

This booklet answers these questions:

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A foreword for parents

This is a booklet written for boys who have been sexually abused. Nine to twelve year olds should be able to read it easily, but younger children may need help. The vocabulary is fairly simple, but some of the ideas are not.

Also, one of the main ideas expressed in this booklet is that children need the help of their parents to recover from the effects of sexual abuse. Unless, of course, the parents also happen to be the abusers. One way in which you can help is by reading and talking about this booklet with your son.

Parents can help by reading and talking about this booklet with their child.

What is this booklet about?

If you are a boy and you have been *sexually abused*, this is a special booklet for you.

It will help in three ways:

- ① Explain what sexual abuse is.
- ② Help you understand your feelings.
- ③ Tell you how to get help for mixed-up feelings.

You may not want to read it all at one time, but read as much as you can. Then come back to read more later. If you find some of the words hard to understand, ask an adult or a friend to help you.

If you can talk to your parents about your feelings, they may be the best people to help you with the reading. It may be a good plan to ask them to read this booklet anyway. They need to understand your feelings too.

As you go through this booklet you will read seven true stories. Eric, Lucien, Pierre, Nathan, Justin, Bob and Carlos are all boys who went to a counsellor because they had been sexually abused. These are not their real names, but their stories and their feelings are very real, just as yours are. Maybe some of your feelings are like some of theirs.

Eric's story

Eric was sexually abused by his baseball coach. The coach had talked him into staying behind in the locker room after a game. What the coach wanted was to get into the shower with Eric and rub his bum with soap. Then he gave Eric five dollars and told him to be quiet about it. Eric was afraid to talk to anybody. He was especially afraid that the coach would kick him off the team and tell his parents if he dared to say anything.

Lots of abused children are afraid to tell because the abuser has made a threat. Boys like Eric who have been told to keep quiet often have bad dreams. For a long time Eric had bad dreams and couldn't do his school work. Eric felt much better after he told his counsellor. He felt less afraid and stopped having the bad dreams. Then he was able to do his school work because he wasn't worried all the time.

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is a touch you didn't ask for, but made you feel guilty anyway. It means that someone has touched you in a way that made you feel confused and bad about yourself. It's a touch on a part of your body that is private, like your penis or your bum. But the person who touched you didn't seem to care whether it was private or not.

If another kid hits you or you get a spanking, you don't feel good. But you understand what happened to you. Sexual abuse isn't like that. You may feel bad and good at the same time, and that's really hard to understand.

Suppose your hockey coach says he's going to show you how to make a slap shot. While he's showing you, he puts his hand down your pants and feels your bum. Then you make your shot, and your coach says "Good shot, Jimmy!" You like to hear the praise, but you don't like him touching you that way. Feeling bad and good at the same time is confusing.

If you have been sexually abused, it usually means you have been touched on a private part of your body. But not always. You may be asked to touch someone else on a private part of their body. Or you may be made to watch a video showing people touching one another's private parts. If watching the video makes you feel weird, it's a kind of sexual abuse.



Lucien's story

Lucien had a teenaged babysitter who made him get on top of her and put his penis into her vagina. Lucien felt a lot of shame and fear, and asked his mother to get another sitter. But he told his counsellor that the sexual abuse was his idea, not the sitter's, and that he didn't mind being abused. Lucien had heard other boys say that any boy who could have sex with a teenaged girl was lucky. So he pretended to his counsellor that he didn't have a problem.

Lucien saw his counsellor for a long time before he would admit to how scared and ashamed he really felt.



When boys are sexually abused by older girls, they often have a hard time telling their real feelings.

Who is sexually abused?

Every year thousands of boys and girls in this country are sexually abused. We used to think that only girls were sexually abused. Now we know that it happens to both boys and girls. Some counsellors think that just as many boys as girls are sexually abused, but that boys are more afraid to admit it's happened to them.

If you have been sexually abused, you're not the only one. It's much more common than you might think, and it happens to both boys and girls.

Who does the abusing?

Men and teenage boys do most of the sexual abusing, but women and teenage girls also sexually abuse young boys. Boys and girls your own age may sexually abuse other children, but that's not as common as adults and teenagers doing it. Males sexually abuse boys more often than females do. This is because a lot of males learn to be forceful and take what they want.

