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# Stop It Now!®

*Together We Can Prevent the Sexual Abuse of Children*

September 2015

**Dear Friends and Supporters of Stop It Now!,**

For 20 years, the Helpline at Stop It Now! has been a unique and ground-breaking tool and resource to help keep children safe from sexual harm. We've had over 16,000 conversations on sex abuse and its prevention with adults from all over the world. We talk with survivors and we talk with adults in caregiving roles with children. We speak with people about their own sexual thoughts and feelings, and we speak with people worried about their friends' behaviors with children. We have conversations with concerned adults when there are warning signs of abuse, and when abuse has been disclosed. We have been the first stop for many when there didn't seem to be anywhere else to turn.

*"I'm so glad that you're here. You're such a great resource, I called and you were able to give me a real sense of direction. This gives people power." - phone call from a school nurse*

## The People Behind the Helpline

In 1995, when the helpline launched in Vermont, the idea of reaching out to adults who abuse and adults at-risk of abusing was pretty radical. Initially, Stop It Now!'s vision didn't include designing and running a helpline that people from all over with any relationship to the needs for sex abuse prevention could call, but the Helpline has become a stand-alone,

vital and relevant service. As we celebrate the Helpline's growth and development through the years, we wanted to share a brief interview we conducted with one of the first Stop It Now! employees, and as well as some words from our current Helpline Counselors on why this work is important to each of them.

## Interview with Joan Tabachnick

Joan Tabachnick served as the Director of Public Education at Stop It Now! for twelve years and created the Helpline's protocols that contributed to the vision, mission and the practical tools that have helped create Stop It Now! and all that it offers. She is a recognized expert in sex abuse prevention and social marketing and has authored a number of works addressing sex abuse prevention, including **Engaging Bystanders in Effective Prevention** and co-authored with Alisa Klein, **A Reasoned Approach: Reshaping Sex Offender Policy To Prevent Child Sexual Abuse**.

**Now!:** *What role did you envision the HL could play in prevention?*

**JT:** We first realized that just a public education campaign around child sex abuse was not enough unless we could tie them to simple and safe preventive actions. We wanted to create the first step people could take when they heard a Stop It Now! Public Service announcement or read our materials but didn't know what they could. We particularly wanted to offer a practical step and access to help for anyone at-risk to abuse (adult or adolescent) or their friend or family. Fay Honey Knopp, founder of **Safer Society**, thought of a helpline as a place where people could ask for help and learn about the resources in their area. We recognized that no one else in the United States was offering this kind of help and we wanted to test whether or not anyone would even call.

**Now!:** *Why was the Helpline designated a confidential helpline?*

**JT:** Almost everyone we spoke with thought that confidentiality was important because of the shame we thought people would feel. The idea behind it was that if the caller could talk with someone, break their own isolation and silence, there were more likely to do something. We often talked about a ladder of steps. How do we get someone to take the first step, thinking that the first step is always the hardest? We felt that talking is not enough. So part of our goal was to be sure that every caller would hang up from a Stop It Now! call with a clear idea of what their next step(s) should be.

***[Click here for the rest of the interview...](#)***

## Helpline Consultants of Today

Our two newest additions to the Helpline joined us in early 2015, after some newly acquired funding allowed us to hire two part-time positions to answer both phone calls and emails, as well as maintain our specialized resource library. We asked them to talk about why they do this work and to share something that has surprised them about talking about sexual abuse prevention for a job.

### **Micah:**

A person is more than one decision, one action, or one belief. I believe that if a person has the desire to change, if the seed is there, if they have hope, then it is possible. If they're brave enough to reach out for help, I'll gladly extend my hand and offer what I can. I do this work to get them to that next step. I do this work because one in five girls and one in ten boys is still too many. You're not a failure if your child was sexually abused or if they sexually harmed another child; you're not a monster if you have thoughts about children and want to change it -- you're a person, your past matters but what you do from here with this knowledge is significant. I do this work so that when I get off the phone -- with a parent, a concerned neighbor, a survivor, or an at-risk adult -- I have given them the first tools to work towards safety, healing, treatment, prevention.

Most surprising for me: I've become more aware of the just how important it is to start early and talk often about sexuality and body boundaries, and how this is something we really need to improve on as a community. And it's surprising... but this work also gives me hope that people can forgive, can move forward - people can look to healing both parties, the abused and the abuser. Not in all cases, but I'm happy to see it when I do.

### **Josie:**

The moment I started working for Stop It Now!, I wish I'd known about the helpline sooner. It could have been an essential part of my previous work providing intensive therapeutic support for children and their families. Through that work, I saw the effects that child sexual abuse could have on survivors of any age and their families. I saw the shortage of support for youth with sexual behavior problems. And I saw the dire need for information about prevention and safety for adults, youth, and organizations. When an opportunity came to help provide that information and prevent these same situations, I leapt at the chance. Each time someone tells us they feel more able to react or share information or less likely to harm a child, it adds to my sincere belief that the work we do is helping to keep children safe.

