

# WHAT TO DO

- If you were abused, or you suspect you were abused
- If your child was sexually abused, or you suspect child sexual abuse
- If your loved one was sexually abused



[WWW.FIGHTINGFORME.ORG](http://WWW.FIGHTINGFORME.ORG)

# WHAT TO DO

## If You Have Been Sexually Abused

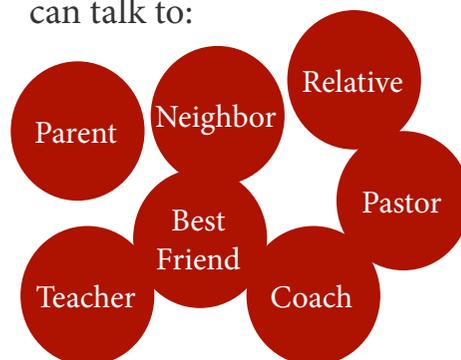
Sexual abuse is a violation of trust and voice; part of healing happens by breaking the silence

### 1 Talk

Tell someone you trust and know loves you unconditionally

If the first person you reach out to does not receive you in a supportive way, then tell someone else<sup>1</sup>

Examples of those you can talk to:



### 2 Avoid Contact with the Abuser

If the abuser is outside the home, be assertive by preventing or limiting your contact with them

If the abuser is in your home, work on a strategy to find a safe place to go

Call the RAINN HOTLINE 800-656-HOPE (4673) for compassionate help

### 3 Report

The choice is entirely yours (unless you are a minor and confide in a mandated report)

Regardless of your decision, you are not responsible for the perpetrator's actions and their consequences

Ways to Report:

Call 911

Contact the Local Police Department

### 4 Consider Counseling

Counseling can be valuable in the process of hope and healing, even if you choose not to report. Call Fighting For Me to request an appointment for free counseling.

Visit a Medical Center: if being treated for assault injuries, tell a medical professional that you wish to report the crime

# *If You are Not Sure if You Have Been Abused*

- 1** If you suspect recent abuse, seek medical attention. Medical professionals can test for STDs and any other foreign conditions. Explain you would like to be examined for sexual assault and provide as many details as you can.
- 2** Resist the temptation to doubt your own intuitions. Your body and mind are connected, and even in the presence of no memories, you can still feel the effects of sexual abuse.
- 3** Recall what you can. It can be extremely frustrating, but while there may not be a way to “prove” your memories or suspicions of abuse, there is hope for moving forward.

To help piece the puzzle, review the possible indicators of abuse at

<http://overcomingsexualabuse.com/2010/02/13/possible-indicators-of-sexual-abuse/>

Blurry memories paired with symptoms of abuse do not necessarily prove you have been abused, but they can be an indicator that something is not right and healing is needed.

You deserve to be the person you were created to be, and Fighting For Me will never ask you to prove your abuse to receive free counseling. We understand the complexities in memories, so help is still available and healing is possible.

For a thorough definition of sexual abuse, download our “What is Sexual Abuse” PDF at [www.fightingforme.org/get-informed](http://www.fightingforme.org/get-informed)

# WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

*Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a minor.* These acts can include **sexual touching** (e.g., touching a person's penis, vagina, buttocks, or breasts, oral sex, or intercourse) and **sexual behaviors that do not include touching** (e.g., peeping, flashing, or showing pornography to a child.)

Sometimes an older child may sexually abuse a younger one. <sup>2</sup>

When a perpetrator engages with a child this way, they are committing a crime that can have lasting effects on the victim.

## Examples of Child Sexual Abuse

- Intercourse; sex of any kind with a minor, including vaginal, oral, or anal (including use of foreign objects)
- Fondling; touching a child's sexual organs except for medical or hygiene purposes
- Unwanted or forced kissing
- Obscene phone calls, text messages, or digital interaction
- Exhibitionism, or exposing oneself to a minor
- Sex trafficking

*A child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity, period.*

### If You Suspect Abuse in a Child

If you are able to have a private conversation with the child, you may consider asking age appropriate questions to determine more. Make sure you approach calmly and carefully.

# IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED

---

Suspicion of child sexual abuse should be dealt with promptly, properly, and with caution. Don't rush to ask the child leading questions or discuss the concern with other people.

