

# ***Dealing With Child Sexual Abuse***

***By Dr. Edward Watke Jr.***

## **Introduction:**

- One study revealed that one-fifth to one-third of all women reported that they experienced some sort of childhood sexual encounter with an adult male.
- Yet boys are more likely to be abused than girls.
- It is said that assaulters of boys average 282 victims, while assaulters of girls average 23 victims.

## **A. We are told that these “red flag” signals may be signs of sexual abuse:**

1. fearfulness, extreme reclusiveness, or non-responsiveness to peer interactions;
2. physical and/or emotional difficulties or complaints, such as night mares, phobias, stomach pains, venereal infections, etc.;
3. violent or highly aggressive behavioral responses;
4. low self worth and low self image. The person has a hatred of self, and possibly feels very unclean, undesired, and unwanted;
5. vacillation between being pseudo-adult and ultra-immature in actions and reactions;
6. regressive behaviors (thumb-sucking, clinging, infantile posture, baby talk);
7. bedwetting which is not an organic or developmental problem. (Sheldon, 1984)  
*Caution: These signs are not necessarily caused by sexual abuse.*

## **B. Very often, the first contact outside the family reporting sexual abuse is with the family physician or family’s pastor.**

## **C. There is little correlation between a person’s religious practices and sexual abuse. Many abusers attend fundamental churches.**

***That should alert pastors and cause us to reconsider five things.***

1. Are we using superficial methods of evangelism?
2. Are we emphasizing Biblical progressive sanctification?
3. Are we teaching and preaching the truths that build Christians toward victory as we honestly relate to the things people potentially face?
4. Are we carefully screening those who work with children and youth?
5. Do we allow situations where individuals have long periods of time alone with a child?

**D. As leaders we are in strategic positions. We must therefore understand the problem and the need of our help.**

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION REPORTED:** (From those who work with such problems.)

**A. How to spot the molester or offender!**

1. He:

- is a man you and your children trust, often a relative
- 90% are not in jail
- has completed one or more years of college, (often excellers)
- holds a job
- often is well respected
- was not molested as child -- .40% of boy molesters were .24% of girls molesters were
- may have many normal interests, seems very normal in every way

2. He usually positions himself to get time alone with children. (Or he abuses opportunities he naturally has; may be a camp counselor, teacher, scout leader, etc. Check out history of those who work with children.)

3. He usually not show any antisocial behavior.

4. He is rarely caught unless the child tells.

5. Check out history of those who are hired, who work with children in any way whatsoever.

**B. The history of the past, how it may have begun.**

1. As a child molester he possibly was molested.

2. By fantasizing, (Became interested through pornography, masturbation, TV programming. Thoughts allowed to linger, fed, etc., and not suppressed and dealt with. Government and church has the **right to deal** with these cases.)

**C. Watch for the molester's procedures:** (Note if these things are true.)

1. Has excessive amounts of time spent with the child or youth.

2. Seeks opportunities for himself (in camp, a coach, etc.)

3. Manufactures excuses for extra time with the person.

4. Abuses privacy ("skinny dipping," physical contact, traveling, etc.)

5. Hunts for the vulnerable:

- family in financial distress and need
- broken family, one parent family, father ill or gone, etc.

#### **D. If you have reason to suspect:**

1. First, assure the person that no matter what anyone has told them, You love them and will and can protect them and yourself.
2. DO NOT first ask about inappropriate touching.

### **II. ISSUES THE COUNSELOR SHOULD CONSIDER:**

- \* **World's** emphasis is on: "victim" and "perpetrator". This diminishes the sovereignty of God. The world tells the victim to go to court and tell all; get dragged through the mud in the process.
- \* God is sovereign! He is on the throne, He knows it all; and the abused person is not a victim but has a position as victor in Christ. (Rom. 8:37)

#### **A. Teach God's Sovereignty and power.**

1. Life will not, or may not be fair, even in our view.
2. God is not to blame even though there is much inequity in life.
3. God knows how to bring beauty out of ashes, wholeness out of brokenness, joy in the midst of pain. (Study Isaiah 61:1-3.)
4. God will give grace for it all. (II Cor. 12:9; Jas. 1:2-4) (Consider Joseph.)
5. God uses hurts, damage to bring growth, maturity, victory and joy of knowing Him in a new way.
6. God will some day settle all accounts. (Rom. 12:19)

#### **B. Help, don't victimize or help the victim to remain a victim.**

1. Victimization denies God's power, will, and providential workings. (Rom. 8:28-29; I Cor. 10:13; II Cor. 12:9)
2. Give help, and not pity.
  - Don't major on the losses, the failures or the hurts.
  - Major on the positives not the negative. (God is at work!)
  - Don't make implications that deny the power of the Word and the Spirit.
  - Three options:
    - 1) I was treated wrong, but God can and will intervene and give me victory; I can and will forgive.
    - 2) I was horribly hurt; I have a right to be bitter; I won't forgive.
    - 3) I have right to live as I am living; I love to do wrong for life isn't fair anyway.

