

Sexual Abuse

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In 1972, the Texas Family Code stated that there are four types of abuse that can occur to a child: physical, emotional, neglect, and sexual. Each form of abuse causes pain and damage to a child. Sexual abuse is completely different than the other types of abuse. Sexual abuse is the one that stands out from the others because it represents the unknown and misunderstood.

Many of us don't condone it, but we understand how some people hurt their children. We understand that some parents do not have the parental skills to restrain themselves; we understand how some parents are too deep into drugs and alcohol to supervise their children. We also understand that in some situations, stress or frustration can lead to a parent to accidentally spank a child so hard that it leaves a mark. No one understands why someone would sexually abuse their child. Anger, stress, and frustration can lead us into a negative situation, but sexual abuse is different. No one who is undergoing a large amount of stress or frustration will have sex with their own child.

The basic cause of sexual abuse is unknown. That is the scary part. There is no answer to when someone asks "why do they do this". Science is still trying to figure this one out. We look at the offenders to have a greater understanding. Many people believe that all these sex offenders were sexually abused themselves, many offenders will even state that they were abused. This is not true. About 70% of all adult offenders were not sexually abused. Many offenders will say that they were abused just to gain sympathy or to justify their behaviors. Some believe that sex offenders are just plain "crazy" or psychopaths. This is an easy explanation because it makes sense to us all. They must be "crazy", why else would they do that to a child. Once again this is false, only 20% of incarcerated offenders are considered psychopaths. In fact, many offenders are "normal" people who do not stick out in a crowd. They come from all parts of society and are very hard to detect.

The fact that offenders cannot be stereotyped or profiled shows the complexity of their nature. The general consensus is that sexual abuse stems from the pathology of the perpetrator. Something inside this person's head is just not right. The normal mechanisms that tell us not to do something are tuned off for these individuals. Yet, they are intelligent and savvy enough to continue these behaviors under little to no suspicion.

There is still so much that is unknown about the offenders of child sexual abuse. As opposed to the other three types of abuse, sexual abuse represents a gray area of understanding. The lack of understanding leads to fear; the fear of recognizing and the fear of reporting. Those are the two areas that will be discussed in a future article.