
A GUIDE FOR MALE SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

1 in 6 boys is sexually abused before the age of 16. The average age for the first time of the abuse is 8 years and 4 months old (1in6.org).

Why Do I Have To Deal With It Now, If It Happened Back Then?

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse may believe that since the abuse happened so long ago it would be better not to rehash the past. They may avoid feelings and memories in order to function in their day-to-day lives. However, the abuse may still be affecting them. Triggers (internal or external reminders of the trauma) may bring up unresolved emotional issues. Some common situations survivors may find themselves in that make them realize they should seek support include:

- I am reacting unusually to situations differently than before.
- I am having emotional or sexual problems that are not getting any better.
- New circumstances have made me more aware of past experiences.

If you are a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, know that you are not alone. Survivors have found that recognizing what has happened to them and speaking about their experiences can be one of the most vital components in the healing process. Below is a list of common affects of sexual abuse that may linger with survivors in their adult lives.

Men who have been victims of childhood sexual assault may deal with the following:

- Anger and Hostility
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Dissociation
- Fear
- Helplessness
- Questions about Sexual Orientation
- Isolation and Alienation
- Loss of Power, Control, and Confidence
- Low Self-esteem
- Masculinity Issues
- Negative Childhood Peer Relations
- Negative Feelings about People and Self
- Problems with Sexuality
- Self Blame/Guilt
- Sense of Inadequacy
- Sexual Dysfunction
- Shame/Humiliation
- Sleep Disturbance
- Suicidal Ideas or Behaviors

Grieving/Mourning Being abused as a child means the loss of many things- childhood experiences, trust, innocence, normal relationships with family members (especially if the abuser was a family member). Survivors must be allowed to name those losses and grieve them.

Fear, anxiety, and being 'always on guard' and the Art of Remembering Fear and anxiety are normal responses to trauma. Some survivors have experienced traumatic amnesia or delayed recall of memories of child sexual abuse. Traumatic amnesia is a particular response of the brain that prevents a child from having any conscious recall of the abuse. It is associated with extreme emotional trauma. Memory loss has a reason: we may have been so young when abused that we were unable to form thoughts or put our feelings into words. Memories can't be forced; they will come back when the brain is ready to handle them.

Experiencing 'triggers' If you were sexually abused in childhood there may be things that bring back or 'trigger' memories. These include the way your partner may touch you sexually and everyday things such as colors, kinds of furniture or vehicles, sounds, or smells, which bring back memories or feelings associated with the abuse. These experiences can trigger a flashback, which is a re-experiencing of the abuse as if it were occurring at that moment. It is usually accompanied by visual images, or flashes of images, of the abuse. This is one of the ways of remembering the abuse.

Anger Some adult survivors report problems with anger. It may be anger against a particular person, fate, or a higher power. They may even feel angry with themselves for not being able to stop the abuse, angry with the abuser, or angry with parents or care givers for not protecting them. These emotions need to be acknowledged and validated.

Depression Many adult survivors suffer from depression as a result of childhood sexual abuse. Research shows, in fact, that depression is the most frequently reported symptom. Intimate Relationships and Personal Boundaries Trust is a crucial issue for many survivors throughout their lives because it was broken as such a young age by the very people who were supposed to care the most for them. Because survivors of childhood sexual abuse may have had to keep the abuse a secret in order to protect the family, as a result, many survivors may feel they have to put the needs of others above their own. Because the survivor's personal boundaries were invaded when they were young, adult survivors may have trouble understanding that they have the right to control what happens to them.

Reclaiming Your Sexual Self after Abuse

Sexual abuse influences a survivor's ability to establish and maintain healthy sexual relationships. Sexual concerns often emerge naturally after survivors have resolved feelings of anger and fear about the abuse, and begun to feel better about themselves. For many therapists and survivors, addressing sexual issues is seen as a final stage in sexual abuse recovery, but sexual concerns come up at all points in sexual abuse recovery.

You may want to work with a therapist who specializes in sexual abuse treatment. Survivors can greatly benefit from joining a therapy or support group and spending time with friends who are familiar with healing from sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse can disrupt many facets of our sexuality, including:

- How we feel about our gender

- How we feel about our bodies, sex organs, and bodily functions
- How we think about sex
- How we express ourselves sexually
- How we experience physical pleasure and intimacy with others

It takes time and effort to develop a positive sexual self-concept. Not only do we have to watch for the false conclusions and negative beliefs about ourselves that resulted from the abuse, we also need to replace old ways of thinking with new, healthy ones.

Begin your journey only when you feel ready for it. Go slowly and trust yourself. Sexual healing is usually never as fast as survivors and intimate partners would wish. Sexual healing is a profound personal growth work. During the process you will probably look closely at who you are, how you feel, what has happened to you in the past, and how you now take care of yourself and relate to others. (Taken from *The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*. Wendy Maltz, 2001)

HEALING FROM TRAUMA

Healing can begin at many starting points and everyone's journey is different. With many survivors breaking the silence, we have learned that there are shared reactions and experiences as survivors heal from the trauma. It is important to find someone to talk to about your experiences and feelings, either someone you know and trust, or a counselor.

