

Help...



*..I need someone
to talk to*

Help...

Hi. My name is Sam. This booklet deals with real-life stuff that I have had to face over the last couple of years. I hope that my true and honest comments throughout this booklet will help you deal with the experiences and emotions that I too have gone through.

I was sexually abused as a younger child. It's really important that you find someone to talk to about it...

It can be difficult to talk to someone because of all the mixed up feelings the experience has probably left you with.

The person who abused you may well have tried to make you keep it secret. But if you can tell someone what's happened, not only will it help you, but you can also help to stop the abuse happening to anyone else.

You need to know that, whatever the abuser said to you, it's not your fault.

They were in a position of power and they have taken advantage of you. You are not in any way to blame for what has happened.

Talking to somebody about the abuse is the way to begin to get over it. Bringing it into the open will also make sure that you and other children and young people are kept safe.

Who should I tell?

You will know who it's best to talk to about what's been going on. It may be a parent or relative, friend, teacher or someone you trust at church or club.

This person cannot promise to keep what you have told them to themselves, but they will be able to help you through the next steps.

If the first person you try to talk to doesn't listen or fails to do anything then tell somebody else.

Some young people find it easier to talk to someone they don't know and this is where the telephone helplines listed at the end of the leaflet can help.

Sam says...

Think of the best person to talk to. A person that will help you and keep their promise not to tell people who don't need to know.

First things first

Whenever someone says they have been sexually abused, social services and the police have a duty to make sure you and others are safe but also investigate what has happened. This may sound scary but these people are here to help you! Part of their job will involve you telling them what has happened. The person who has abused you will also be interviewed and this may eventually lead to them being charged with a sexual offence. The reason for the investigation is to get the facts straight.

Although it may be upsetting and difficult for you, the people you talk to, whether it's the police or a social worker, they are used to dealing with these situations. They will be patient and listen carefully and sympathetically to what you have to say. The person who has abused you will be kept away from you whilst they make their enquiries and won't be able to put you under any pressure to change anything.

Sam says...

Think of it this way. You are helping others, not just yourself. You have stopped it now - full stop!

What will happen next?

So, you've told a trusted adult about the abuse and they have got in touch with social services or the police. The next thing that happens is that you will be contacted by a social worker who will arrange for you to be interviewed. This interview will probably need to be video recorded because it may be used as evidence in a future Court case. We've said it before that social services and the police will listen to what you have to say and if you don't want the person who has abused you to be prosecuted, they will try to respect your wishes. But whether or not there is a Court case, this interview is very

Sam says...

Don't feel guilty. You have done everything right, to stop it. You are doing the right thing.

important and it will be done by people who are specially trained. One of the good things about the video interview is that it will save you from having to tell your story over and over again.

Young people being interviewed in this way may choose to have someone they

trust at the interview with them. The trusted adult you first talked to may be a good person to be there to support you whilst you tell your

story. Whatever your feelings at this point you need to remember that a crime has been committed against you and the person who abused you is the one who has done wrong.

Will I be taken into care?

If you have been abused by someone who lives with you, social services need to be sure that you are safe but if it means someone moving out, they would try to make sure that the person who has abused you moves rather than you. Some young people who have been sexually abused do have to move for their own safety, but this only happens when there is no other way of keeping them safe.

Usually young people remain with the parent who isn't involved in the abuse but they may stay with a relative, friend or foster-carer during the investigation. Even if you do need to live somewhere else for a while, it's in everybody's interests to get you back home as soon as it is safe for you to return. If the person who has abused you doesn't usually live at your house then your parent/guardian will make sure that there is no contact, and you are kept safe.

Sam says...

Don't worry. Social workers and the police must make your best interests a priority.

Your feelings

Everyone is different and your reaction to the abuse will depend on lots of things like who did it, how often it happened and how old you were when it started. Young people tell us that being sexually abused leaves them with all sorts of mixed-up emotions. You can feel dirty and also guilty, as though what happened was your fault. Because everyone likes being given attention you may feel even worse about it if the abuse sometimes felt nice. It's reassuring to know that experiencing pleasant sexual feelings is perfectly normal and just means your body's working properly.

