:
 - Sexual abuse seen as “normal”
 - Victim knew that somebody loved him
 - Victim had some good relationships
 - Abuser was accepted by the child as a friend, lover or playmate

Disclosure

- Those who tell soon after their abuse often experience fewer long-term consequences.

Emotional Distress in Adulthood

- Often a consequence of adult understanding of childhood experiences
- Results in inappropriate blame.

Problem Feelings and Behaviors In Survivors

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Troubling memories
- Anger
- Fear or mistrust of Adults
- Fear or dislike of loving, lawful sexual activity
- Inability to respond sexually, even in a loving relationship
- Stormy relationships, due to difficulties with trust
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Sexual promiscuity
- Some survivors become abusers themselves.
- Others seek to exploit others sexually in other ways, such as prostitution
- Some become victims of domestic partner abuse
- Some become rape victims, sometimes repeatedly
- Desire for control can lead to eating disorders
- Self-injury may be related to desire for control, or a way to “let the bad out”
- Some survivors struggle with many emotionally-related illnesses or chronic pain
- Some survivors (especially male) turn to crime
- If the abuser was the same sex as the victim, the victim may become homosexual, and most will struggle with sexual identity.
- If the victim responded to the physical stimulation, he/she may conclude that this means he/she is homosexual

Was My Counselee Sexually Abused?

- If the feelings and behaviors we’ve just discussed are present in a counselee, this does not necessarily mean that they have been sexually abused. ▣
- The “recovered memories” issue

Helping Survivors

- Teach the Gospel
- Deal With Guilt and Shame
- Address Fear and Trust Issues
- Address Other Problem Behaviors

About Guilt

- Almost all victims feel guilty.
- Start with the gospel
- The issue of responsibility
 - She may need to repent for something
 - Even victims can sin
 - She's only responsible for her own sin, and doesn't have to repent for her abuser's sins.
 - Abuse of other children
 - Lying to or disobeying parents to maintain relationship

About Sexual Arousal During Abuse

- It is normal to respond to sexual stimulation with enjoyment.
- She can't help how she felt while being abused, and these feelings don't mean that she's immoral.
- She is still pure, because she did not choose this sin for herself.
- This is true even if she learned to enjoy sexual activity.
 - She will need to learn to say no to her future sexual urges to remain pure.
 - This will be harder for her than if she had not been abused, but God will give her the grace if she asks Him for it.

Masturbation

- For sexual gratification, or release of tension
- Very common in survivors
- Ask!

▣ About Shame

- It will take longer to help a victim who struggles with shame, because it makes her reluctant to discuss the abuse because of the bad feelings associated with remembering it.
- Jesus took our shame!
- It's never necessary to be ashamed of having been victimized. The shame belongs to the abuser, not to her.

Other Damage

- Problems Trusting God:
 - He is good and promises to work good in our lives as we look to Him in faith (Rom. 8:28).
 - Foundational truth!
 - If she doesn't trust God, she won't look to Him for help with her problems in trusting others.
- Problems Trusting Other People:
 - God will never fail her (Heb. 13:5).
 - With a foundation of faith in Him as her protector and anchor, she can feel safe to reach out to others in love without fear of what they will do to her (Prov. 29:25).
- Fear and Sense of Powerlessness:
 - As she looks to Him in faith, and trusts in His power, her sense that she must be in control over the circumstances in her life will decrease (Phil. 4:13).
- Difficulty Knowing What is True:
 - As we compare what we are told to God's Word, we can know what is really true (Ps. 119:105; Ps. 36:9).

Associated Problem Behaviors

- Dissociation
- Self-injury
- Eating Disorders ▣
- Alcohol or Drug Abuse ▣
- Promiscuity

Two-Pronged Approach to Problem Behaviors

- Talking about the emotions that prompt the behavior (guilt, shame), and working together to break the habits.
 - Dissociation: She CAN handle her problems with God's enablement and doesn't have to "check out".
 - Self-injury: She CAN experience painful emotions without injuring herself.
 - If she believes she's full of evil that must be let out, combat that belief with the truths from God's Word. Teach her to redirect her thoughts when tempted.
 - Eating Disorders are dealt with similarly.
 - Alcohol and Drug Abuse: She CAN bear the pain. God will enable her to if she will trust Him with her feelings instead of turning to sinful substitutes.

- Promiscuity: God will meet her desires for love, and she can hope for a lawful marriage.

Adult Challenges

- If you're working with a teen or young adult, teach her to find her security in Christ.

Sexual Responsiveness in Marriage

- Some were forced to submit to painful or humiliating sexual activity in childhood.
- Others have ambivalence about enjoying sex because they felt guilty about enjoying sex with their abusers.
- Sometimes a wife doesn't mind not feeling much desire/responsiveness, but her husband wants a responsive wife.
- Counseling for him.

Feeling Overwhelmed?

- God will make you equal to the task of helping sexual abuse survivors.
- Trust Him for wisdom, and look to Him for the strength to help these needy people.