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## **Myths and Facts: Siblings in an Incestuous Family**

**Myth #1: When incest occurs in the family, it does not affect the siblings.**

**Fact:** Everyone in the family is affected to some degree because of the dynamics, i.e.: loss of boundaries, communication difficulties, isolation, role confusion, etc.

**Myth #2: Siblings don't need counseling.**

**Fact:** Siblings may need someone to talk to about their concerns and questions. Since they are also affected by the dynamics, they will need some help in changing some of the patterns in the family.<sup>2</sup>

**Myth #3: The siblings should hate the perpetrator. It is not okay for siblings to love the person who sexually assaulted their brother or sister.**

**Fact:** It is okay to have good feelings toward the perpetrator; one need not forget the good times. This is probably a person who has shared a lot of the siblings' lives and it is not easy to turn off the love for that person. One can hate a person's behavior and still love the person.

**Myth #4: The siblings always know that incest is occurring in the home.**

**Fact:** Some siblings may know, but may be too afraid or confused to say anything.<sup>1</sup>

**Myth #5: Siblings always believe the victim when incest is revealed.**

**Fact:** Most siblings find it hard to believe that this could happen in their family or that someone they love could do such a thing; therefore, they may not want to believe the victim.

**Myth #6: If one sibling is sexually assaulted in a family, then all the other siblings will be too.**

**Fact:** Although this happens sometimes, it does not always occur.

**Myth #7: Siblings always feel sorry for the victim and try to protect him or her.**

**Fact:** Although this may be the case in some families, many times siblings feel resentful toward the victim because of the amount of attention the victim may be receiving, or the amount of authority s/he is using on the siblings. Siblings may also feel angry at the victim, especially if the family is somehow separated as a result of the incest being revealed.

**Myth #8: Incest will never occur in the families of the sibling. (this means in the families of the siblings after they have had their own children)**

**Fact:** It is possible that incest will not occur in the siblings' families. However, since it involves the dynamics of the entire family, the likelihood of it occurring in the next generation is high, unless the family receives counseling to deal with the dynamics.

References:

1. Web4Health: <http://web4health.info/en/answers/sex-incest-family.htm>
2. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:  
[http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/child\\_sexual\\_abuse](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/child_sexual_abuse)

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