What lies ahead? The five stages of healing:

Stage One: Initial Shock

- Shock following an assault can take on many forms. You may experience emotional as well as physical shock, which could be exhibited in controlled and withdrawn behavior, or highly expressive behavior such as crying, screaming, or shaking. You may not be comfortable expressing these feelings to others.

Stage Two: Denial

- Also called pseudo-adjustment, this stage may find you attempting to go on with your normal routine, wanting to forget about the assault. This denial or rationalization of what happened is an attempt to deal with inner turmoil and return to normal life.

Stage Three: Reactivation

- This stage involves a re-experiencing of the feelings from Stage One, usually brought on by the triggering of memories of the assault. Feelings of depression, anxiety and shame may increase. Other symptoms can include nightmares, flashbacks, and a sense of vulnerability, mistrust and physical complaints.

Stage Four: Anger

- You may experience feelings of anger—often toward yourself, friends, significant others, society, the legal system, all men/women, etc. With skillful support this anger can be redirected in ways that are healing.

Stage Five: Integration (Closure)

- As you integrate the thoughts and feelings stemming from the assault into your life experience you will begin to feel “back on track.” As a result of support, education, and the passing of time, you will feel strengthened.

Help Healing From Trauma

After experiencing a traumatic event, such as a sexual assault, you might find yourself reacting to situations in ways you would not have before the assault. You may feel numb, like the whole world is just floating by. Or, you may have memories that are so strong you find it difficult to stay in the present

moment. These strong memories are called flashbacks, and they can be triggered by a thought, smell, color, or anything that reminds you of the attack.

If you have a flashback, try grounding yourself and reentering the present moment using sensory techniques:

- Focus on the present (not the trauma).
- Take 3 slow, deep breaths.
- Try doing an activity that changes your current experience in any of your five senses:
 - Sight: Name 5 things you see in the room.
 - Taste: Drink something hot or cold, eat some strong tasting candy, or suck on ice.
 - Touch: Run your hand across something highly textured, or pet your dog.
 - Smell: Use scented candles, lotion, bubble bath, aromatherapy, or food.
 - Hear: Listen to music, someone's voice, or any noise happening around you (cars, barking, etc)

Sometimes you may be in the present moment, but just thinking a lot about the assault. The most important pieces of healing from trauma are to be gentle and patient with yourself. When you need some extra comfort you might:

- Turn on music, light candles or incense, and run yourself a warm bath.
- Drink hot tea or hot chocolate.
- Go to a special place (actually or in your mind).
- Hug a stuffed animal or a person who makes you feel safe.
- Cry.
- Use art, journaling, or other creative outlets.

At other times you might need to just get your mind off the assault, and that's okay too. You can watch TV, clean the house, go for a walk, or play cards with a friend. Just know that healing from trauma is possible. It will get better with time.

Coping and Self-Care

Coping mechanisms can also be described as Survival Strategies. Every survivor needs a toolbox of coping strategies to help with flashbacks, memories and the hard days where anxiety, depression and other feelings seem overwhelming. Some coping strategies are healthy (exercising, eating comforting foods in moderation, spending time with safe people, seeking out counseling, etc.) and some are not (self-harming, consuming alcohol or drugs, attempting suicide, promiscuous sexual activity, etc.).

Positive coping and self-care is incredibly important in the healing process. Below are some suggestions for taking care of yourself from the Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network (RAINN). More information can be found on their website www.rainn.org.

Physical

- Food is a type of self-care that is often overlooked. Make sure that you are getting adequate nutrition, and let yourself have a few favorites in moderation!
- Exercise! Exercise has been found to help combat feelings of sadness or depression.
- Make sure you are getting 7-10 hours of sleep each night.

Emotional

- Counseling. This could mean seeing a psychologist, social worker, or therapist, or speaking to someone on a crisis line. You will find resources at the end of this document.
- Keeping a journal. Some survivors find that recording thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary helps them manage their emotions.

- Connecting with others. Nurture relationships with people who make you feel good about yourself and make it a priority to spend time with friends and family. Consider joining a support group for survivors.
- Relaxation techniques or meditation. Here is one to try: Sit or stand comfortably, with your feet flat on the floor and your back straight. Place one hand over your belly button. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose and let your stomach expand as you inhale. Hold your breath for a few seconds, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, sighing as you breathe out. Concentrate on relaxing your stomach muscles as you breathe in. When you are doing this exercise correctly, you will feel your stomach rise and fall about an inch as you breathe in and out. Try to keep the rest of your body relaxed—your shoulders should not raise and fall as you breathe! Slowly count to 4 as you inhale and to 4 again as you exhale. At the end of the exhalation, take another deep breath. After 3-4 cycles of breathing you should begin to feel the calming effects.

