

Myths about Male Sexual Abuse/Assault

Knowing the truth about male sexual assault/abuse is important for any child, teenager or adult.

Myth: Boys and men can't be victims.

Truth: This myth is sometimes referred to as the “macho image.” Males learn very early they should be able to protect themselves. But no one is capable of protecting themselves from everything. Men who experience childhood sexual abuse should remember that children are weaker and more vulnerable than their perpetrators. Children cannot fight back. The perpetrator is bigger, has more strength and knowledge. The perpetrator's power is from a position of authority, using more resources, such as money or other bribes, or outright threats – whatever advantage can be taken to use a child/man for sexual purposes.

Myth: Most sexual abuse of boys is perpetrated by homosexual males.

Truth: Pedophiles who molest boys are not expressing a homosexual orientation any more than pedophiles that molest girls are practicing heterosexual behaviors. While many child molesters have gender and/or age preferences, of those who seek out boys, the vast majority are not homosexual. They are pedophiles.

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

Truth: In reality, males can respond physically (get an erection) to stimulation, even in traumatic or painful sexual situations. Perpetrators can maintain secrecy by labeling the child's/man's sexual response as an indication of his willingness to participate. “*You liked it, you wanted it,*” they'll say. Physical stimulation is likely to happen in a sexual situation. It does not mean the child/man wanted or understood what it meant at the time.

Myth: Boys/men are less traumatized by the assault/abuse experience than girls.

Truth: While some studies have found males to be less negatively affected, more studies show that long-term effects are quite damaging for either sex. Males may be more damaged by society's refusal or reluctance to accept their victimization, and by their resultant belief that they must “tough it out” in silence.

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

Truth: Many boys who have been abused by males erroneously believe that something about them sexually attracts males, and that this may mean they are homosexual or effeminate. This is not true. Pedophiles who are attracted to boys will admit that the lack of body hair and adult sexual features turn them on. It is the pedophile's inability to develop and maintain a healthy adult relationship that is the problem.

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

Truth: This myth is especially dangerous because it can create a terrible stigma for the child. While it is true most perpetrators have histories of sexual abuse, it is *not* true that most victims go on to become perpetrators.

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

Truth: Premature or coerced sex, whether by a mother, aunt, older sister, babysitter, teacher or other female in a position of power over a boy, causes confusion at best, and rage, depression or other problems. To be used as a sexual object by a more powerful person, male or female, is always abusive and often damaging.