## Report the Incident

- Different states have varying guidelines concerning who needs to report and with what agency\*
- Agencies to report to: Child Protective Services and the local police department

## Utilize Your Resources

- Darkness to Light's helpline (1-866-FOR-LIGHT) routes you to local resources
- The ChildHelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline is available for help at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)

## Seek Emotional and Spiritual Support

- Your child may need counseling to handle abuse caused pain
- As a parent, guilt and grief may be overwhelming. Consider seeking support for your own mental and spiritual well being and for the benefit of your child\*\*

## Resist the Urge to Take Revenge

- Trust authorities to handle the matter legally
- Many survivors feel the best revenge is to overcome the trauma and be the strongest version of themselves. You *can* help your child achieve that.

\* In some states, it is illegal for any adult who comes into knowledge of sexual abuse of a minor not to report. Do the right thing.

\*\* Fighting For Me offers free counseling services to anyone affected by sexual abuse -- that includes family members of the abused.

# WHAT TO DO

## If You Suspect Sexual Abuse in an Adult

### Let Them Bring Up the Topic Themselves

Allow them to speak about their experiences on their own time. Let them know you are a safe outlet when they are willing to share. You may consider asking loving, open ending questions based on information you've seen or they've given you.

### Refrain From Giving Advice

Without proper training, you are not in a place to offer advice (even if you've been abused -- your experience is different). Even counselors refrain from telling clients what they "should" or "shouldn't" do.

### Respect Their Privacy

Respect people's desire to maintain their face and dignity. Please refrain from sharing your suspicions with others.

### Practice Unconditional Love

Love them without expecting immediate reciprocation. Exercise patience and understanding as they navigate this journey. They will appreciate your steady selflessness and support. Your love is enough.

### In the Event that They Do Bring it Up...

Ask them what they want to do. Offer support in their choice. If your loved one is uncertain, offer to help explore options such as counseling or support groups.

# WHAT TO DO

## If Someone You Love Has Been Abused

### 1 Check in Periodically

Even if the event happened a long time ago, it doesn't mean the pain is gone. Check in with the survivor to remind them you still care about their well-being and believe their story.

### 2 Avoid Judgment

It can be difficult to watch a survivor struggle for an extended period of time. Avoid phrases that suggest they're taking too long to recover such as, "How much longer will you feel this way?" or "You've been acting like this for a while now."

### 3 Remember the Healing Process is Fluid

Everyone has bad days. Don't interpret flashbacks, bad days, or silent spells as "setbacks." It's all part of the process.

### 4 Know Your Resources

You're a strong supporter, but that doesn't mean you're equipped to manage someone else's health.

Become familiar with resources you can recommend, like the National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-HOPE (4673) and [online.rainn.org](http://online.rainn.org). You may want to encourage them to look into free counseling with Fighting For Me.

*Encouraging phrases to show support for the survivor:*

"I'm sorry this happened."

"It's not your fault."

"I believe you."

"You are not alone."

"Are you open to seeking medical attention?"

"You can trust me."

"This doesn't change how I think of you."

“

RICHARD GARTNER

TELLING WHAT HAPPENED... IS A  
LARGE PART OF HEALING. AS YOU  
TELL OTHER PEOPLE, YOU'RE ALSO  
TELLING YOURSELF.

YOU'RE PUTTING TOGETHER THE  
FULL STORY OF YOUR LIFE. THE  
MOST IMPORTANT PERSON WHO  
NEEDS TO KNOW THAT STORY IS  
YOU.

”

BEYOND BETRAYAL, P. 168

- 
1. <https://1in6.org/men/get-information/online-readings/relationships/telling-someone-or-not-about-what-happened/>
  2. [http://www.stopitnow.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/lets\\_talk.pdf](http://www.stopitnow.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/lets_talk.pdf)

### *Additional Information Available*

For more information about sexual abuse, contact the following organizations:

**Division of Violence Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS**  
800-232-4636 • <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/index.html>

**National Sexual Violence Resource Center**  
877-739-3895 • [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

**Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice**  
202-514-2000 • [www.ovw.usdoj.gov](http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov)

**Love is Respect**  
1.866.331.9474 • <http://www.loveisrespect.org/resources/download-materials/>

## Stay In Touch

-  [www.facebook.com/fightingforme.org](http://www.facebook.com/fightingforme.org)
-  [www.twitter.com/fightingforme1](http://www.twitter.com/fightingforme1)
-  [www.youtube.com/channel/UCZCrzOfjUCOZXOqDALPXEJA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZCrzOfjUCOZXOqDALPXEJA)
-  [www.instagram.com/fightingformeofficial](http://www.instagram.com/fightingformeofficial)

