

PROTECTING THE BLACK CHILD



A DIGITAL GUIDE TO END CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT
INSTITUTE GENDER AND CULTURE



#DEARSURVIVOR

**WE ARE SORRY
FOR EVERY TIME
YOU WERE
FORCED BACK
INTO SILENCE.**



ABOUT BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT

SINCE 2008, BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT (BWB) HAS ORGANIZED AGAINST RACIAL AND GENDER INJUSTICE, WORKING INTER-GENERATIONALLY WITHIN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA TO PROTECT THE CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF BLACK COMMUNITIES; TO BUILD POLITICAL CAPACITY WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES; AND TO FACILITATE CULTURAL PRODUCTION/PRESERVATION AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES. OUT OF ITS HEADQUARTERS IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, BWB ALSO PROVIDES COMPREHENSIVE INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING SERVICES AND HEALING CIRCLES, GROUNDED IN LIBERATORY FRAMEWORKS AND INDIGENOUS PRACTICES, TO SURVIVORS OF STATE AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE.

ITS FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE, THE BLACK WOMEN'S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (BWTRC) ON RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT (2010 TO 2016), WAS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND TO IGNITE CIVIL SOCIETY IN EXAMINING THE HISTORY, CONTEXT, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON BLACK WOMEN, GIRLS, AND GENDER-FLUID PEOPLE. OVER THE LAST NINE YEARS, BWB HAS ESTABLISHED A MEANINGFUL TRACK RECORD OF WORKING IN COALITION TO PUSH FEDERAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY AGENDAS THAT SEEK TO ERADICATE THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN UNDER-RESOURCED COMMUNITIES WHILE ALSO SHIFTING THE HEARTS, MINDS, AND BEHAVIORS OF IMPACTED POPULATIONS.

BLACK WOMENS BLUEPRINT ENVISIONS A WORLD WHERE WOMEN AND GIRLS OF AFRICAN DESCENT ARE FULLY EMPOWERED AND WHERE GENDER, RACE AND OTHER DISPARITIES ARE ERASED. WE ARE COMMITTED TO MOBILIZING AND EMPOWERING LGBTQ+ FOLX AND CHILDREN TO CHALLENGE AND SHIFT THE NARRATIVES ABOUT THEIR LIVES IN THEIR OWN WORDS AND IN THEIR OWN VOICES. COUNTER THE INCREASINGLY HOSTILE AND FEARFUL CLIMATE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL THROUGH STORYTELLING AND TESTIMONIAL TO SHIFT THE PUBLIC WILL TOWARDS PROTECTING THE INTERESTS, RIGHTS, LIVELIHOODS, AND FULL HUMANITY OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE - SPECIFICALLY TRANSGENDER WOMEN OF COLOR - IN THE UNITED STATES

CHANNEL THE ENERGIES OF OUR RESPECTIVE CONSTITUENCIES TOWARDS MAKING, CREATING, AND SHARING ART THAT CENTERS THE TRANS EXPERIENCE AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

INSTITUTE FOR GENDER & CULTURE

The Training Institute delivers prevention education and intervention curricula based on an understanding of the complex interplay between the individual, relational, social, cultural, environmental, historical and persistent systemic factors that influence the spectrum of discrimination, oppression and violence that impact people's lives. Using proven effective pedagogy and methodologies, the Institute works to equip organizations and institutions with a framework for the development of strategies that directly address civil and human rights measures, offers anti-oppression analysis and key points for intervention.

Our primary audience for this project are the caretakers of young children of African descent more broadly and Black caretakers of any children, including parents, caregivers, daycare providers, school counselors, after school program directors, pediatricians, educators, childcare providers, and nursery aids. The initial pilot group for this project would draw upon our own membership in addition to tapping existing communities of Black caretaker around the country, including online.