A lot of people think the men who sexually abuse boys do it because they are gay or homosexual. This idea is wrong. Men molest boys because they want to use their sexual power against someone smaller and weaker. They are sexual bullies. Whether they are gay or not has *nothing* to do with it. In fact, about 95% of the men who sexually abuse boys are not gay. If they were, they would want to spend their time with other gay men, not with young boys.

Some boys think that if a man has sexually abused them, then they must be gay themselves, or the man wouldn't find them interesting. This idea is wrong too. Men who do this do it because they are sexually attracted or 'turned on' to children.

Males grow up to be either *heterosexual* (prefer women) or *homosexual* (prefer other men). We don't quite know why, but we do know it has nothing to do with having been sexually abused.

Pierre's story

Whenever Pierre visited his uncle on the farm, his uncle would get Pierre to sit on his lap. Then he would slip his hand down Pierre's pants and touch his penis. Finally Pierre had had enough, so he told his mother. His mother stopped him from visiting the farm, but she didn't tell the police. Then she told his father. His father didn't say anything. He just stared at Pierre, and didn't talk to him as much as he used to.

Pierre told his counsellor about his uncle. He had a hard time telling the counsellor about the way his father was behaving. Pierre was afraid his father thought it was his fault. He was also afraid that his father thought he was a homosexual.

The counsellor told Pierre that his uncle was acting that way because he was attracted to children. He also told Pierre that this had nothing to do with homosexuality. The counsellor also spent some time with Pierre's father so he could learn to be more of a help to Pierre.

Boys who are molested by men are often afraid of growing up to be homosexual. Sometimes they are afraid that other boys will find out and call them names like 'fag' or 'gay'. A good counsellor can help abused boys get over these fears.

Nathan's story

Nathan had done something dangerous. He was late for school, and decided to put his thumb out for a ride. A well-dressed man in a new car pulled over to give him a ride. Nathan thought he was lucky, but the man drove him to a country road instead. He ordered Nathan out of the car and made him take his pants off. Then he stuck his penis up Nathan's anus. After this he gave Nathan some chocolates, and drove him back to the city.

When Nathan got back to his home, he was frightened half to death, and he had a very sore bum.

As soon as the police had spoken to him and heard about the man with the new car, they took Nathan to the hospital. Nathan's parents were afraid he might have gotten AIDS from the man. Their family doctor looked at Nathan, and found out he was quite okay.

When Nathan went to the counsellor, he still couldn't believe he hadn't been damaged. The counsellor had to see Nathan for several weeks helping him get over his fears.

When boys are sexually abused in a painful way like Nathan was, they are often afraid of damage to their bodies. And they are often afraid of AIDS. A good counsellor will work with the doctors and nurses to help calm your fears.

Was it my fault that I was sexually abused?

No, it wasn't. The person who sexually abused you may have tricked you. He may have pretended that he was lost or that his dog was lost. He may have pretended he was going to show you how to hold a baseball bat. He may have pretended that he was going to teach you about sex. He may have pretended that he wanted to be your friend just so he could sexually touch you.

The person who sexually abused you may have started by showing you something really interesting, like a model train, or a record collection, or a fish tank, or his new truck. Then he abused you when you weren't expecting anything bad to happen.

The person who sexually abused you may have offered you money, or liquor and cigarettes, or a chance to play with some interesting toys. Sometimes boys think the abuse was their fault for accepting a gift, or letting themselves be tricked, or going to the abuser's house instead of going home on time.

Sometimes kids let the abuser touch them because they really want the gift. Then they feel bad after and think it was their fault, but it's not. Adults are supposed to take care of kids, not trick them so they can sexually abuse them.

What do we know about people who sexually abuse children?

① Abusers don't want to get caught, because if they do they may have to go to jail. So they may tell you to keep the abuse a secret.

② Abusers may threaten you to make you keep the secret. They may tell you that you or your family may be hurt or killed if you tell. When this happens you feel trapped.

③ Abusers may offer you presents to try to get you to agree to be abused again.

④ Abusers may look for other children to abuse. Many men who abuse children do it over and over again. They really enjoy abusing children and don't want to stop. They are called pedophiles, and they are quite dangerous.

