



Fact Sheet: Myths about child sexual abuse

The mother is just as much to blame

Most women have no knowledge that their child has been sexually assaulted by a person well known to the child and the family.

The mother must not have been able to satisfy her partner's sexual needs

- The only person responsible for the abuse is the abuser;
- No man has the 'right' to have his sexual needs met by anyone;
- There is no consistent link between the sexual relationship of the offender and his partner and the child sexual abuse.

Children will forget, get over it or grow out of it

A child's development is impacted by sexual abuse in many ways, including self esteem, capacity for intimacy and sexuality, feelings of self worth, anxiety, depression and coping with their own life-stressors.

Children are too young to understand what has happened to them

Children can tell us through play, their behaviour and their words that they are upset, traumatized or are uncertain about what is happening to them.

Children are sexy

A child's appearance can never excuse an adult's abusive acts.

Children's behaviour that does not indicate stress and trauma means that they are not traumatised by the sexual abuse

- Children are often frightened and threatened by their abuser, making it difficult for them to tell anyone;
- Children can feel guilty about what is happening to them;
- Children are often threatened by the abuser not to tell e.g. I will go to jail, your mother will go to jail, you will be taken away from home.

Sexual abuse only happens to children from poor families

Being poor does not mean you will be sexually abused, but poverty is a serious risk factor as well as families that are in crises, dysfunctional families and parent/s under stress. These situations create vulnerable children who are more likely to be exposed to abuse.