The project is designed especially pitch to culturally-specific media outlets and blogs aimed at Black parents and caretakers as a way of encouraging dialogue and participation about child sexual abuse prevention

Black Women's Blueprint staff collectively organized on designing a youth program that would tackle child sexual abuse prevention through a reproductive justice framework. We designed a hands-on, Black feminist/womanist curriculum that combined our bystander intervention practices with our gender justice analysis through a culturally specific approach. To date, the Center for Disease Control has no mandated culturally specific primary prevention curriculum that challenges the structural and historical experiences that continue to disrupt the lives of Black women and girls with regard to child sexual abuse. Black Women's Blueprint's Child Sexual Abuse program was established in 2013 to shift attitudes and behaviors that enable sexual violence against minors in African-American and Black immigrant communities in New York City. The program provides a framework for addressing child sexual abuse prevention and intervention at the micro- and macro-level contexts of individual, relational, communal, and societal as sexual abuse occurs at home, at school, at church, the streets and elsewhere in communities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03

BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT
HISTORY +INSTITUTE FOR
GENDER & CULTURE

07

WHAT IS CHILD
SEXUAL ASSAULT

20

ENSURING SAFETY AND
PROTECTION

08

HOW TO ADVOCATE

09

IT'S MORE THAN
JUST STREET
HARASSMENT, THESE
ARE CHILDREN.

11

PAY ATTENTION,
BE OBSERVANT

13

ACCOUNTABLE
FOR THE SAFETY
OF CHILDREN

15

TIPS FOR ADULTS

19

THE SIGNS

22

COMBATting VICTIM-
BLAMING

24

ELIMINATE THE HARM

26

ELIMINATING PAST
HARM & TRAUMA

28

MYTHS AND FACTS AND
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT'S STANCE

Our prevention program has had current and past success in creating a safe space for disclosure, supportive services, children's services and advocacy. As well as fighting against the culture of silence that accompanies sexual abuse. In a truth and reconciliation survey conducted by BWB, we learned that 60 percent of Black girls in this country have experienced sexual abuse at the hands of black men before reaching the age of 18, yet the vast majority of incidents go unreported. Seven years ago, a similar study by the Black Women's Health Imperative found that number was closer to 40%. According to the Child Molestation Prevention Institute one of every five little girls and at least one out of every ten little boys are victims of a sexual abuser. Far more men than women are abusers. In fact, approximately one out of 20 men, and approximately one out of 3,300 women are sexual abusers of children. We also know that approximately 40% of Black and African American women nationally report coercive contact of a sexual nature before they even reach the age of 18. The lack of attention and awareness on these staggering statistics is especially derived from the culture of silence about sexual violence in Black and African American communities. Such silence often functions as a protective shield against further discrimination and vilification of Black men in a world where police are killing young Black men and women, and where the "second highest form of police misconduct is sexual violence" (Cato Institute). Young Black survivors negotiate seeking justice and healing for their experiences at the intersection of race, sexuality, class and gender and often strive to adhere to codes of loyalty and protection of communal/community relationships instead of reporting due to pressing threats predicated on historical disenfranchisement and marginalization. Within African American and Black immigrant families, limited conversations with children about human sexuality can also send a more general message that sexuality is taboo, making it virtually impossible for victims of sexual abuse to feel comfortable disclosing their abuse, especially if the abuser is a member of the child's social network. There is also a tendency in these communities to point to systemic failures experienced by the offender that immobilize communities and families from taking even the most basic steps to preventing child sexual abuse at the familial or communal levels. Such silence and lack of action creates the perfect storm for new cases of sexual assault to proliferate.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Child sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and an adult – or another child – in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer.



Older individuals in our families, friend circles, and communities often take advantage of their access to children.

No matter how a child's body is shaped or what their stage of physical development, it is not okay to sexualize children.

HOW DO WE ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BEING BLAMED FOR THEIR VULNERABILITY?



If you witness someone blaming a young person for the ways older individuals look at or interact with them...

You must step in and stand up for the child.

It is never okay to blame a child for an aggressor's inappropriate behavior.

We must protect children instead of blaming them.



IT'S MORE THAN JUST STREET HARASSMENT, THESE ARE CHILDREN.



NO MATTER WHAT THEY'RE WEARING



It is never
okay to
sexualize
children's
bodies.

Unwanted staring,
remarks, and touching
are never okay.
In order to protect youth,
older individuals must
call-in inappropriate
behavior by other
members of the
community.
Educate your friends
about respect as well as
boundaries.



