



## MEN & CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

### CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT IS ALWAYS THE FAULT OF THE PERPETRATOR NEVER OF THE CHILD

It is estimated that approximately 1 in 8 eight boys are victims of sexual assault. Research suggests that 90% of perpetrators are males, 10% are female. Boys are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a male but women can and do sexually assault children, both male and female.

The perpetrator is usually someone known to the child. For boys, research suggests it is less likely to be a close family member and more likely to be a friend of the family or someone in a position of authority over the child. Most perpetrators identify as heterosexual and many are in a sexual relationship with a woman at the time of the assault.

#### **Impacts of abuse**

Children who are sexually assaulted experience many painful emotions including fear, shame, guilt, loneliness and confusion. Many children blame themselves for the abuse, especially if they have been bribed or coerced by the perpetrator

Some possible impacts for men in adulthood include:

#### **Relationship difficulties:**

- ❖ Because children have had their trust betrayed and their boundaries violated relationships can be difficult.
- ❖ Common difficulties include not trusting, not setting boundaries, always putting others needs first.

#### **Low self-esteem:**

- ❖ Because children may blame themselves for the abuse they may feel 'bad' and 'worthless'

#### **Addictive/compulsive behavior:**

- ❖ Because the child is exposed to intense and frightening emotions they may develop strategies as an adult to keep feelings and memories at bay.
- ❖ Addictions can include addiction to alcohol or other drugs, workaholics', eating disorders, risk taking behaviours, dissociation.

### Sexual difficulties:

- ❖ Because of unconsciously associating sex with abuse sex and sexual feelings may feel 'wrong'.
- ❖ Alternatively some survivors engage in compulsive sexual behaviour to try and come to terms with these feelings.

### Shame and Anger:

- ❖ Shame and anger at being seen as a victim and fear of not being believed - 'it doesn't happen to boys' - men are supposed to be able to protect themselves'.
- ❖ A child of whatever gender is powerless against adults who choose to abuse or trick them.

### Fear of being gay:

- ❖ 'It doesn't happen to real men'. Many heterosexual men feel that if the abuser was male they may have been targeted because they seemed 'gay' or they may fear that sexual assault may make them 'gay'.
- ❖ **Sexual assault does not affect sexual orientation.** Sometimes bodies may respond with physical pleasure during an assault. This does not mean that the child wanted the assault - it is a physiological reaction.
- ❖ For gay men it is important to know that their sexual orientation is not a result of abuse.

### Fear of being blamed:

- ❖ 'Men are always interested in sex - it must have been your fault'.
- ❖ If the abuser was female men may not be taken seriously when they disclose abuse. Even if the abuser is a female, even if the child's body responded pleasurably to the assault, even if the child participated in the sexual activity because they were bribed or tricked **any sexual activity between a child and an adult or someone older or bigger is the responsibility of the perpetrator.**

**Fear of being a perpetrator:** Some people think that '*child sexual abuse makes someone a perpetrator*' Because of this belief some men may be hyper vigilant around children or may isolate themselves from family or relationships.

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