

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE INFORMATION SHEET (Child)

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Child sexual abuse is when an adult or older child touches, or rubs a child's or adolescent's private parts (i.e. penis, testicles, vagina, bottom, breasts), or when the adult or older child asks the child to touch or rub their private parts. The person who does this is called a sex offender. The offender might make you do these things and be rough with you, or they might pretend it's a game, or even give you a reward to do it. The offender could be someone you know, a relative, a stranger, or another child. Still it's not OK even if they try to make it fun and you think it is fun.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

You need to remember that your body belongs to you. If you feel uncomfortable in the way you are being touched, you can tell the person "NO!" Also, tell another adult about what happened: parent, other relative, teacher, friend. It is important to keep telling until someone listens and helps.

HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED?

For some children, the sexual touching may feel good and they may still like the person who did it. But some people have other feelings. Some children have feelings like being angry at the person, or afraid of him or her. Other children might feel guilty about what happened. Sometime when people have these feelings, the feelings affect the way they behave. Like a child who is afraid may not want to sleep alone or be alone. Sometimes children get into more arguments and sometimes they may just feel sad and want to be alone. Some children feel upset for a long time after the abuse has ended, but they often feel better with the help of counseling. If someone is having a hard time with these feelings, talking with a counselor or a parent can help them feel better.

WHO IS SEXUALLY ABUSED?

Sexual abuse happens to a lot of children. It can happen to boys and girls of all ages, religions, and races. Some sexually abused children and adolescents are rich, some are poor, and they are from all different neighborhoods. By the age of 18, one out of every three girls, and one out of six boys experience some form of sexual abuse.

WHO SEXUALLY ABUSES CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS?

There are some people who sexually abuse children and adolescents, but there are many more people who only touch them with okay touches. Most sex

offenders are men, though some are women. You cannot tell by the way they look, dress, or act that they are offenders. Most of the time the offender is not a stranger, but someone who is well known to the child or adolescent.

WHY DOES SEXUAL ABUSE HAPPENS?

There are lots of different reasons just like there are lots of different offenders. But it is very hard to know the reason why it happens to any child or adolescent. We do know this much; no child or adolescent is responsible for what an adult does.

WHY DON'T CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS TELL?

Sometimes the offender tells the child or adolescent to keep it a secret. The offender may say: it's the child or adolescent's fault, and that they or their family will get hurt if they tell. These are all tricks. Sometimes children and adolescents just keep it a secret because they feel ashamed; embarrassed or scared. It is important to tell an adult until they find one that will help.

WHEN SHOULD YOU SUSPECT ABUSE?

You cannot tell by looking at a person that he or she has been abused. Sometimes you can tell by the way a child or adolescent is acting that something is bothering them, but you do not know what it is. That is why it is so important for children and adolescents to tell somebody.

Some children and adolescents are very angry at the person who did the abuse, or are scared of him or her; others may still like the person. Any of these feelings are OK.

COPING WITH CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

It is great to talk to a counselor or a parent. You really do need to talk about sexual abuse, even though it can be hard. Talking will help you feel better after a while.