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