



The Sexual Abuse of Boys and its Aftermath

Information compiled by Male Survivor www.malesurvivor.org

- **Up to one out of six men report having had unwanted direct sexual contact with an older person by the age of 16. If we include non-contact sexual behavior, such as someone exposing him- or herself to a child, up to one in four men report boyhood sexual victimization.** (Lisak, D., Hopper, J., Song, P. 1996. *Factors in the cycle of violence: Gender rigidity and emotional constriction. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 9: 721-743.*)
- **On average, boys first experience sexual abuse at age 10. The age range at which boys are first abused, however, is from infancy to late adolescence.** (Finkelhor D., Hotaling G., Lewis I.A., Smith C.1990. *Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics, and risk factors. Child Abuse and Neglect, 19:557-68.*)
- **Boys at greatest risk for sexual abuse are those living with neither or only one parent; those whose parents are separated, divorced, and/or remarried; those whose parents abuse alcohol or are involved in criminal behavior; and those who are disabled.** (Holmes, W., Slap, G. 1998. *Sexual abuse of boys: Definition, prevalence, correlates, sequelae, and management. Journal of the American Medical Association, 280:1855-1862.*)
- **Boys are most commonly abused by males (between 50 and 75%). However, it is difficult to estimate the extent of abuse by females, since abuse by women is often covert. Also, when a woman initiates sex with a boy he is likely to consider it a "sexual initiation" and deny that it was abusive, even though he may suffer significant trauma from the experience.** (Lisak, D., Hopper, J., Song, P. 1996. *Factors in the cycle of violence: Gender rigidity and emotional constriction. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 9: 721-743.*)
- **A smaller proportion of sexually abused boys than sexually abused girls report sexual abuse to authorities.** (Holmes, W., Slap, G. 1998 *Sexual abuse of boys: Definition, prevalence, correlates, sequelae, and management. Journal of the American Medical Association, 280:1855-1862.*)
- **Common symptoms for sexually abused men include: guilt, anxiety, depression, interpersonal isolation, shame, low self-esteem, self-destructive behavior, post-traumatic stress reactions, poor body imagery, sleep disturbance, nightmares, anorexia or bulimia, relational and/or sexual dysfunction, and compulsive behavior like alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, overeating, overspending, and sexual obsession or compulsion.** (Holmes, W., Slap, G. 1998 and Gartner, R.B. *Betrayed as Boys: Psychodynamic Treatment of Sexually Abused Men.* New York: Guilford Press.1999.)
- **The vast majority (over 80%) of sexually abused boys never become adult perpetrators, while a majority of perpetrators (up to 80%) were themselves abused.** (Lisak, D., Hopper, J., Song, P. 1996. *Factors in the cycle of violence: Gender rigidity and emotional constriction. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 9: 721-743.*)
- **There is no compelling evidence that sexual abuse fundamentally changes a boy's sexual orientation, but it may lead to confusion about sexual identity and is likely to affect how he relates in intimate situations.** (Holmes,W., Slap, G. 1998 *Sexual abuse of boys: Definition, prevalence, correlates, sequelae, and management. Journal of the American Medical Association, 280:1855-1862.*.)
- **Boys often feel physical sexual arousal during abuse even if they are repulsed by what is happening.** (Gartner, RB 1999. *Betrayed as Boys: Psychodynamic Treatment of Sexually Abused Men.* New York: Guilford Press.)
- **Perpetrators tend to be males who consider themselves heterosexual and are most likely to be known but unrelated to the victims.** (Holmes, W, Slap, G. 1998 *Sexual abuse of boys: Definition, prevalence, correlates, sequelae, and management. Journal of the American Medical Association, 280:1855-1862.*)