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# Child Sexual Abuse: What Your Graduate Program Didn't Teach You

— Cassandra Fleck —

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# How much time was spent in your graduate program on sexual abuse?

- A. It was never talked about. We just learned about it through internship and mandated reporter training.
- B. It was briefly mentioned in my courses
- C. It was a significant focal point in one of my courses
- D. There was an entire course on it
- E. Multiple courses



# Scope of the Problem

- 60,000 substantiated or indicated reports
- Every **8 minutes** a claim is substantiated by CPS
- 1/10 before age 18
- **CPS investigates 55% of reports made to them**

**60% never tell**

# Signs

- Physical signs such as bruising, bleeding, redness, and bumps around mouth, genitals or anus
- Urinary tract infections
- STD
- “Too perfect” behavior
- Withdrawal
- Fear
- Unexplained anger and rebellion
- Nightmares, bedwetting, failing grades, cruelty to animals, bullying, fire setting, running away, self-harm
- Sexual behavior and language that is not age appropriate

# The Complexity of CSA

- 93% of perpetrators were known to the child
  - Familial dynamics
- Might feel “good”
- Stigma related to sexual abuse
- Expansive consequences
- Differing definitions
- Grooming
- Impact on the brain

# Impact

- Drug abuse
- PTSD
- Depressive episodes
- Anxiety
- Oversexualized behavior problems
- Suicide attempts
- Physical health problems
- Behavior issues
  - Delinquency and crime
- Eating Disorders
- Teen pregnancy
- Average lifetime cost \$210,012

# Protective Factors

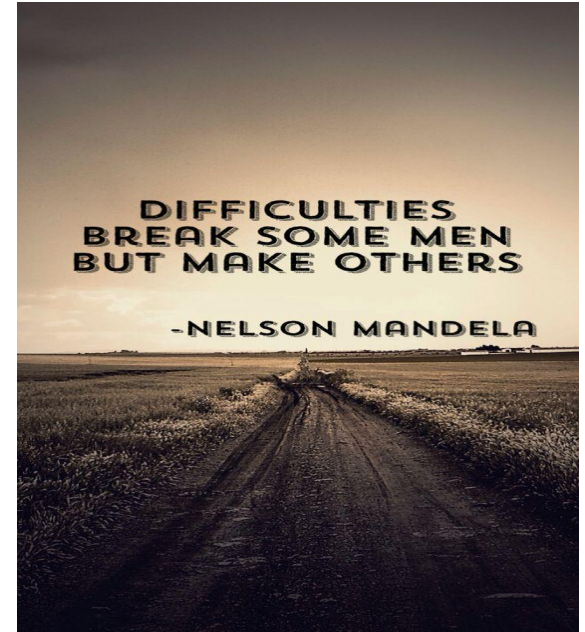
Child: Good health, intelligence, hobbies, peer relationships, easy temperament, active coping style, positive self-esteem, good social skills, internal locus of control

Parental/Family: Secure attachment, supportive family, household rules, extended family, parents model good coping skills, high parental education

Social/Environmental: SES, access to health care, consistent parental employment, housing, faith participation, good schools, supportive adults outside of the family.

# Key Factors Toward Resiliency

- Supportive & caring relationships
- Capacity to make realistic plans and carry out steps
- Positive view of self and confidence in abilities
- Skills in communication and problem solving
- Ability to manage strong feelings and emotions





# Handling Disclosures

- Simple open ended style
- Validate the child “took a lot of courage to share”
- Don’t ask questions that begin with W (who, where, when , why
- Don’t make negative statements
- Don’t delve deeply
- Don’t make promises

# Challenging Topics

# Why Do So Many Not Report?

- Fear retaliation
- Fear they won't believe
- Believe adults can't help
- Embarrassment/shame
- Not wanting perpetrator to get in trouble
- Protect non-abusive parent
- Confusion

# When a Child is a Perpetrator

- What are your stereotypes or misconceptions?
- Media influence on perceptions
- 15% of perpetrators are 15 or younger
- Most are not predators and will not go on to be offenders in adulthood
- Ability to accept responsibility - improves treatment outcomes
- Outside treatment will consist of individual, group, family counseling, social skills, and behavioral therapies
  - Goals: impulse control and coping, conflict resolution, anger management and social skills

# Prevention Programming

- Risk reduction: recognize, repel, report
- Private zones
- Inappropriate vs. Appropriate touch (Not good vs. bad)
- Correct names for body parts
- Involve parents & other adults in the conversations
- Possible for those they know to hurt them
- Right to decide who touches body
- Never their fault
- Who and how to tell
- Utilize your resources
- Special populations



# Special Populations

- Children with disabilities
- Previously victimized
- Foster Children
- Race/Diversity

# Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) & OVS

- Financed by fines and penalties paid by convicted federal offenders (not tax dollar)
- Distributed to states
  - Victim Service Providers
  - Victim Compensation
    - **Medical and counseling**
    - Loss or damage of essential property
    - Burial/Funeral expenses
    - Lost wages or support
    - Transportation
    - Occupational rehabilitation
    - Shelters
    - Crime scene clean up
    - Moving expenses

# Sexual Assault Agencies

- Medical help
  - Screening for STD
  - HIV exposure testing
  - Emergency contraception
- Legal help
  - Reporting to police
  - Proxy reporting
- Short term crisis counseling and connection to services





# Child Advocacy Centers

- Continuum of services
- Multidisciplinary, child-focused approach
- Law enforcement, social services, mental health, child protection teams, and state attorneys
- Forensic interviews, specialized medical care, specialized therapeutic services
- Access to video and audio equipment

# Resources to Check Out

Rape and Incest National Network [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

Darkness to Light [www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org)

NYS Childrens Alliance [nyschildrensalliance.org](http://nyschildrensalliance.org)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

[https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications\\_NSVRC\\_Guide\\_Child-Sexual-Abuse-Prevention-programs-for-children.pdf](https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Guide_Child-Sexual-Abuse-Prevention-programs-for-children.pdf)

The National Center for Victims of Crime [victimsofcrime.org](http://victimsofcrime.org)

Office of Victim Services <http://ovs.ny.gov>