



PARENTALK

PARENTalk is a Stop It Now! publication by and for parents of children and teens with sexual behavior problems.

PARENT TO PARENT: HOW YOU CAN HELP

Nearly every parent we've met through a Stop It Now! parent workshop or community panel has had similar things to say: "I felt so alone;" "I never knew anyone else was going through this;" "I was so relieved when I hear that parent's story. It was so like mine!"

PARENTalk began as a way for parents of children with sexual behavior problems to support each other, to break the isolation they live with every day, to find a way to talk and listen and not feel so alone. It seems so simple and yet so frightening, telling about the experiences you've gone through or writing them down. Yet, it is one of the best ways to help other parents of children with sexual behavior problems. There is no substitute for hearing or reading about the experiences of other parents who have been there! But we've received no parent stories to share in the last six months, so we must decide the future of this newsletter. Should we continue the newsletter as a joint project with you as parents, or should we end it?

To answer that question for ourselves, there are two questions we need you to answer: Is the newsletter valuable to you? And, if it is valuable, would you be willing to share your story with us and with other parents? We know that this is truly important work and that we can't do it without you! If you would be willing to help other parents by telling your story, it is not necessary to reveal your identity to our audience.

"Kay" wrote our first parent story in the spring of 1998. "My hope for the future is that parents will be able to talk about stopping child sexual abuse with each other. Breaking the silence around child sexual abuse will help our children talk about their concerns and will give all of us the support we need to deal with this growing epidemic." In phone calls and letters, parents who read her article said, "I want to know how she had the courage to keep going and helping her family heal from the abuse."

"Sue" shared her experience with you as well, writing, "I have felt very isolated in this experience. I am here today because I believe it is important that more people speak out to break the silence around child sexual abuse."

In another issue of PARENTalk, Mike and Laura, the parents of six children, wrote about the shock of realizing that their oldest son had been sexually abusing two of their daughters for at least four years. Among their best advice for other parents was, "Reach out; don't try to go it alone."

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When you feel most invisible to the people who are supposed to help, sharing can remind you that others have been in a similar place and survived. Or when you feel suddenly, glaringly all too visible to your neighbors or the police or the courts, sharing in a forum like PARENTalk can be a safe way to connect with others who understand what it's like.

Sharing the experiences you have lived can also be the strongest message of hope and healing for other parents who are just beginning the process of dealing with a child who has sexually abused another child. You may be coping with some part of the trauma still, and the fact that you have gotten this far can be enough to help another family, another parent keep on

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*Guest Column***READING INTO PREVENTION: BOOKS THAT HELP***by Euan Bear*

What's the thing that has been the biggest challenge for you when living with and loving a child with sexual abuse problems? Whatever the challenge, there is almost certainly a book already published or due out soon that will help you develop ways to approach the issue. I reviewed a few of the books below, with a slight bias towards the books I know best—those published by the Safer Society Press.

Prevention Books

A Very Touching Book For Little People and For Big People by Jan Hindman. Jan Hindman knows how to play with, talk to, and write for children ages 4 to 8 without talking down to them. She explains why in mainstream American culture we keep our genitals ("our special parts") covered and don't share them with others except under certain circumstances. Hindman does this all with a sense of fun and play that helps take any discomfort out of the conversation.

The Right Touch by Sandy Kleven. Sandy Kleven writes for children ages 4 to 8 in a more serious format that is also effective. One parent reported that after reading this book to her child, the child not only came and told her right away when a man moving furniture touched her inappropriately but mentioned the story as the reason why.

It's Perfectly Normal by Robbie Harris. This is one of the best books I've seen for children ages 10 to 13. The illustrations and text are explicit and informative, and the author is clear that values such as mutual respect and sexual responsibility belong in this discussion. The corner comments from a bee and a bird may be a little too cute for the age group, but this is a great demystifying book for both boys and girls.

Healing Books for Children and Their Parents

Feeling Good Again by Burt Wasserman is a solid collection of activities, exercises, and information for young victims of sexual abuse. It is designed to be used by a therapist. Its messages are that the child is a

worthwhile human being, that abuse hurts children's feelings and beliefs, that it's okay for the child to talk about feelings, to be angry when hurt, and to learn new ways of letting go of anger and hurt feelings. Wasserman has also provided a companion booklet for parents, *The Feeling Good Again Guide for Parents and Therapists*. At a slim 32 pages, it provides an introduction to the treatment goals, theory, and issues likely to be addressed in the child's therapy and outlines how parents can help.

