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Dear Stop It Now! Helpline,
What Survivors Ask

Jenny Coleman, MA, LMHC
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With Guest Expert
Jackie Humphreys, LICSW

Content warning:
Child sexual abuse
Sexual violence

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Why We're Doing This

"I want to thank you for your support and for being the only adult to stand by me in this matter. You have no idea how much your mail back then meant to me and how much it helped, you made me feel and know that I am not alone, and that got me through a lot of hard times."




"I couldn't possibly have spoken with a professional today and be on the road to a better life if it wasn't for you."



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The Questions... The Needs

- What did I **experience**? What does this mean about me? Did I **respond** the "right" way?
- Is there **help** for me? Can I have **healthy relationships**?
- How do I **protect** others?
- How can I hold my abuser **accountable**?
- **What else** can I do?



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Our Guest Expert: Jackie Humphreys, LICSW



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Was This Abuse?

When I was 10, my same sex cousin who was 17 touched my privates multiple times over several years. Each time I was scared to death and just laid there unable to speak or move. That was over 40 years ago. I buried the memory but recently it has popped up and is haunting me. I don't know if I was sexually abused, I think so but am unsure. Is that normal childhood "play"?



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Clarifying What's Abusive

All sexual activity between an adult and a child is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse does not have to involve penetration, force, pain, or even touching. If an adult engages in any sexual behavior (looking, showing, or touching) with a child to meet the adult's interest, or power or sexual needs, it is sexual abuse.


Sexual touching between children can also be harmful, and in some cases abusive.

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I Spoke Up... No One Listened

As a child from kindergarten up through 3rd grade I was sexually abused by a member of my church. I told my mom and instead of helping me she extracted me. She never got me help, or stopped it from happening. I remember instances where during my childhood my sister and I kissed and touched one another. My mother and father upon realizing what happened physically threatened me and I became the dirty-nasty child. Though I'm older, this still haunts me.



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What Gets in the Way

No one will believe me

Mom would be devastated

It's my fault for not resisting

I did the attention I get

If he goes to jail, we'll get evicted

We'll just hurt my younger sister instead

I don't want everyone to know this about me

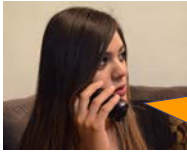


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What Should I Have Done?

When I was around 12 years old, my dad fondled my breasts and asked me if I played with myself and told me that he was the kind of kid who played with himself all the time. My mom didn't have a job, so my dad was our only source of income, so if he were put in jail, we would have starved. I'm 21 now and I only recently told my mom what he had done. What should I have done as a child? We were entirely financially dependent on him, so I think I couldn't tell anyone or we'd end up without financial support. I'm only recently realizing how much his behavior affected me.



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I'm Worried They'll Harm Again





I was sexually abused by a family friend at age 5 and I'm now 23. This family friend is still around my family, and I am worried about my 2 year-old sister's safety. My family never found out what happened. What can I do to protect my sister from this man?



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How Do I Protect a Child from Abuse?

- Learn
- Safety Planning
- Communication
- Identify allies/support
- Reporting
- Trust their instinct
- Act




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Can I Prosecute?



When I was 13-15 I was sexually abused by my sports coach. Now that I've done the work and am strong enough, I want him locked up and I want him to pay for what he did. What are my first steps to pressing charges?



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Legal Steps



- Statutes of limitations
 - <https://rainn.org/policy/>
- Professional legal support
- Knowing what to expect
- Victim advocacy/support resources
 - <https://victimsofcrime.org/help-for-crime-victims/>
- Having support/allies




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How Do I Heal?

I am 25 year old female and was sexually abused as a child by a stranger in the street at the age of 9. I have never talked about it. When it comes to dating I get panicked and won't show up. It has made me feel so lonely and left out. I can't trust and I can't fit in relationships. I can't sleep or stop blaming myself... I feel the urgent need to talk to someone about it. I don't know what to do!



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Male Survivors

I'm a 20 y/o male that was sexually abused by a female family member from about ages 5-10. I think it's causing a lot of mental and behavioral problems, but I don't know what to do. I've just recently accepted it happened and wasn't just a dream, but I'm afraid to share and talk about it with people close to me or professionals. And it's affecting who I am, how I think, and how I behave. I don't really know what to do or what the next step is, which I'm afraid to take anyway.

While we most often hear from women (58%), 21% of survivors who contact us are men.

*The remaining 21% of survivors who contact us are men. This statistic is based on the gender of the survivor who contacted us and is not representative of all survivors.

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Supportive Resources

- Individual and group counseling
- Professional/specialty organizations
- Online supports
- Media
- Allies



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How to Talk to Others About the Abuse

- Pick supportive allies
- Go slow, take breaks
- Only share as much as is comfortable
- Write it down, send an email, invite to a therapy session
- Share what the other person can do to help



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Other Difficult Conversations

- Speaking with the person who abused you
- Speaking with the parent who didn't believe you
- Speaking with other family members
- Disclosing to your spouse


- Does this feel like the right choice?
- What is your objective?
- Is it safe?
- Are you supported?
- Are you okay with not hearing acknowledgement or apology?
- Best and worst case scenarios


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How Can I Help the Survivor I Care About?


- Listen!
- Ask what you can do to help
- Be supportive in their next steps
- Remember each person's journey is different
- Not everyone wants to report
- Know what resources are available



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Questions?



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Stay tuned for our next webinar!

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