PAY ATTENTION, BE OBSERVANT

Child Sexual Abuse prevention is stopping the abuse from happening before it happens or taking appropriate action to stop it from happening again. Prevention of child sexual abuse also means fighting against child sexual abuse across the range of violence in both at home and in public spaces. Prevention works best when parents and caretakers learn how to spot the signs, have all the facts, communicate with their children, and hold other people in the community accountable for their actions.

SPOT THE SIGNS.

Children depending on their developmental stage they will not have the ability to communicate to their parents in the same way adults communicate sometimes they will show signs of behavior changes instead. Knowing these behavior signs can help stop sexual abuse from happening; for example you can take your child away from a bad environment if you see that they are uncomfortable or talking bad about the circumstances.

HOW CAN WE BE MORE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOL, DAYCARE, AND OTHER PUBLIC SPACES?



It's good practice to establish a trusting relationship with your child so they will feel comfortable telling you if anything happens to them, and they won't feel alone.

Ask them how their day was

Be genuinely interested in what they have to say

Genuinely listen to your children, what they have to say matters.

ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN

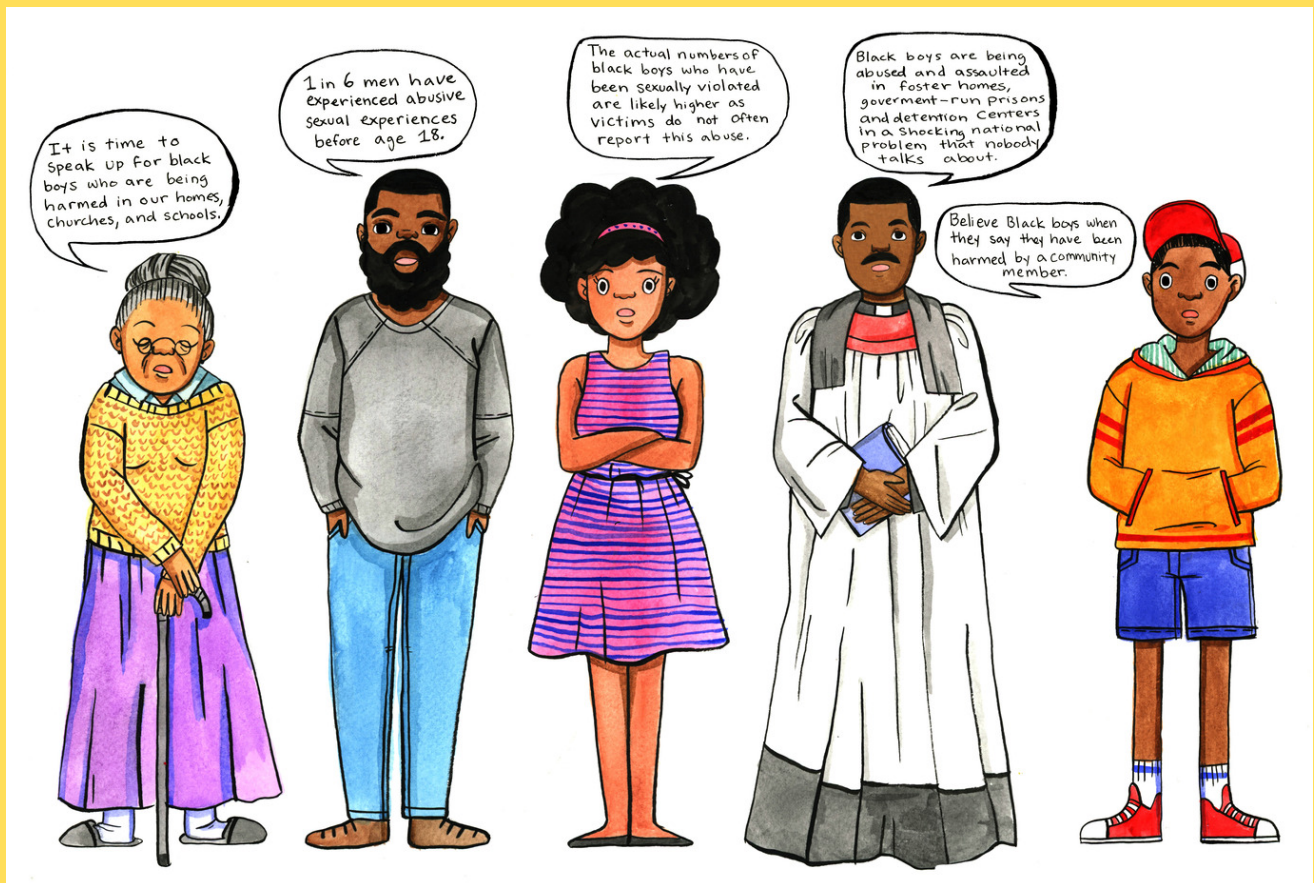


Prevent harm at school and public spaces by always believing children and comforting them when they are afraid or show signs of anxiety and discomfort.

Have open conversations with your child about what goes on at school, at sports practice, at their afterschool program, or anywhere they spend their time.

Children are impacted on a regular basis, and we are responsible for ensuring their safety.

ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN



Family members, Teacher, Pastors, Preachers,
Coaches, Celebrities, Women

**ANYONE CAN BE AN ABUSER.
ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM.**

TIPS FOR ADULTS

Model respect for your child's personal space and physical boundaries by asking permission or declaring what you are going to do before touching them. For example, before helping your child use the bathroom, tell them you are going to help them pull down their pants and/or help them wipe before immediately doing it without saying anything.

Establish a "Trusted Triangle" – a list of three adults that your child can go to whenever they need help or feel uncomfortable about a situation.

Clarify to children that strangers are not the only people who can harm them, even family members and people they know and like can be inappropriate and not follow the "rules" about touching children. Teach them to decide if a person is safe or unsafe based on the way someone makes them feel and not how they look or not how well they know the person.