Healing Books for Youth with Sexual Behavior Problems and Their Parents

Secret Feelings & Thoughts by Rosemary Naramanian is one of the best storybooks for boys aged 6 to 12. Although usually identified as a book for young male victims, many young abusers were themselves abused and can see themselves in the story. *Secret Feelings & Thoughts* is one of only a few books that deal with sexual abuse of a younger brother by an older one. Reading this book can help boys with sexual behavior problems disclose any abuse they experienced or engage them in understanding the harm their behavior has done to someone else.

Roadmaps to Recovery by Tim Kahn is a workbook designed for kids aged 8 to 12. Full of illustrations and spaces for kids to write and draw as well as good information, it's an engaging book that helps kids learn why they did what they did and how they can choose to do something different. It keeps motivations to change simple: to stay out of trouble and not hurt anyone else.

Pathways: A Guided Workbook for Youth Beginning Treatment by Tim Kahn is written for adolescents with sexual behavior problems. *Pathways* goes into Relapse Prevention in more depth, demonstrating how a person can interrupt the plans to sexually abuse a child at each step to arrive at a different, safer outcome. Tim Kahn has also written *The Pathways Guide for Parents of Youth Beginning Treatment* as a companion to the workbook. It provides guidance for parents in support-

ing their child's work in therapy and guidelines on how to reinforce the child's new skills.

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SOON THAT WILL HELP YOU DEVELOP
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The Relapse Prevention Workbook for Youth in Treatment by Charlene Steen is designed for older adolescents. It teaches the nuts and bolts of Relapse Prevention, with plenty of examples and a serious dose of why and how a client can change a negative and hurtful pattern and begin making restitution to victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

While these are only a few of the books available today, they are a wonderful sample of the kinds of resources that are rapidly developing. If you do not find the book you are looking for you can also call Stop It Now! toll free at 1-888-PREVENT (1-888-773-8368) to ask for additional resources.

Euan Bear is currently a freelance writer and editor. She was book editor for the Safer Society Program, Press and Foundation for 12 years.

How You Can Find the Books You'll Need

A Very Touching Book, AlexAndria Associates, ISBN 0961103418. Direct contact by telephone: (541) 889-8938.

Right Touch, Illumination Arts, ISBN 093569910. Available through your local bookstore, library, or the Safer Society Press.

It's Perfectly Normal, Candlewick Press, ISBN 1564021599. Available through your local bookstore or library.

Secret Feelings and Thoughts, Philly Kids Play It Safe. Direct contact by telephone (215) 634-2983.

Feeling Good Again/Feeling Good Again Guide for Parents and Therapists, ISBN 1884444512/1884444520. Order directly through the Safer Society Press: (802) 247-3132.

Roadmaps to Recovery, Safer Society Press, ISBN 1884444547. Order directly through the Safer Society Press: (802) 247-3132.

Pathways: A Guided Workbook, Safer Society Press, ISBN 18844440342. Order directly through the Safer Society Press: (802) 247-3132.

Pathways: Parents' Guide, Safer Society Press, ISBN 18844440106. Order directly through the Safer Society Press: (802) 247-3132.

Relapse Prevention Workbook for Youth, ISBN 1884444024. Order directly through the Safer Society Press: (802) 247-3132.

going. As “Jeff” and “Hannah’s” mom wrote, “I also want families to know that we can heal from this kind of trauma.” “Rachel” and “Max’s” mom wrote, “I never would have thought that telling our story would help break our isolation and further our healing.”

In the last issue of PARENTalk, “Sue” wrote to update us on her family’s progress. She wrote, “Families can, and do, move forward. Together we can make an even bigger difference.”

Sharing your story as a parent can help you heal and can help other families find the courage to carry on the struggle to love and get help for their children. Parents

talking to and writing for other parents know things about how it feels that no one else knows. Sharing is giving each other strength and facing together the task of preventing more sexual abuse.

Please share your experiences with us and our readers—who are very much like you! Write us, call us, or E-mail us with your feedback about the PARENTalk newsletter. And if you are willing to share your story with us, by writing it yourself or being interviewed by a staff member or parent, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Joan Tabachnick at Stop It Now!. Send E-mail to jtab@stopitnow.com or call (413) 268-3096.



Stop It Now!

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PARENTALK...PARENT TO PARENT: HOW YOU CAN HELP

PARENTalk is by and for parents. What questions or topics would you like the newsletter to address?

Stop It Now! is grateful for your feedback and will respect your confidentiality.

Yes! I want to support Stop It Now!’s work to keep all our children safe from sexual abuse. Please accept the enclosed contribution.

\$ _____

Anonymous gift

Please make checks payable to Stop It Now!.
Mail to: Stop It Now!, P.O. Box 495, Haydenville, MA 01039
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Thank you for your support!