

Common Myths

Children who have a “normal” medical exam were not sexually abused.

FALSE: The majority of children who have been sexually abused do not have conclusive medical findings that substantiate sexual abuse

Children make this thing up for attention.

FALSE: Most victims are very reluctant to disclose abuse, they attach a sense of shame to their victim status, and blame themselves for the abuse.

Only female children are sexually abused.

FALSE: Many boys are victims of sexual abuse.

You will be able to tell if your child has been sexually abused.

FALSE: There is no foolproof way to tell if your child has been abused.

All children who have been sexually abused will become sexual abusers in the future.

FALSE: Appropriate counseling may help prevent the cycle from continuing. Children who have been sexually abused need help healing with the trauma of abuse.

Children will tell someone right away when they have been abused.

FALSE: Children are often afraid or ashamed to tell someone about their abuse. Many children are threatened not to tell.

Children are always angry with their abuser.

FALSE: Children can have feelings of anger, fear, love, and concern for their abusers. Children can love the abuser but hate what the abuser did.

A child who was sexually abused once will not let it happen again.

FALSE: Children do NOT let abuse happen and often cannot protect themselves against adults.

Sexual activities with a child which are “gentle” and not forced or do not involve penetration will not harm the child.

FALSE: Any sexual activity with a child can be emotionally and physically harmful.

Sexual assault by a stranger is more traumatic than sexual abuse by a known adult.

FALSE: Children can be more traumatized when a known adult commits the abuse because the child's trust in the adult has been broken.

All sexual offenders are men.

FALSE: Women and children can be sexual offenders, too.

If an alleged offender insists he or she did not abuse the child, the child must be lying.

FALSE: Many offenders deny they abuse children. The police and Child Protection Services will carefully investigate cases of alleged abuse.

Men who sexually abuse children do not have relationships with women.

FALSE: Men who sexually abuse can be married or in a serious relationship with an adult woman

You can tell if a person would molest a child by their personality or appearance.

FALSE: There is NO foolproof way to tell if a person would abuse a child. People of all incomes, education levels, and professions have been convicted of child sexual abuse.