In early childhood, parents can teach their children the name of the genitals, just as they teach their child names of other body parts. This teaches that the genitals, while private, are not so private that you can't talk about them.

Enroll your child in daycare and other programs that have a parent "open door" policy. Monitor and participate in activities whenever possible.

As children age, create an environment at home in which sexual topics can be discussed comfortably. Use the news or publicized reports of child sexual abuse to start discussions of safety, and reiterate that children should always tell their parent about anyone who is taking advantage of them sexually.

Teach children early and often that there are no secrets between children and their parents, and that they should feel comfortable talking with their parent about anything -- good or bad, fun or sad, easy or difficult. Teach your children that anything that bothers me should not have to be a secret. Reinforce that you will always believe them and that they can tell you anything. Reinforce that you will not punish them if they tell you that a stranger or someone you know touched them in a way that made them feel uncomfortable, scary, embarrassing, or sad.

Advocates recommend using concrete concepts like "red flag" and "green flag" to help children understand touch that is okay or "green" versus touch that is not okay or "red." Teach children that touches cause a range of feelings and ask them to give examples of different types of touches and the feelings it causes (i.e. sad touches, happy touches, embarrassing touches, scary touches).

TIPS FOR ADULTS

” Share your child’s way of communicating “no” with their care team; ask them to respect your child’s “no.” Children should be able to say “no” to hugs, kisses, or being placed on the laps of family friends or relatives. Cultural norms of obeying your elders or greetings that involve hugs or kisses makes it harder for children to disclose about abuse or set boundaries.

Learn what the expected sexual behaviors are in your child’s age group. See CHILD SEXUAL BEHAVIORS. This knowledge will help you prepare for what your child needs to know as well as tell the difference between expected behaviors and behaviors that may be cause for concern.

Tell your child stories real or fiction of occurrences of sexual abuse with kid friendly language. This is an easy way to provide your child with sex education that comes from you.

Play “what if” games with children. For example, ask them “If you are outside playing and a neighbor says they want you to go to their house for cookies, what would you do?” You can use role-play scenarios to teach such lessons. If you are role-playing with your children, it is important to develop “what if” situations which are pertinent to your family. One of the purposes of “what if” games is to stress to children the importance of always getting a parent/caregiver’s permission before going anywhere.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?



Learning that your child has been sexually abused can be absolutely devastating.

