



The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

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I. Traumatic Sexualization

A. Dynamics

- 1) Child may have been rewarded for sexual behavior that was inappropriate for his / her developmental level
- 2) The offender exchanges attention and affection for sex
- 3) The offender transmits misconceptions about sexual behavior and sexual morality
- 4) The offender connects sexual activity with negative emotions and memories

B. Psychosocial Impact for the Child

- 1) Increased salience of sexual issues
- 2) May experience confusion about sexual identity
- 3) Confusion about sexual norms
- 4) Confusion of sex with love and care getting / giving
- 5) Negative associations with sexual activity and arousal sensations
- 6) Aversion to sex or intimacy

C. Behavioral Signs

- 1) Sexual preoccupations & compulsive sexual behavior
- 2) Precocious sexual activity
- 3) Aggressive sexual behavior
- 4) Promiscuity
- 5) Prostitution
- 6) Sexual Dysfunctions (may experience flashbacks of the abuse)
- 7) Avoidance of or phobic reactions to sexual intimacy
- 8) Inappropriate Sexualization of parenting.

II. **Stigmatization**

A. ***Dynamics***

- 1) Offender blames, denigrates the victim
- 2) The offender and others pressure the child to keep the secret
- 3) Child learns attitudes of shame about sexual activity
- 4) Some may have a shocked reaction to the child's disclosure
- 5) Others may blame the child for events
- 6) The victim may be / feel stereotyped as "damaged goods"

B. ***Psychosocial Impact for the Child***

- 1) Guilt & shame
- 2) Lowered self - esteem
- 3) Sense of being different from other children

C. ***Behavioral Signs***

- 1) Isolation
- 2) Drug or alcohol abuse
- 3) Criminal involvement
- 4) Self - mutilation
- 5) Suicide

III. **Betrayal**

A. ***Dynamics***

- 1) Trust and vulnerability are manipulated
- 2) Violation of the expectation that others will provide care and protection
- 3) Feeling that the child's well - being is disregarded
- 4) Lack of parental support and protection

B. ***Psychosocial Impact for the Child***

- 1) Grief and depression
- 2) Extreme dependency
- 3) Inability to judge trustworthiness of others
- 4) Mistrust, particularly of authority or men
- 5) Anger and hostility

C. ***Behavioral Signs***

- 1) Clinging
- 2) Vulnerability to subsequent abuse and exploitation
- 3) Isolation
- 4) Discomfort in intimate relationships
- 5) Marital problems
- 6) Aggressive behavior
- 7) Delinquency

IV. **Powerlessness**

A. ***Dynamics***

- 1) Body invaded against child's wishes
- 2) Vulnerability to invasion continues over time
- 3) Offender uses force or trickery to involve the child
- 4) Child feels unable to protect self and stop abuse
- 5) Repeated experience of fear
- 6) Child is unable to make others believe him / her

B. ***Psychosocial Impact for the Child***

- 1) Anxiety and fear
- 2) Lowered sense of capability
- 3) Perception of self as a victim
- 4) Need to control
- 5) Identification with the aggressor

C. ***Behavioral Signs***

- 1) Nightmares
- 2) Phobias
- 3) Somatic complaints, eating and sleep disorders
- 4) Depression
- 5) Dissociation
- 6) Anger
- 7) School problems, truancy
- 8) Employment problems
- 9) Vulnerability to subsequent victimization
- 10) Aggressive behavior
- 11) Delinquency
- 12) Increased risk of becoming an abuser