As well as mixed-up feelings, abuse tends to make young people unsure about who they can trust. This is hardly surprising after someone who claimed to care has abused this trust. Often young people

just don't want to talk and don't want people prying into their thoughts and feelings. This, again, is a perfectly understandable reaction.

Sam says...

If you can share some feelings, do. But if not, don't worry.



Getting help if you need it

Sometimes, young people who have been abused benefit from extra help. Not every young person wants it, but if your experiences have made you confused and unhappy then it's important that you are able to get the help you need. The main thing is that you feel ready, and it's usually better to wait for a bit before arranging anything. The social worker involved or your GP, should be able to put you in touch with someone who is experienced and skilled in helping young people. Sometimes there are local groups where you can meet up with other young people who have had

similar experiences, and this alone can be a very good way of helping you deal with the effect the abuse has had on you. If it seems to be taking a long time to get over it, don't worry! Everybody's different and for some it may take longer than others.

Sam says...

Go to someone if you need to, though time will help.



Can prayer help?

Christians believe that God cares about everything that happens in their lives. So when horrible things happen it's good to be able to talk to God about how we feel. God understands and can help us to face and deal with all the uncomfortable feelings we don't know what to do with. If there is a

mature Christian you trust and you feel comfortable with, then it can help to talk and pray together. You don't need to feel under pressure to talk only about the abuse but, as you share your feelings, it is likely to crop up. Some young people find it a very healing experience to be able to talk and pray in this way, particularly when they are reassured God cares for them and is working things out for their good. Healing is often a gradual process so don't worry if it you experience a few set-backs and feeling better takes longer than you'd hoped.

Sam says...

Prayer plays a big part in getting over abuse. I found prayer has helped me through.

What about forgiveness?

Forgiveness is always difficult when you have been hurt by someone in this way. Feelings of anger towards the person who has abused you are only natural. Nobody can force you to forgive and you shouldn't feel under pressure to do it. Forgiveness, like healing, can't be rushed. Some people choose not to forgive those who have abused them and nobody can blame them for this. It may help you to realise though, that forgiving doesn't mean the abuser is let off. It just means you are leaving them and the situation with God to sort out.

Sam says...

I didn't feel like forgiving, but when I did it made me feel better.

Coming through

You may feel that things are never going to get back to normal and, in one way, they won't because the abuse has happened and we can't pretend it hasn't. From time to time your experiences may come back to you in things such as flashbacks or nightmares, but the effect the abuse has had on you will hopefully, over time, begin to fade. Although something really bad has happened to you things will get better.

Sam says...

Always remember "All things work for the good for those who love God." Romans 8 v 28

Every week, CCPAS is contacted following a young person's disclosure of abuse. This leaflet is one of a series that has been prepared by experienced members of the CCPAS team with help from Sam.

Resources

Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service
Provides training and advice on all areas of child protection and good working practice to churches, organisations and individuals across the UK as well as a 24 hour helpline service for young people and all affected by abuse.

Tel: 0845 120 45 50

Address: PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ

Email: info@ccpas.co.uk

Web: www.ccpas.co.uk

Childline
24 hour helpline for children
and young people

Tel: 0800 1111

NSPCC National Child
Protection Charity

Helpline: 0808 800 5000
Information & ordering
publications tel: 0207 825 2775
Web: www.nspcc.org.uk

Kidscape National charity
publishing booklets and
information on self-protection
skills for children and how to
keep children safe.

Helpline: 0845 120 5204
Tel: 0207 730 3300
Address: 2 Grosvenor Gdns,
London, SW1 0DH
Web: www.kidscape.org.uk

Stop it now! A national campaign that aims to prevent child abuse by encouraging offenders to seek help. It also provides adults with information to help protect children.

Helpline: 0808 1000 900
Web: www.stopitnow.org.uk

Other titles in the 'Help' series

Help... something bad happened to me (8-10yrs)

Help... someone I care about was abused

Help... a sex offender has joined my church

Help... my child's been abused - now what?

Help... I was abused as a child

CHURCHES'
Child Protection
ADVISORY SERVICE

© CCPAS 2004

PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ

Tel: 0845 120 45 50

Fax: 0845 120 45 52

Email: info@ccpas.co.uk

Web: www.ccpas.co.uk