



**rape and abuse
crisis center**

advocacy. counseling. education.

Sexual Abuse: Your Family and You

Why it happens

Sexual abuse is about the offender's need for power, control, and dominance. Offenders may be motivated to sexually abuse because they need to validate their sense of self-worth and bolster their self-esteem.¹ Offenders tend to be sexually and emotionally immature.

Offenders tend to be narcissistic and seem unable to have empathy for their victims. Denial keeps them from having to look at themselves and the consequences of their behavior. They use guilt and bribes. They have a low tolerance for frustration and poor impulse control. They deny, minimize, and rationalize their behavior.²

How the Victim Feels

The victim often feels trapped, guilty, and very afraid of what might happen if the "secret" is ever revealed. They may feel powerless, and they may feel like the abuse was their fault.

As an adult, they may have trouble in relationships because they have a hard time associating sex with love or caring. Naturally, they might mistrust men, and have a poor self-image. Because of the potential for feelings of self-hate, some victims may drink, have eating disorders, shoplift, or be promiscuous. They may also have many medical problems, including a strong tendency toward depression.

How the Family Feels

The siblings of the victim may blame the victim for what happened. They may be jealous of all the attention the victim receives. They feel "left out" of the family and angry at the victim for "causing problems."

The mother of the victim may find it very difficult to be assertive. She may be overwhelmed by what has happened and may choose to pretend it hasn't happened because she doesn't know what she can do about it.

How to Get Help

Treatment and support groups are a must for victims of family sexual abuse. They can help victims learn to express their thoughts and feelings more directly and learn how to relate better to the family. Call the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center for help at 701-293-7273.

References:

1. Gado, Mike. *The Slaughter of Innocence*.
http://www.trutv.com/library/crime/criminal_mind/psychology/pedophiles/2.html
2. SECASA: <http://www.secasa.com.au/index.php/workers/21/13>

24-hour Crisis Line (701)293-7273

www.raccfm.com

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