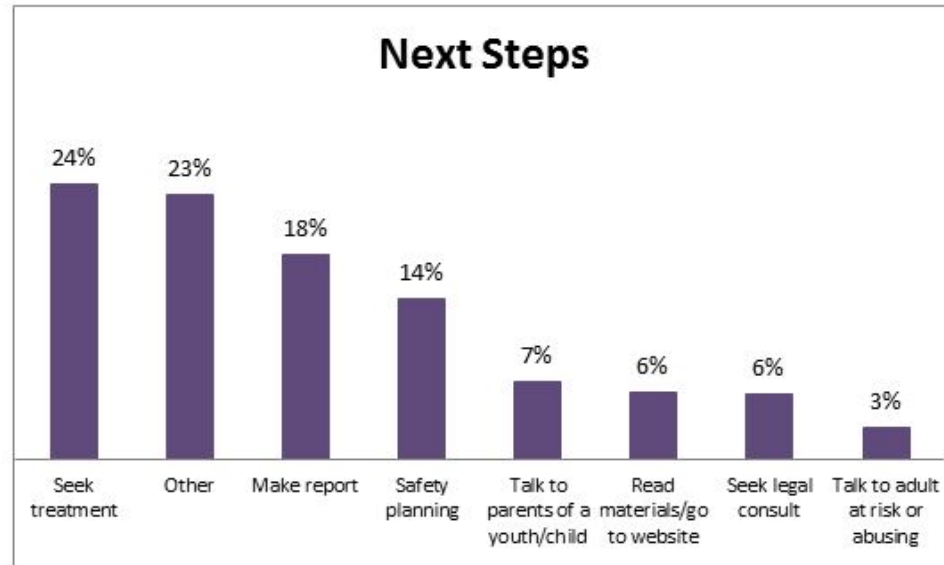
I am consistently surprised by how many adults, and even youth, have tried so hard to find help to keep themselves from harming someone only to find this help unavailable. Our society has painted a very particular view of what these adults may look like, and these often inaccurate assumptions leave people afraid to tell loved ones that they need help and support.

## Helpline Statistics at a Glance

As we near completion of a Helpline 3-year summary report, the stats we have collected help us affirm, develop or even change how we help others. Learning about what people call about helps us develop new materials and provide information for public policy and awareness. Most importantly, we see the situation they are in, which helps us deepen our understanding of the needs they have to achieve prevention.

### **Some data highlights from this 2012 - 2014 review:**

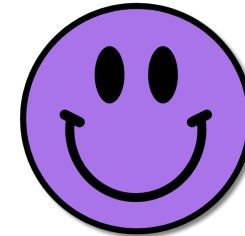
- In 3 years, the Helpline responded to 3176 people with questions specific to sex abuse in a personal situation. Of these:
  - 82% of the people who reached out to us were in a bystander role
  - 70% knew both the person abusing or at-risk to abuse AND the child/adult at-risk of being abused or is a survivor
  - ¾ of our contacts are women
  - 49% identified their situation as RED prevention level, meaning abuse had already occurred and they were either dealing with the knowledge and aftermath or/and trying to prevent further abuse
  - Of those situations where abuse had been disclosed, 64% had not contacted the authorities
  - 11% contacts seeking help w/personal situation are non-US based and of these, 27% are from low to low-middle income countries
  - A newer piece of information we've been collecting since mid 2013 is what the identified step is for the Helpline contact. Since this information is mostly only available when the contact is a phone call, it is limited, but still helps us understand how the Helpline can guide folks to taking the next protective action:



## Helpline Satisfaction

Satisfaction: Our contacts through email are provided a link to a survey. In 2014, we received a score of 4.5 out of 5 on the following questions by those who responded to our survey.

- I received a prompt email reply
- I got my questions answered
- I am satisfied with the resources and links I received
- I feel better prepared to take action



## Goals and Wishes

### ***Looking ahead - Helpline goals for 2015-2016***

Our goal is to continue to provide this valuable, toll-free service.

- Including a chat feature to increase the access to our Helpline
- Expanding our hours to be more available more often
- Increasing Helpline staff hours



### ***Our "magical wand wish"***

It's always good to think large and so, we wish that a generous and/or public figure recognizes the role the Stop It Now! Helpline plays in the prevention of child sex abuse and either funds our Helpline operation or becomes a spokesperson, helping to bring awareness to the Helpline - both for adults who need help and for those seeking to support a program that for some, is the only place they could turn. Let us know if you know someone who fits this description.

Donate Now!

### **Staff**

**Patricia Wilcox**, *Vice President of Strategic Development - Klingberg Family Centers, Inc.*

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