Leisure

- Find time to do activities you enjoy.
- Get involved in a sport or hobby. Join a group and connect with others!

Campus Resources

Office of Women's Programs and Studies- Serves all people, regardless of gender

PH: (970) 491-6384

Trained Advocates are available to provide emotional support and information to survivors, male or female, of sexual assault, stalking, childhood sexual abuse, or domestic violence. Advocates are volunteers (students, staff, and faculty) who complete an extensive training program. They understand the complexity of the aftermath of sexual assault and can assist students in making decisions and obtaining resources. They are educated about legal, university, medical systems, and the psychological ramifications of sexual assault. Calling for an advocate does not obligate reporting anything to the police.

Victim Assistance Team

PH: (970) 491-7111 *ask to speak to an advocate

Trained Advocates are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide confidential emotional support and information to survivors of sexual assault. Advocates are volunteers (students, staff, and faculty) who complete an extensive training program. They understand the complexity of the aftermath of sexual assault and can assist students in making decisions and obtaining resources. They are educated about legal, university, medical systems, and the psychological ramifications of sexual assault. Advocates can help you navigate decisions about reporting to police or university authorities. Ultimately, the decision is yours unless there is an identifiable threat to another person.

Medical Concerns - Hartshorn Health Services

Medical Clinic (970) 491 – 7121

Taking care of medical concerns is an important part of the recovery process for survivors. Medical options to consider include: medical evaluation and treatment, and medications to lower the risk of contracting and/or treatment of STDs. In addition, if you decide to report the sexual assault, police may authorize a medical forensic examination, which must be performed at the local emergency room. Usually a forensic exam is only an option for 5 days after a sexual assault.

Emotional Healing - CSU Health Network Counseling Services

PH: (970) 491 – 6053 After Hours: (970) 491 – 7111 *ask to speak to a UCC counselor

The CSU Health Network Counseling Services offers a number of programs including individual therapy and 24-hour emergency services. These services are free of charge for students. Call or stop by Aylesworth Hall to speak with a counselor.

Academic Concerns

When you are healing from abuse, it is important to be patient and gentle with yourself. If you are having trouble concentrating and fulfilling your academic commitments, contact an advocate in the Office of Women's Programs and Studies about your options.

Legal Options

Choosing to report sexual assault crimes is not an appropriate option for everyone, and a trained advocate can help you navigate through your options. Investigations are often very difficult, long, and painful processes for survivors. Some survivors find they want to seek resolution through the legal system, and others do not. Deciding to report does not mean agreeing to testify; a survivor can always make the decision about testifying later. In Colorado, victims don't "press charges" – they are considered witnesses to a crime. They can decide not to participate at any point in the investigation and, upon choosing to make a police report, have rights as a crime victim under Colorado law.

An investigation can take from several weeks to several months. When the investigation is complete, it will be sent to the District Attorney's Office for a decision about filing charges. The victim has the right to be informed about this decision and to share their feelings and wishes with the District Attorney's

office. A victim advocate through the DA's office will be assigned to each crime victim. This person is an excellent resource for information about the legal process.

Police Resources

Police Emergency (on or off campus) – 911

CSU Police Department - Non-Emergency (970) 491-6425

Fort Collins Police Department Non-Emergency (970) 221-6540

Fort Collins TTY (Deaf Accessibility Line) Emergency (970) 221-3490

Larimer County Sheriff's Department Non-Emergency (970) 498-5141

Larimer County District Attorney's Office Victim/Witness Division (970) 498-7285

University Disciplinary Options - Conflict Resolution & Student Conduct Services

PH: (970) 491-7165

The Colorado State University Student Conduct Code applies to all students and persons residing on university property. Sexual misconduct, including sexual assault is a violation of the Code of Conduct. If the perpetrator of the crime is a student (or lives in university housing), you may choose to make a report to the Conflict Resolution & Student Conduct Services office. A Hearing Officer may determine there is sufficient reason to conduct an additional investigation into the sexual assault and disciplinary sanctions may be taken against the perpetrator.

Other Community Resources

- Childhelp USA's National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800- 4ACHILD (422-4453)
- Non-profit agencies such as Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center in Fort Collins also provide community advocates and counseling to survivors of sexual assault. 24-hour hotline (970) 472-4200; office (970) 472-4204.
- Medical Center of the Rockies Emergency Room (970) 624-2500
- National Sexual Assault Hotline (24-hour, confidential counseling and referral service): 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or www.rainn.org
- www.lin6.org helps men who have had unwanted or abusive sexual experiences in childhood live healthier, happier lives. This includes providing resources for people who care about them.
- www.malesurvivor.org committed to preventing, healing and eliminating all forms of sexual victimization of boys and men through treatment, research, education, advocacy and activism.