

HELPING AN ABUSER

If you know me and suspect I have a problem with children, tell me what you think. Ask me to find help before I hurt a child and ruin my own life.

If you learn I have abused a child because he or she told you, believe the child. Kids lie to get out of trouble, not into it. (They probably only told you the tip of the iceberg.)

If you confront me, I will convince you not to report me and I will continue abusing. **Don't argue, just make the call.** If you talk with me first, I will do everything possible to keep you from doing what you should. I will tell you, *"This was the first time I've ever done something like this."* or I will promise, *"I will never do it again. Never."* I will say *"I'm sorry."* I will tell you *"I'll get help."* What I really mean is *"I'm sorry I got caught."*

If you don't make the call, I won't get the help I need, and you'll be my accomplice. My problems will get worse with time and be more difficult to resolve. If you report me, you'll actually do me a favor. Yes, I might go to jail, but I deserve it. What I've been doing is criminal and children will be safer if I'm locked up.

When I get out, they will require me to continue having sessions with a therapist. I won't always like that, but I need it. I will complain. Tell me, "It's what has to happen to change your behavior." Don't feel sorry for me. I have a gift of manipulating people. Support me, but don't facilitate my crime.



PROTECT *me*
PROJECT

Is a not-for-profit organization.

We are working throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to prevent commercial sexual exploitation (CSE).

Between 69-98% of survivors of CSE report having been sexually abused in childhood. This is the most common denominator and is proven to contribute to their vulnerability toward exploitation. It's time to educate families about detecting, reporting and preventing the sexual abuse of minors (SAM).

Even though SAM may be part of our history, it doesn't have to be part of our children's future.

Be an agent of change

The content of this brochure was created by convicted perpetrators of sexual abuse of minors as part of their rehabilitation process. Protect Me Project reproduces it here with the permission of The Center for Behavioral Intervention in Beaverton, Oregon USA.



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Data indicates that one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before reaching puberty. (See back panel for source of information.)

The offender will be someone close to your child; a relative, friend of the family, or one of the many volunteers who work closely with your child on a daily basis.

He (or she) will make as big an effort to deceive the adults who supervise the child as they will to seduce and silence their victim.

Their tactics are so successful that only 5% of abusers are reported and sentenced for their crime.



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FIRST CONTACT

Sexual abuse of a minor (SAM) begins with a relationship. The offender wins the trust and friendship of a child. As the relationship progresses the offender tests the child's understanding of safe limits and their ability to protect him or herself. For example: wrestling with the child, opening the door "by accident" when the child is using the bathroom, or "accidentally" touching a child's private parts while playing. The offender will talk about sex with a child, may show him or her pornography or expose the child to adult sexual behaviors.

If the offender is skilled at this, the child won't even recognize what's happening or feel uncomfortable. If parents haven't talked with their children about SAM, children may not know they are being sexually abuse. The longer it goes on, the less probable it is the child will be able to detect and report it.

In order to keep the child from telling what is happening, the abuser will say something like, "No one will believe you.", "If you tell, they'll be really mad.", or "It will break their heart." or "You'll destroy the family."

52% of sexual abusers of minors reported that, when a child did tell his or her parents, the abuser was able to convince them not to call the police.

HOW I OPERATE

- ▶ It's easy. I pay attention to your son or daughter. I make them feel special.
- ▶ I present myself as someone who can be trusted. Someone who is responsible.
- ▶ I study your child's likes and I buy him or her little gifts. I look for ways to isolate your child; places where we can play alone.
- ▶ If you're a single mom, I prey on your fears of not being enough, that your child lacks a father figure. I spend my spare time "helping" the child. I offer to baby-sit or take your child on an outing.
- ▶ I know more about what your child is interested in than you do.
- ▶ I take advantage of a child's natural curiosity toward sex, I tell him or her "dirty" jokes, I show them porn and we "play" sexually.
- ▶ In public I make comments like, "They ought to shoot all the pedophiles!" That way people don't think I am one. I find ways to catch your child in a lie, then I point it out to discredit him or her.
- ▶ If I'm a parent, it's even easier to isolate and manipulate my kids. If they have cousins, I will abuse them, too. My wife and family will never suspect.
- ▶ I touch your child while you're present. If he or she says something, you will dismiss it with some kind of explanation, and you'll tell your child they were mistaken. You'll help me abuse and won't even know you're doing it.

ADVICE

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

- ▶ I'm someone you know. I hide my real identity. If I want to, I will try to abuse your child. Do your part – talk with your child about SAM. I'm going to do everything on my end to make it really hard for your child to tell you what's happening. He or she deserves your trust, I don't. Make it easier for them. Communicate, listen and believe.
- ▶ Teach your son or daughter about sex. If you don't, I will. Look for signs of abuse in your child, but watch my behavior just as much.
- ▶ Teach your child the anatomical names for their private parts. Talk about safe and unsafe touch. Tell them it's never ok for someone to touch or see, be touched or show their private parts.
- ▶ Tell him or her it's not ok to look at pictures of people without clothes. Reassure them they won't be in trouble if they tell you when someone has shown them pictures of nude people. They can always tell.

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT

- ▶ Tell a child it's never their fault if an adult sexually abuses them. They won't be in trouble if they tell. Teach your child that a person who tries to touch them in secret is tricking him or her, and that person has a problem like stealing or lying.
- ▶ Don't confuse your child by calling this a sickness. What I do is sick, but it's not an illness, it's a crime.
- ▶ Let your child know that if they don't think they can tell you, it's ok for them to tell another trusted adult like their aunt, teacher, grandma or school counselor.