Prevent further harm by seeking counseling and support and by talking to your children and the children in your communities.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?



You can also seek help as a preventative measure rather than a reaction to harm done.

THE SIGNS

BEHAVIORS YOU MAY SEE IN A CHILD OR ADOLESCENT

Nightmares or problems sleeping without explanation
Difficulty concentrating/spacing out (e.g. going away in there mind, daydreaming)
Change in eating (e.g. refuses to eat, drastically increases or decreases appetite, trouble swallowing)
Change in mood when around a certain person or in general (e.g. going from talkative and cheerful to quiet and withdrawn).
Asking not to be left alone with a certain adult, child, or caretaker
Leaves clues like notes or drawings or freighting images
A sudden reduce in self-confidence

SIGNS MORE TYPICAL IN YOUNGER CHILDREN

Has new words for private body parts that were not learned at home
Bathroom accidents unrelated to toilet training
Starts acting younger than their age (e.g. bed wetting, thumb sucking)
Resists removing cloths at bath time, bedtime, or toileting
Mimic adults like sexual behaviors

SIGNS MORE TYPICAL IN ADOLESCENTS

Inadequate personal hygiene (e.g. not showering/bathing, not brushing teeth)
Engaging in self-harming behavior (e.g. cutting, burning, self-mutilation)
Drug or alcohol abuse
Compulsive eating or dieting
Fear of intimacy
Depression/ anxiety
Running away from home
Engaging in sexual acts with anyone who gives them attention
Withdraw from family, friends, classmates, and activities they usually

ENSURING SAFETY AND PROTECTION



Some harm-doers visit target areas where children can be found, such as playgrounds, daycares, and school yards. Have you been paying attention to who shows up in child-friendly spaces? Be aware, and if you see something, say or do something.



Many harm-doers make a habit out of visiting those places and return to them repeatedly. Be empowered to speak up or do something if you notice patterns in these spaces.

ENSURING SAFETY AND PROTECTION



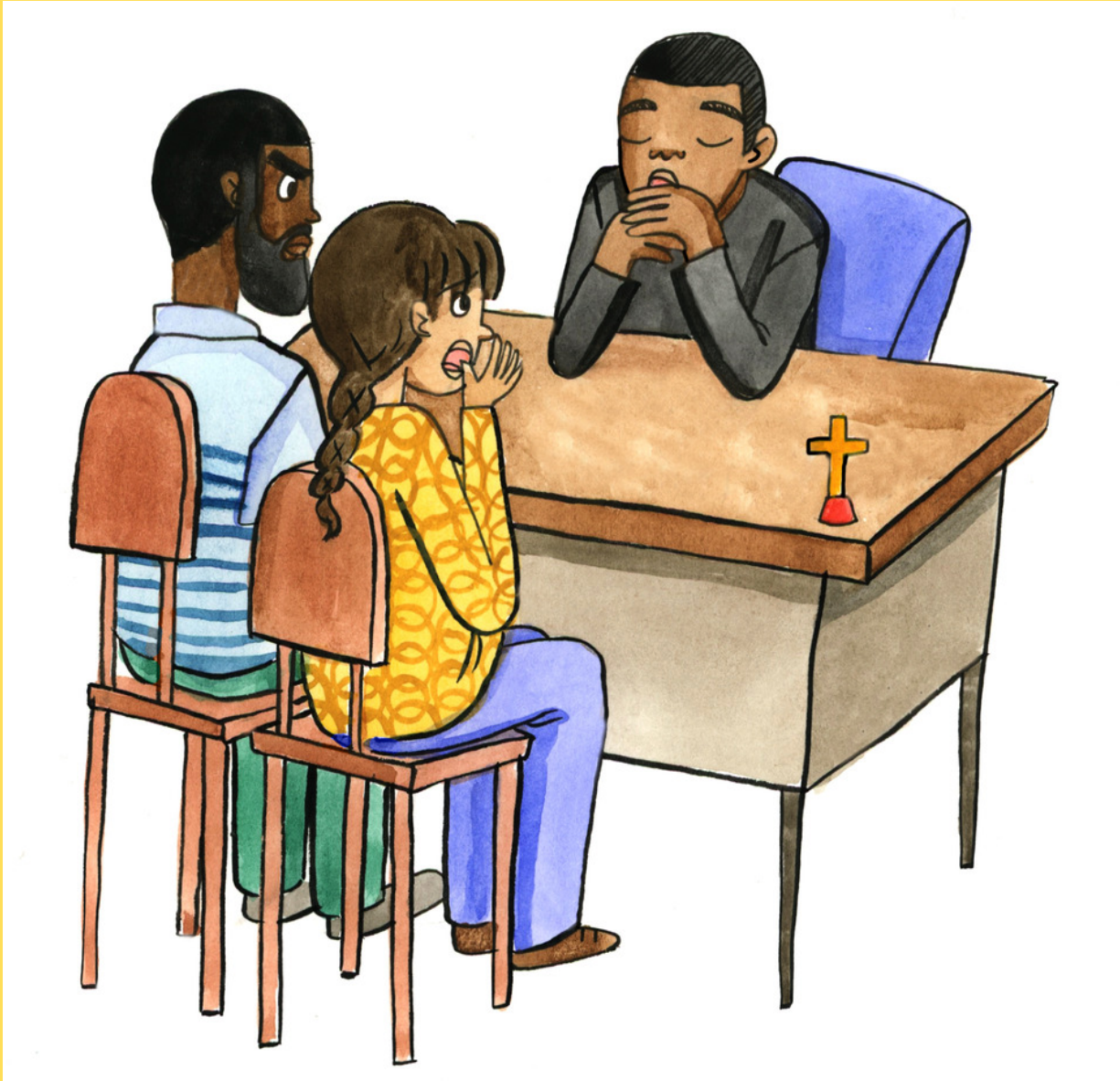
If you or someone you know has ever considered harming a child, or even witnessed a harm-doer repeatedly visit a place where children play and learn, say or do something.

