



Myths and Facts about Male Survivors

Myth #1: Boys and men can't be victims.

Fact: One out of every 10 men is a victim of sexual assault, and 1 out of six boys will be sexually abused by age 18. Males are socialized to not be vulnerable and not identify themselves as victims.

Myth #2: Most sexual abuse of boys is perpetuated by gay males.

Fact: Some child molesters do have gender preferences, but the majority of child molesters who abuse boys do *not* identify themselves as homosexual or gay.

Myth #3: If a boy/man experiences sexual arousal or orgasm from abuse, this means he was a willing participant or enjoyed it.

Fact: Sexual arousal or orgasmic response does not mean that positive emotions or consent were involved. It simply means that the body reacted. The act of abuse assumes or disregards a victim's feelings. A male can have an erection or an orgasm even when he is afraid.

Myth #4: Boys are less traumatized by the abuse experience than girls.

Fact: Males may be *more* traumatized by the abuse experience than girls because societal views often cause them to deny their victimization and deal with it on their own.

Myth #5: Boys abused by males are or will become homosexual.

Fact: Being abused *confuses* the victim about his or her sexual identity. It does not *cause* or *change* a victim's sexual orientation.

Myth #6: Boys who are sexually abused go on to abuse others.

Fact: Most boys who are sexually abused do not react abusively to others.

Myth #7: If the perpetrator is female, the boy or adolescent should consider himself fortunate to have been initiated into heterosexual activity.

Fact: Sexual abuse is about power, control and authority. The boy/adolescent does not deserve to be treated like a sexual object by anyone, whether male or female. Female-victimized males may be severely affected because of role reversal of gender stereotypes which put the female in the more powerful role.

Common Responses of Male Survivors

- Difficulty setting personal limits
- Sense of hopelessness
- Careless or reckless behaviors
- School problems or delinquency
- Running away
- Drug or substance abuse

Common Feelings of Male Survivors

- Confusion about sexual identity—
“Does this make me gay?”
- Guilt--“I should have been able to defend myself and stop it”
- Shame--“I'm dirty, weak or less than a man because this happened”
- Anger--“I'm mad at who did this, but it shows with other people”
- Sadness--“I don't have power or control. I'm worthless”
- Denial--“It's upsetting so I don't talk about it. I block it out of my mind”



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Other Key Issues

- Not being believed
- Fear of perpetrating
- Intimacy
- Aggression
- Trust
- Setting limits—esp. child survivors
- Self-esteem
- Body memory
- Isolation

Statistics say that...

In 2002, one in every eight rape victims were male. [NCVS 2002]

About three percent of American men — a total of 2.78 million men—have experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. [Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women 1998.]

Of sexually abused children in grades five through twelve, 48% of the boys told no one about the abuse—not even a friend or sibling. [Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls, 1998.]

In one study, 98% of males who raped boys reported that they were heterosexual. [Sexual Abuse of Boys, Journal of the American Medical Association, December 2, 1998]

**Cited on this fact sheet*

How can I help a male survivor that I know?

- Take it seriously.
- Ask him what you can do to support him.
- Let him know that it wasn't his fault.
- Let him know he is not alone.
- Find out about resources that are sensitive to male victims and let him know his options.
 - Tell him that help is available and encourage him to call a rape crisis hotline.
 - Don't pressure him to do certain things. He needs to know that he has choices and that you support him.

Resources for Male Survivors

24-Hour Chicago Rape Crisis Hotline: 1-888-293-2080. Available for survivors and those who want to support them.

Rape Victim Advocates. Provides counseling and advocacy for teen and adult survivors of sexual abuse.
180 N. Michigan Ave., Ste 600
Chicago, IL 60601
312-443-9603

www.malesurvivor.org*

www.survivingtothriving.org/malesurvivors*

www.aest.org/uk/survivors/male*

www.brown.edu/Student_Services/*

www.menweb.org

www.theawarenesscenter.org/mens.html*