

17 COMMON MYTHS of Child Sexual Abuse

Many people don't know what child sexual abuse and exploitation is, or don't realise it's happening around them. The following gives you the facts behind the myths.



✗ CHILDREN ARE VERY SUGGESTIBLE AND THEY CAN EASY "MAKE UP" STORIES OF ABUSE.

Children are no more than adults, and can distinguish between reality and fantasy. Research shows that children resist making false reports during leading and suggestive interviewing techniques.



✗ CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE SEXUALLY ABUSED.

Children with disabilities and special needs are 3 times more likely to suffer abuse.



✗ CHILDREN USUALLY TELL SOMEONE ABOUT THEIR ABUSE.

Most children do not tell anyone. They are often silenced through threats or fear of not being believed. Some children do not have the words to speak about what is happening to them.



✗ WE CAN SPOT AN ABUSER.

Abusers often compartmentalise their behaviour, they can often abuse a child and then act like a normal parent, teacher, coach, etc. The idea that we can spot abusers is not only incorrect its dangerous and reckless.



✗ SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED AS A CHILD IS LIKELY TO GO ON TO BECOME AN ABUSER AS AN ADULT.

This is perhaps the most damaging myth of all survivors of childhood sexual abuse who fear that they will harm their own children. The reality is that someone who has been sexually abused as a child is no more or less likely to go on to abuse children as an adult. In fact one piece of Canadian research showed evidence that the majority of child abusers, were not in fact abused in childhood.



✗ CHILD ABUSE ONLY HAPPENS IN SOME PARTS OF SOCIETY.

Child abuse happens across all social classes, religions and ethnicities.



✗ ONLY MEN SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILDREN.

Although much fewer, women also abuse children.



GREATEST ABUSE MYTH

✗ STRANGER DANGER

More than **90%** of child sexual abuse is carried out by someone you know, or known by the family.



✗ IF A CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED THERE WILL BE MEDICAL EVIDENCE.

Medical evidence is found in less than **5%** of substantiated child abuse cases.



✗ SEXUAL ABUSE COMMITTED BY BOYS IS NOT AS SERIOUS AS THAT COMMITTED BY ADULT MEN.

Children are damaged by sexual abuse whoever the perpetrator is.



✗ CHILD ABUSE ONLY TAKES ONE FORM.

There are many types of sexual abuse such as, individual, gang, group, street grooming, online and peer-on-peer.



✗ PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN ABUSED THEMSELVES.

The majority of sexually abused children are female, and yet the majority of sexually abusers are men.



✗ CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS NOT PREVENTABLE

More than **90%** of child sexual abuse is preventable though learning early warning signs & prevention education.



✗ BOYS ARE LESS LIKELY TO SUFFER LONG TERM TRAUMA FROM SEXUAL ABUSE.

The long term severity of trauma is equal in boys and girls.



✗ PEOPLE LIE ABOUT CHILD ABUSE FOR ATTENTION AND SYMPATHY.

Research, including police and court statistics shows that it is very rare for a person of any age to state they were abused when they were not. However, "false negative reports" of abuse are common e.g. many adults state that they were not abused as children when they were.



✗ CHILDREN "GET OVER" BAD EXPERIENCES IN CHILDHOOD.

Adults are often deeply affected by childhood trauma and abuse. You cannot just "get over" it. Survivors need the right care and support to overcome the impacts of abuse, recover and live full and healthy lives.



✗ PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILDREN ARE MENTALLY ILL.

Most people who sexually abuse children are not mentally ill. They are often married or have sexual relationships with adults as well. In anonymous surveys, a significant minority of men in the community indicate a sexual interest in children.