Examples include:

- Reach out to them or call for help
- Refer them to a clergy member or a mentor in the community
- Guide them to treatment centers where they can talk to someone
- Point them in the direction of resources that will stop the harm
- Prevent child sexual abuse before it happens

COMBATting VICTIM-BLAMING

Even some of the most trusted members in our communities are not properly trained or equipped to handle action steps for child sexual assault and can say harmful and inappropriate comments.



“Mr. and Mrs. Smith I hate to tell you this, but if your child was molested, it is no one’s fault but yours. You know that she is too sexually mature for her age, and you fail to discipline her time and time again.”

COMBATTING VICTIM-BLAMING



"I am sorry to hear this Mr. and Mrs. Smith... What Pastor said was absolutely inappropriate. We let the pastor know how this has made you feel so that it does not happen again.

Disciplining a child will not prevent them from being harmed. It is not okay to blame the child or yourselves for any harm done. What we can do is educate and empower our children."



HOW CAN WE CONTINUE TO ELIMINATE THE HARM OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND PAST TRAUMA IN OUR LIVES AND COMMUNITIES?



The notion that “boys will be boys” or
“men will be men” is unacceptable.

Teach better habits.

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ELIMINATE THE HARM



Whether you were harmed or were the harm-doer, healing, validation and acknowledgment can take place.



Harm-doers often don't realize the damage they have done and never seek help for their wrong-doings and the trauma that they created.

Speaking up can renew our strength if we approach this on our own terms in our own time.

ELIMINATING PAST HARM & TRAUMA



Harm-doers have multiple options in seeking help and guidance. It is important that as a community we hold space for the multitude of methods and acknowledge that ones not better than the other but rather an opportunity for healing and reconciliation. In destigmatizing therapy, whether individual or group, we as a community are providing a resource that ultimately aids the ending of child sexual abuse and working with an ethic of care.

Concretely, this ethic of care looks like creating more spaces, convening and community organizations that focus on Black sexual violence within the community; Black people across the gender spectrum partnering in community conversations to discuss the repercussions of rape and heal from harm-doing; openly discussing sexual violence in Church meetings and delivering preventative messages from the pulpit; providing holistic sex education within the church for Black children and Black youth so that they can articulate their experiences and hardships; training clergy on bystander intervention and modalities for addressing sexual violence within Black spaces; providing materials to the community and making resources adequately accessible.

