



# Male survivors of childhood sexual abuse

Childhood sexual abuse is any act of a sexual nature imposed on a child. This can include online abuse, forcing a child to participate in or watch pornography, and any sexual act including touch. In Australia, these are crimes. They are never the fault of the child.

Boys, girls and non-binary children are all at similar risk of experiencing childhood sexual abuse. The large majority of children who experience sexual abuse know the perpetrator.

## Impacts

The impacts of childhood abuse can be profound and last well in to adulthood. For adult survivors of child sexual abuse, impacts can include:

- ▶ feelings of worthlessness and anger.
- ▶ strong feelings of shame and self-blame.
- ▶ difficulties with affection and intimate relationships.
- ▶ struggles to form trusting relationships with others.
- ▶ ongoing suicidal thoughts and behaviour.
- ▶ increased drug and alcohol use.
- ▶ decrease in school and work attendance which can impact on educational achievements and employment outcomes later in life.
- ▶ long-term difficulties with concentration levels.
- ▶ long-term sleep disturbance, including nightmares and insomnia.
- ▶ long-term health implications.
- ▶ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues including anxiety and depression.
- ▶ difficulties with sex and desire.
- ▶ fears of becoming a perpetrator (research indicates that more than 70 per cent of perpetrators did not experience childhood sexual abuse).
- ▶ worry and fear about becoming and being a parent.

For male survivors of childhood sexual abuse, social and cultural expectations of masculinity can impact on how they make sense of what happened to them. We live in a world where men are often still expected to be strong and sexually dominant, and able to defend themselves. This attitude often exists in the way we raise and educate boys.

Many male survivors of sexual abuse report doing things to prove how 'manly' they are, such as being very competitive in sport, overly aggressive in their mannerisms and avoiding showing any emotion that might be interpreted as weakness.

*Choose not to let shame rule your life.  
By sharing your story with someone  
supportive, shame can't survive.*



## Disclosing abuse

Most people don't disclose childhood sexual abuse until many years after it happened – often people are well into adulthood before they tell anyone what happened to them.

When men do disclose their experience of abuse, they often state that they should have been stronger or that there was something wrong with them for not being able to stand-up to the abuser or stop the abuse.

The reality is that people who perpetrate sexual abuse often carefully and systematically build up the trust of the child and the child's caregivers over time.

They often form a 'special bond' with the child and isolate them from other adults (including parents) in order to carry out the abuse. These tactics are known as grooming a child and they usually begin well before the sexual abuse starts.

## Important points to remember

- ▶ Nothing you did or did not do, led to the abuse. The abuse was something that was done to you by a person who had power over you.
- ▶ You are not alone. There are people and services available to support you.
- ▶ Remind yourself of all the things you did do to survive the abuse you experienced – sometimes people think that saying or doing nothing allowed the abuse to happen when in fact, this silence was often the very thing that kept them from experiencing more violence and abuse.
- ▶ The abuse does not define who you are. Focus on the things that remind you of who you really are – a son, brother, husband, partner, friend, colleague, coach, teammate or father.

## Resources

- ▶ **A Care Package** with lots of information and tips about coping and recovery can be viewed or downloaded from the SARC website.
- ▶ **A Supporter's Guide** providing information to parents, family and friends on how to support someone who is recovering from sexual trauma can also be viewed or downloaded from the SARC website.

## Things that can help

- ▶ Learn more about abuse and its impacts to help you make sense of things.
- ▶ Create safety around you – in your relationships, within yourself and the places you go.
- ▶ Connect with others who understand and who share your values in life.
- ▶ Take charge of your life and change the things you have control over, for the better.
- ▶ Remind yourself of your strengths and feel hope for the future.
- ▶ Consider accessing counselling, either in person, or starting with a telephone support service.

*It is possible to recover  
and to find enjoyment  
in life and hope for  
the future.*



## Support and counselling options

- ▶ **Living Well website:** information and support for men who have suffered sexual trauma: [www.livingwell.org.au](http://www.livingwell.org.au)
- ▶ **Living Well:** a Guide for Men. A comprehensive support guide for men who have experienced sexual abuse: [www.livingwell.org.au/get-support/living-well-services/living-well-a-guide-for-men/](http://www.livingwell.org.au/get-support/living-well-services/living-well-a-guide-for-men/)
- ▶ **MensLine Australia:** [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)
- ▶ **SAMSN** – Survivors and Mates Support Network: [www.samsn.org.au](http://www.samsn.org.au)
- ▶ **National Redress Scheme** – for Australians who suffered sexual abuse while in care: [www.nationalredress.gov.au](http://www.nationalredress.gov.au)
- ▶ **BeyondBlue:** [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- ▶ **Lifeline Australia:** [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

The **Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)** is a free 24-hour emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault. Counselling for any sexual assault/abuse experienced recently or in the past is also available to people of all genders aged 13 years and above. Call SARC on **(08) 6458 1828** or Freecall **1800 199 888**.