



**IMPACT**

OF

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

There is an undeniable link between early-life trauma and numerous adult-life physical and psychological disorders. Survivors of child sexual abuse are trying to process events, stay safe and focus on survival. Society does not want to hear about it. So survivors are accustomed to dealing with trauma by just holding it locked away somewhere. This takes a toll on their overall well being. The effects can be multiple, extensive, and characterized by a boundless amount of variability.

## IT NEVER STOPS SHAPING YOU

“All emotions, even those that are suppressed and unexpressed, have physical effects. Unexpressed emotions tend to stay in the body like small ticking time bombs—they are illnesses in incubation.”  
 — Marilyn Van M. Derbur, Miss America by Day, CSA Survivor

### PSYCHOLOGICAL

Many experience a complex post-traumatic stress disorder, a condition in which sufferers tend to have a completely pervasive and rigid negative belief about themselves (WHO). Depressive symptoms, panic attacks, anxiety, self harm and suicidal tendencies are most common.



### SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substances temporarily numb the pain, cope with or block out traumatic memories, improve feeling of self esteem and deal with the psycho-logical issues caused by sexual violence. If they attempt to stop using the drug, symptoms reappear and the likelihood of relapse increases.

### INTIMACY & RELATIONSHIPS

The act of sexual abuse breaches the implicit trust the child places on an adult. Their views on sexual intimacy may change from a way to show affection toward someone you love and trust to an act that elicits fear, helplessness and powerlessness.



### PHYSICAL

Women are more likely to develop obesity and eating disorders as a way to de-sexualize themselves to prevent negative experiences from happening again. Sleep disturbances, headaches and pain are common.



### SPIRITUAL

When a child experiences harsh criticism from their abuser, they turn on themselves, becoming their own harshest critic. Feelings of guilt, self-blame and shame intensify as the child grows older and they feel like a 'bad' person.

### SELF ESTEEM

When someone is told over and over again that they are not loved or that they are a problem or used as a sexual object, eventually they begin to believe it and take it on as their identity.



**INFORMATION SOURCES**

- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jun/28/it-never-stops-shaping-you-the-legacy-of-child-sexual-abuse-and-how-to-survive-it>
- Burrowes, N, (2014). The Courage to be Me. A story of courage, self compassion and hope after sexual abuse. NB Research Ltd. (London).

The road to recovery may be long, it may be difficult, but healing is possible. Having a mental health concern does not make you “weak” or “broken.” People cope with trauma in different ways. Therapy offers a safe, private place to get help without judgment. You do not have to handle your problems alone.

## HEALING IS POSSIBLE

"I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it." - Maya Angelou

**Bring your thoughts outside:** Writing thoughts down shifts them from the inside to the outside. Now you can explore them and think about whether they are helpful.

**Look at triggers:** Can you figure out what, when, where and who can set off a flashback or anxious thought? A trigger record will help you to manage or avoid trigger-situations or even prepare for it.

**Think about what is important to you:** Make a list of valuables that keep you going on the journey of life. E.g. people who love you, good memories, aspirations.

**Telling is when healing begins-** even if it is after years of enduring the pain and the burden of silence. When you feel ready, reach out to any of these helplines or organizations.



**RAHI Foundation**  
(Recovery and Healing  
from Incest)

**Arpan:** Towards freedom  
from Child Sexual Abuse

**The Rakshin Project**

**The Safe Space Project**

**TULIR:** Centre for  
Prevention and Healing  
from Child Sexual Abuse

**Enfold India:** Creating  
Safe Spaces



## ABOUT CIRCLES OF SAFETY

Circles of Safety (CoS) sensitises the community on prevention of child sexual abuse through education. We seek to cultivate a change in culture in which adults are no longer uncomfortable or afraid when discussing sexuality and related topics, but instead, acknowledge that no topic is too taboo or cumbersome when the safety of our children is at stake.

## TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- Ask for a private consultation
- Organise a workshop for adults
- Implement the Circles of Safety student curriculum for 1-12 graders



[www.circlesofsafety.com](http://www.circlesofsafety.com)

