



Child Sexual Abuse: Understanding the Issues

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Overview

- definitions,
- healthy adult-child relationships,
- types of sexual abuse,
- prevalence,
- social forces that account for child sexual abuse,
- the effects of child sexual abuse,
- what sexual abuse means to child survivors,
- what sexual abuse means to perpetrators,
- do survivors become perpetrators, and
- factors associated with recovery from child sexual abuse.



Definitions

- Abuse of power
- Another person takes advantage
- Goal: gratification
 - Sexual
 - Emotional
- Not sexual play between consenting generational equals



Healthy Adult-Child Relationships

- Adults
 - sensitive, responsive
 - emotionally available
 - respects children's capacities
- Children
 - reciprocal interactions
 - internalize type of caregiving received
respects adult authority
 - taught to resist abuse of authority



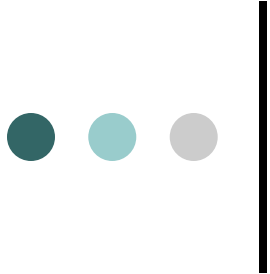
Types

- Incest
- Child molestation
 - By persons children/family know
 - By strangers (least common)
 - Direct contact
 - Through internet
- Child pornography
- Prostitution & child trafficking
- Sexualizing children



Prevalence

- World-wide Prevalence
 - At least 20% of all girls
 - At least 10% of all boys
 - More than 900 million survivors world-wide



Social Forces that Account for Child Sexual Abuse

- Children's status
- Entitlement, often gendered
- Sexual and emotional gratification of perpetrators
- Minimization of effects on survivors
- Victim-blaming & silencing of survivors
- Taboos sexual abuse and healthy sexuality
- Myths about perpetrators
- Financial gain,
- Underfunded prevention efforts.



Effects

- Wide variation
- Depend on
 - Other adversities children have experienced
 - Resources available to survivors
 - Sensitive, responsive care providers



Do Survivors Become Perpetrators?

- Most do not
 - Have resources and protective processes that they put to work
- Most perpetrators were not sexually abused
 - Many use sexual stimulation to cope with stress
 - Most experienced other childhood trauma
 - All have beliefs that support their sexually abusive behaviors



What Sexual Abuse Means to Children

- Do not understand sexual abuse and sexual behaviors
- Think they have to obey adults
- May love perpetrators but hate the abuse
 - Want perpetrators to get help
- Afraid they will be blamed
 - Often are blamed



What Child Sexual Abuse Means to Perpetrators

- Sexual Gratification
- Love
- Emotional High
 - Lifts mood
- Many believe
 - Sexual abuse is mutual love
 - What they are doing is not sexual abuse



Talking to Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused

- Emotional availability
 - Under-react
 - Use same words as the children
 - Sit at children's level
 - Avoid multiple interviews
 - Let children set the pace
- Inform children of legal implications



Treatment

- Treatment aids recovery
- Multi-Modal most effective
- Psychoeducation for entire family
- Parents have
 - to take care of own issues
 - be emotionally available to children
- Perpetrator accountability



Prevention

- Continue programs that help children protect themselves
- Add programs that prevent perpetration
- Deal with social forces that support child sexual abuse
 - Entitlement
 - Victim-blaming
 - Dismissal of effects
 - Demonizing perpetrators



Summary

- An abuse of power
- Sexual and emotional gratification
- Children do not understand
- Effects always serious but vary
- Multi-modal treatment
- Prevent perpetration
 - Acknowledge rewards of csa
 - Acknowledge how social forces support csa