### **III. HELPING THE OFFENDED WITH COMMON PROBLEMS:**

#### **A. Excessive fears.**

1. Expressed by: excesses, vigilance, withdrawal, running away

2. Possible fears: death, more abuse, separation, rejection,
3. Giving help:
  - Get data, get understanding; “What were you told would happen if you told the story?” Identify what the child or person fears.
  - Give the child protection.
  - The court may take the child out of the home.
  - Court may remove father, etc.
4. Teach how to handle fear in a way that pleases God.
  - Can’t promise there will be no fear. (Isa 41:10-11; 40:28-31; Josh. 1:7-9; II Tim. 1:7)
  - Can teach how to walk with God.
5. Be compassionate and trustworthy. (honest)
  - Child has been lied to many times.
  - 60% who have been abused once, get abused more than once.
  - Be careful of your own body movements, hands, etc. (touching, etc.)
6. See that the child gets a physical exam.
7. Prepare the child (parents) to deal with the judicial process, if necessary.
  - Do I face the offender? • Should we go to court?
  - Will I go to jail? What if the case is dropped?
  - Why do we have to go through it? -- Offender must face consequences!

## **B. Problems of anger, hostility, and bitterness.**

1. Expressed by:
  - Abused person will manifest aggression and depression.
  - Abused person will be explosive and unpredictable.
  - Abused person may be an emotional basket-case. They will be like a “yo-yo.”
2. Help for:
  - Teach the abused to use the energy of anger to solve problems.
  - Teach the abused to see God in the trial.
  - Teach the person to leave room for God’s wrath. (Put away their own.) (Rom. 12:17-21) They can trust God to be enough! He will take care of the offender.
  - Teach the abused not to make room for excuses for their own wrong actions or reactions.
  - Teach the offended to return good for evil.
  - Teach the offended how to truly forgive.
  - Provide loving examples and help the person to apply Ephesians 4:15, 26-27, 2-32..

## **C. The problem of guilt.**

1. Areas in which the child (youth) may express guilt:

- Believe they were responsible for the abuse or sexual behavior,
- over the disruption of the family,
- over anger, and bitterness toward the offender,
- because of wrong thoughts and behavior,
- because they enjoyed the stimulation or were rewarded for their cooperation.
- because they allowed the abuse to continue,
- because they must tell about the abuse and/or face the abuser.

2. Help for the person:

- Teach what guilt is:
- Offender is 100% wrong for his part of the problem.
- Identify elements of behavior for which the child is responsible.
- Help the offended to see the importance of control of their thoughts.
- Must control thoughts; practice replacement of wrong thoughts, but they can't command emotions.
- Make a **think list** of good things -- of blessings from the Lord. (Phil. 4:7-8)

**D. Problem of relationship with others.**

1. Affected by: fears, personal habits, anger, unsettled life.

- What people know? Who will find out?
- Lessening of social interaction that brings a limitation of building social contact and skills.

2. Teach:

- How to handle fear and anger,
- How to deal with bitterness and give forgiveness,
- Importance of communication,
- Building friendships with the right people,
- Pleasing God more and more, may have to please some people less and less.

**E. Problem of thinking about self:**

1. May **feel** something is wrong with themselves.

2. Help:

- To know who God is!
- How to walk with the Lord!
- Identify with the Lord!
- To put facts over feelings!

**F. Problem of boy-girl relationships and understanding of sex:**

1. Expressed by:

- sex is ugly, dirty, undesirable.
- and yet have natural God-given drives, may be deeply confused
- easy to have loose morals, standards, *"have already failed so what is the use?"*

2. Help by:

- Teaching difference between godly love and lust.
- Teaching the importance of purity outside of marriage.

- Teach satisfaction of sexual relationship within marriage. That God made it holy, sacred, pure, and good within marriage. (Heb. 13:4)
- Teaching about the body, the temple and keeping it holy. (I Cor. 6:9-11, 18-20)
- Teaching Biblical love, not an emphasis on passion or infatuation.

**G. Problem of role confusion.**

1. Role of parent and of the child.
2. Building trust, respect, and honor to those who are trustworthy.

**H. Preparation for marriage, if the person is old enough at that point.**

1. Counseling, role playing
2. Example of other couples.

**I. Dating relationships**

1. The physical in the dating process.
2. The abused may be tempted to be sexually involved because --
  - has a habit of sexual activity, enjoying the emotional responses,
  - likes being treated tenderly, physically by a man,
  - likes acceptance of their unsaved peers,
  - feel ugly; like damaged goods, so why bother being pure.
3. May have greater bitterness toward unoffending parent than toward offending parent or relative.

**J. Needs Biblical teaching on:**

1. Problem solving
2. Building godly relationships,
3. God, His love, acceptance, forgiveness,
4. Restored faith in mankind,
5. Good and evil
6. Thinking biblically,
7. Biblical principles,
8. A pure thought life, putting away idols of the heart,
9. Forgiveness toward the offender,
10. God's providence and sovereign love and care, trusting His grace.