

Frequently asked questions for young people

Why did it happen to me?

You may think it (the sexual abuse) happened to you because of something you did or said. You may even think it happened because of what you were wearing at the time. The abuse happened because the other person was older or bigger or stronger than you and probably someone you trusted or believed in. The person might be in your family. That person used your trust to do what they wanted to do. They knew what they were doing was wrong. That is why they kept it secret, or told you to keep it a secret.

Why couldn't I say no?

Maybe the person is in your family or someone you or your family knows. This person might be very nice to you or even give you things that make you feel happy or special. You might not have wanted to hurt their feelings or to make them angry. Children are also taught to be polite and are often told not to say no, especially to grown-ups.

It is easy to understand why you couldn't say no, and we also know that saying "no" doesn't always stop the abuse.

Am I a bad person?

You may feel like a bad person because the abuse happened, or because you couldn't stop it at the time. Your feelings may be all because you couldn't stop it at the time. Your feelings may be all mixed up and you might even blame yourself. Sexual abuse is NEVER your fault! You are not a bad person. The person who is doing it to you (the offender) is always to blame. There are people you can talk to that will help you with all your thoughts and feelings.

Is my body different now?

Lots of people worry that their body is different now because of the sexual abuse – especially your private parts. You may even wonder if other people can tell what has happened to you. Your body is changing as you grow. If you feel sore or uncomfortable, or have worries about your body, try and tell someone you trust. There are even people specially trained to talk to you about bodies.

What do I do now?

The most important thing to do now is to find an older person that you trust – a teacher, a family member, a parent of one of your friends, or a police person – and tell them about the touching (abuse). If you are still being touched or sexually abused, it is important to tell someone so that it can stop. You might have to tell more than one person to get the best help.

I did tell someone but they didn't do anything. What do I do now?

Sometimes people don't believe what they are hearing, or maybe they don't really understand what you are trying to tell them. DO NOT GIVE UP! You are very brave for trying to tell, so find another adult to tell. You might have to tell more than one person to get the best help, but keep trying.

People you could tell: a teacher, a family member, a parent of your friend, a police person, or someone from SECASA.

Will things go back to how they were?

People need time to sort out their thoughts and feelings. It is very useful to have someone called a counsellor that is trained to help at times like this. Some things will be difficult at first and other things may even get better, but mostly things will not go back to exactly how they were. The person who touched me said if I told I'd get into trouble or that they would hurt someone I love. Is this true?

The person told you these things to frighten you. They know that what they are doing is their fault and it is wrong. They want to keep it a secret, but it is a 'bad' secret because it makes you feel sad, embarrassed, or all mixed up. The only way to stop feeling scared or worried or sad is to tell someone else about what has been happening to you.

What will happen to the person who did this to me?

There are specially trained people who will help decide what will happen. These people want to make sure that everyone gets the right help. They also want you to be safe. These are grown up decisions, but whatever happens to the other person IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT!

My friend told me that this had happened to them but that I'm not allowed to tell anyone. What do I do?

Your friend told you because they wanted someone else to know about the secret. It is not dobbing to tell an adult about this type of secret. This is a 'bad' secret because it is about someone getting hurt. It is okay to tell bad secrets to an adult that you trust. Maybe this is your teacher, someone in your family, or a police person. If you are not sure who to tell, you can ring one of the telephone numbers on the bottom of this page and ask what to do.

I touched another kid on their private parts. Will I get into trouble? Am I weird?

All children experiment with touching private parts as they grow up, touching themselves and sometimes touching others. The thing to remember with touching is that no-one should ever be forced to do something that they don't want to. If the kid you are touching is younger than you, they might not really know if they like it or not. It's sometimes very hard for younger kids to tell older kids "no". If you are not sure that what's happening is OK, there are people you can talk to by ringing the numbers on the bottom of the page.

Someone I know or have seen has been acting funny around kids. What do I do?

It is good that you have noticed something that makes you feel uncomfortable and want to do something about it. Don't keep these things to yourself, tell an adult that you trust, such as your teacher, a family member, another parent or a police person. They will decide what to do. You are very brave for wanting to keep kids safe!