⑤ Abusers like to make their victims think it was their fault. This way they have power over you. If you have been sexually abused, you get some of your power back when you learn that the abuse wasn't your fault.

Justin's story

Justin came from a home where there were lots of problems. His mother drank a lot, and she had several boyfriends. One of her boyfriends used drugs. If Justin's mother was passed out from drinking, he would make Justin take some of his drugs. Then he would sexually abuse Justin in a number of different ways.

Justin felt very, very angry. He also felt trapped because he told his mother, but she wouldn't make her boyfriend leave. One day he couldn't stand it any more, so he told his teacher. His teacher told a social worker, and the social worker took him out of his home right away. Then Justin had to live in a foster home.

Justin didn't like living with strangers at first. But anything seemed better than being trapped and molested by his mother's boyfriend.

Justin's foster parents had a lot of trouble with him. As soon as Justin felt a little bit safe, he started to behave badly. He picked fights with other children at school, and set small fires in his new bedroom. Then he started to sexually abuse the smaller children in his new foster home. Once he even pointed a kitchen knife at another boy to make him do what he wanted. All this made him feel more in control.

Justin told his counsellor everything right away. But he also gave the counsellor a bad time. Justin threw paint around the counsellor's office, and even tried to hurt the counsellor. But after many talks with the counsellor Justin got his angry feelings out. Then he stopped trying to abuse other children. Today Justin has some good friends and is happier in his foster home.

Why is sexual abuse a bad thing?

When you have been sexually abused, you often feel ashamed and frightened. When you have these feelings, they take over your mind. Then it's really hard to enjoy your friends and your family. It may be hard for you to do your school work or to sleep properly at night. You may feel that there's no room in your mind for normal things.

Then you get so confused and angry, you want to get even and hurt people – your parents, your pets, your friends – anyone who gets in your way.



You might think that all you have to do is forget about what happened. But this doesn't really work. If you forget the abuse now, you could have a lot of problems later. Like taking drugs or running away. You might even have problems in your adult life.

So sexual abuse is a bad thing, but it doesn't have to ruin your life. You can get help. When you go for help, remind yourself, "It wasn't my fault."

Bob's story

Bob had been sexually abused by his step-father. The step-father used to go to Bob's bedroom and pretend to read him a story every night. What the step-father really wanted was to make Bob touch his penis. Bob got tired of this, and told his mother. Then they told the police.

But when he came to see the counsellor, he didn't want to talk about it any more. After many visits, Bob agreed to write about his abuse on a piece of paper. Then the counsellor found out that Bob's uncle had told him he was a wimp. He told him he should just forget about the abuse. The counsellor then told Bob how important it was to talk about it. After Bob told his counsellor the whole story, he felt much better. And he didn't feel like a wimp at all. He felt brave.

Some boys think they aren't really manly if they talk about their feelings. But then they learn that talking about feelings takes a lot of courage. That's what Bob learned.

How do I get help?

If you have been sexually abused, you must have help. The best way to get help is by telling someone what has happened to you. If you don't, the abuse could happen again. If you are still being sexually abused, you need to make it stop. And to make it stop you may need help from someone older and stronger than you are.

Boys often think they can make bad things stop without getting help. Someone may have told you, "Just say no", or "If anyone tries to touch you, just yell or bash them one". That is foolish advice. The abuser is probably bigger and older than you are. You need a helper. Don't worry about looking foolish if you go for help. It might be the most important thing you've ever done.

If you decide to go for help, think very carefully before you decide who to tell. Is the person you've chosen really going to help you? If you tell your mother, will she believe you? Or will she just scold you for getting into trouble? If you tell your father, will he help or just make a big noise and tell you to forget about it?

In *most* cases, your parents are the best people to tell, and they will try to help you. But if your mother or father is the abuser, then you'll have to come up with a different idea.

Here are some other people you can tell:

A grandparent

An aunt or uncle

A teacher or school counsellor

A social worker

A police officer

A brother or sister, but only if you're sure they'll tell an adult.

If the first person you tell doesn't help you, keep trying! Tell someone else you trust. Telling is the most important thing to do. If you don't, the abuse may continue. If the abuse happened a long time ago, and has stopped, you still have a secret. This secret almost always makes you feel bad. So it's still important to tell someone.

