

Ask Your Therapist

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Adults Who Were Sexually Abused In Childhood

While I have a general practice of clients with many kinds of challenges here in Ashby, my Wellesley Hills office is devoted to seeing adult clients who were sexually abused as children, and that has been my specialty for almost 25 years.

The statistics are that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will have an unwanted, coerced or forced sexual experience before they are 18 years old. The definition of sexual abuse that I use is: the violation of a child's natural sexual boundary by a person of greater authority or power. This includes genital, anal or oral penetration but also includes: touching, fondling, lewd or suggestive behavior including speech, exposing kids to pornography and using the threat of these things to intimidate or manipulate a child into doing behaviors he or she would not freely do. It does not include the normal sexual exploration of children of equal power or social rank.

What are some of the aftereffects of having been sexually abused as a child? They include: problems with intimacy, poor or rigid boundaries, guilt, shame, sexual difficulties, trust issues, body image distortions, self destructive behaviors, depression, anger, control issues, intrusive memories, conflicted relationships with the perpetrator(s), feeling separate from your body, food and substance abuse, and post traumatic stress disorder, to name a few.

What can be done now to help heal something that happened so long ago? I use a two-sided approach. I serve as a witness to them as they disclose what happened to them as children, and help them work through the feelings, beliefs and decisions they formed back then. And I help clients to understand how the abuse is still affecting them today and actively work to change thoughts, beliefs and behaviors to reflect healthier choices.

This is not a quick process. It takes time to undo the damage that happened when clients were children, but it is relieving and rewarding to finally get an opportunity to tell what happened to someone who will not judge you or blame you or shame you, and then will help you make sense of it and of your life. It is important to get the help you deserve to be free of the oppression that can result from the experience of child sexual abuse.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the Authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information. The Ashby Center for Counseling 978-386-5657