

## Finding Help

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- You deserve support in healing from childhood sexual abuse. You have a right to be believed and listened to, and to express your feelings about the abuse.
- You are not alone, and you can get help finding support for all of the ways that childhood abuse impacts your life.
- Local rape crisis centers have information on how to begin healing your trauma. They may offer individual counseling and support groups to assist you on the path to recovery. They can offer you referrals for social services or for legal help, too.
- There are many ways to heal from childhood abuse. A counselor can help you create a healing plan that meets your individual needs.
- Help is also available for the important people in your life. Your spouse or partner, friends, family members, children or others may want to seek information so that they can understand your needs and challenges.
- There are people who will listen to you, who understand, and who will help you on your recovery path. You are not alone.

There is help...you can talk with someone who will listen, who understands.

You don't need to hide your feelings or pretend they are not there.  
You are not alone.

For More Information,  
Contact Your  
Local Rape Crisis Center

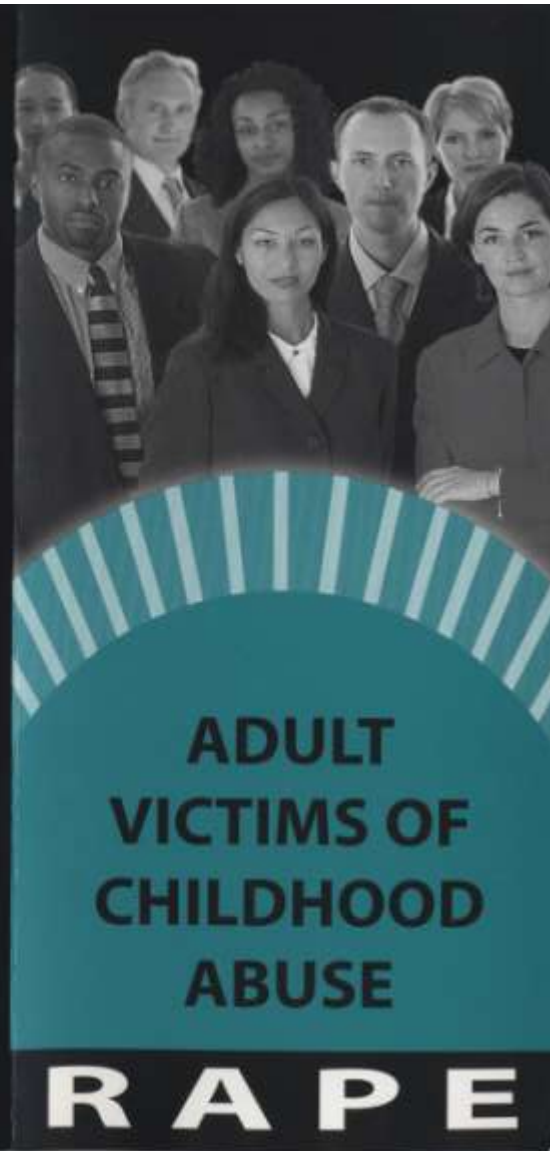
or call



**Florida Council Against  
Sexual Violence**  
1311-A Paul Russell Road  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Information Line: 1-888-956-RAPE  
Office: (850) 297-2000  
[www.fcasv.org](http://www.fcasv.org)

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## VICTIMS OF ABUSE



### What is Sexual Violence?

If it is against your will or consent, it is against the law.

The sexual abuse of children spans all races, ages, ethnic groups and economic backgrounds. Sexual abuse means any kind of unwanted or inappropriate sexual behavior with a child, whether or not there is actual physical contact. Tragically, this kind of abuse is not rare: studies estimate that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 7 boys are sexually abused as children.

Abusers can be family members, friends of the family, authority figures or strangers. It is impossible to tell if someone is an abuser by simply looking—they may be someone who is highly respected in society and has a good reputation. Most child victims knew and trusted the people who abused them.

Children are absolutely dependent of adults for their physical and emotional survival, and abusers have many ways of wielding this power over children. Abusers may use threats to coerce the child, such as the threat of harm to them or their loved ones and withholding of love and affection. They may tell the child that they are special, that the abuse is a way to show love for the child, or that the child is responsible for the abuse.

If you are a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, it is important to remember that no matter what you may have been told, the abuse was not your fault and you are not alone.

### Common Reactions to Victimization

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse may experience a range of emotions and effects that impact many aspects of their adult lives:

- Anger
- Shame
- Guilt
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Denial and minimizing
- Difficulty in trusting others
- Sexual difficulties
- Difficulties with relationships
- Flashbacks
- Memory disorders
- Self-blame and self-doubt
- Physical health problems
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse

Adult survivors may also experience other difficulties, such as not having anyone available to corroborate memories of the abuse. If the abuser was a family member or someone close, the possibility of repeated contact with the abuser can make family relationships stressful, and a history of child abuse in a family can hurt other relationships as well.

Any or all of these aftereffects can combine to produce feelings of depression, isolation and hopelessness. All of these feelings and reactions are normal responses to traumatic experiences. Acknowledging the pain can be the first step in working through the abuse.

What Do Victims Feel?