Some boys think they aren't really manly if they talk about their feelings. But then they learn that talking about feelings takes a lot of courage.

Carlos' story

Carlos went to a school where the principal would invite the boys on the school soccer team into his office. He always told them how well they were playing. But one day he invited Carlos into his office without the other boys. He gave Carlos a pat on the back for playing a good game. Then he slipped his hand into Carlos' pants, and started to rub his penis. Carlos knew that what his principal was doing was wrong, so he told his father when he got home that night. His father went straight to the police and the principal was charged with sexual abuse. It turned out that the principal had been abusing other boys. The principal lost his job, and had to go to court.

Carlos told his counsellor he was glad when the principal went to jail. But the counsellor didn't think he looked all that glad. Then the counsellor found out that Carlos really missed his principal, and missed having him as a soccer coach.

If children like the person who has sexually abused them, they may miss that person as well as feel mad at him. The sad feeling is called grief. It took Carlos a long time to get over his grief.

How will I feel after I tell?

At first you will feel better. This is because you have the secret off your chest, and you will feel brave. It takes a lot of courage to tell a secret you feel guilty about. Some people may say, "We're glad you told." But later you might feel sorry you told.

There are some things you might find difficult:

① The police will want to interview you, and ask you a lot of questions.

② You may have to go to the hospital or to your family doctor for a medical examination. The doctor will want to make sure that your body is okay.

③ Some of your family may be glad that you told, but some of them may not. If the abuser was a favourite uncle, one of your brothers or sisters may be mad at you for telling.

④ The abuser may have been someone you admired, like a coach. Then you may feel sad if telling means you are not going to see him any more.

⑤ You may have to go to court to tell the judge and the lawyers what happened. This may seem scary at first.

⑥ The social worker may want you to see a sexual abuse counsellor.

What will the sexual abuse counsellor do?

The sexual abuse counsellor can help you talk about your feelings. When you have been sexually abused, you have a lot of feelings that are hard to understand. The counsellor can help you sort them out and make sense out of them. The counsellor may ask you to talk about the abuse. Or ask you to draw pictures to show how you feel. Your counsellor will understand how boys feel when they have been sexually abused.

The sexual abuse counsellor will talk to your parents and explain how you feel, so that they understand. The counsellor will tell them how they can help you the most. The counsellor will try to understand their feelings as well.

Suppose you have to go to court. The counsellor will help by working with the police and the *Crown Prosecutor*. The prosecutor is the lawyer for the state who is on your side if you go to court.

"I thought it would be really hard to talk to someone, but my counsellor understands how I feel."

How do boys usually feel about sexual abuse?

The boys you read about, Bob, Eric, Lucien, Nathan, Pierre, Carlos and Justin all had *different stories* and *different feelings*. They were afraid of different things such as getting AIDS, being called names, and being hurt by the abuser. Carlos suffered from grief, and Justin was so angry that he hurt other people.

The boys started to feel better when they could tell the counsellor about feeling afraid and lonely and sad. And about feeling angry, and being tricked and cheated and trapped. After a while they learned how to be ordinary kids again. They felt a lot better when they realized they could talk to the counsellor about things like video games and hockey cards – not just about sexual abuse.

Later the counsellor asked them to be in a group so they could talk to one another about what it's like to be sexually abused. That way they could help each other and not feel so lonely. One important thing they found out was that they all felt guilty. They all felt that it was partly their fault for being sexually abused.

The counsellor kept reminding them that they *were not responsible*. After a while they knew that was true, and then they felt a lot better.

When you get the help you need you will get over the sexual abuse. Then you'll feel just like an ordinary kid again.



What do sexually abused boys need most?

If you have been sexually abused, you need a lot of help:

- ① You need to get a lot of understanding and support from parents.
- ② You need help from trained counsellors.
- ③ You need help from other people like social workers, teachers, police and family.

When you get the help you need you will get over the sexual abuse. Then you'll feel just like an ordinary kid again.

"I didn't want to talk to my mom because I knew she'd get upset, so I told my teacher. Now I talk to a counsellor and I feel alot better."