We must also look into our own lives and see the harm-doers there. We should all seek to understand the ways we've actively perpetuated violence, or willfully remain complicit in the harm of others. Our silence is where the hurt is, and we must speak up and confess our truths to ourselves.

This truth-telling requires no public shaming, but necessitates the inner-work of healing cyphers, writing circles, community holding community, truth supporting truth.

MYTHS AND FACTS AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Myth #1. My child will tell me if abuse has occurred.

In many cases there are barriers that get in the way of your child reporting their abuse. These barriers may be fear, shame, self-blame, trauma, their age, or the relationship of the harm-doer to the child. Children also need time to process the abuse, which means that many children who do speak up will only do so after some time has passed. It is estimated that 73% of children will not tell anyone about the abuse for one year and 45% will not tell for at least 5 years. <https://www.raccfm.com/files/child%20sexual%20abuse.pdf>

Myth #2. Children who have experienced sexual abuse will show physical signs.

Physical warning signs of sexual abuse are extremely rare. Be sure to look for behavioral and emotional signs listed in the See the Signs section above. At the extreme end of the spectrum, sexual abuse includes sexual intercourse or its deviations. Yet all offences that involve sexually touching a child, as well as non-touching offenses (making a child watch pornography or live sexual acts) and sexual exploitation, are just as harmful and devastating to a child's well-being and still counts as sexual violence against children.

Myth #3. Sexual abuse only happens to girls.

Child sexual abuse can happen to anyone including boys. 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). Even though it happens to boys too, it is not often talked about. About 22% to 29% of all child sexual abuse victims are male (Putnam, 2003 p.270). Outside of these statistics, there are even more male survivors of sexual abuse. Black boys are less likely to report abuse because of stigmas of masculinity, meaning there is a stereotype that boys are suppose to be fearless and dominate and not let things like this happen to them. Believing these stereotypes can lead to is victim blaming Black boys when sexual abuse does happen, making Black boys feel even more shame and self blame, which makes it harder for them to report their abuse.

<http://www.apa.org/pi/about/newsletter/2014/11/child-sexual-abuse.aspx>

MYTHS AND FACTS AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Myth #4. Harm-doers are only strangers.

The majority of harm-doers are people who the child knows including, parents, teachers, ministers, coaches, and relatives. Harm-doers are typically someone close to the child. This is one reason why reporting rates are so low; children are afraid of getting the person in trouble or the child may be stuck within the "grooming process". The "grooming process" is a commonly used term to describe when a harm-doer engages in deliberate and purposeful actions to build trust and an emotional connection with a survivor. It is a way of bringing down their guard by befriending them and preying upon their vulnerabilities. It includes subtle, gradual and escalating actions such as giving compliments, buying gifts, buying food, offering shelter, promising a better life or fulfilling any unmet emotional and physical needs.

Myth #5. Children can provoke sexual abuse through displaying seductive behaviors.

Children are NEVER to blame and are NEVER deserving of sexual abuse. Not matter how the child acts or what clothes they wear, no one has the right to violate them. The only responsibility for the abuse lies with the harm-doer; it is never a child's fault. Sexual abuse can exploit children who may not be developmentally capable of understanding or resisting the abuse.

<https://www.raccfm.com/files/child%20sexual%20abuse.pdf>

Myth #6. Harm-doers are only men and gay men are more likely to sexually abuse children than heterosexual men.

Although the majority of harm-doers are men, women and other children/teens can sexually abuse children. Despite a common myth, gay men are not more likely to sexually abuse children than heterosexual men are. About 95% of all men who have sexually abused boys reported they were heterosexual.

Myth #7. My Son is now gay because he was sexually abused.

Child sexual abuse does not determine whether a child is gay or straight. A boy who was sexually abused by a man is not necessarily gay now, nor was he sexually abused because he was gay. Just because a boy can get aroused during sexual abuse that does not mean he liked it or wanted it. That's just how the male body works. It is important to remember that the sexual abuse happened because of the harm-doer's failure to develop healthy sexual relationships and it has nothing to do with the sexual orientation of a child.

<https://1in6.org/family-and-friends/myths/>

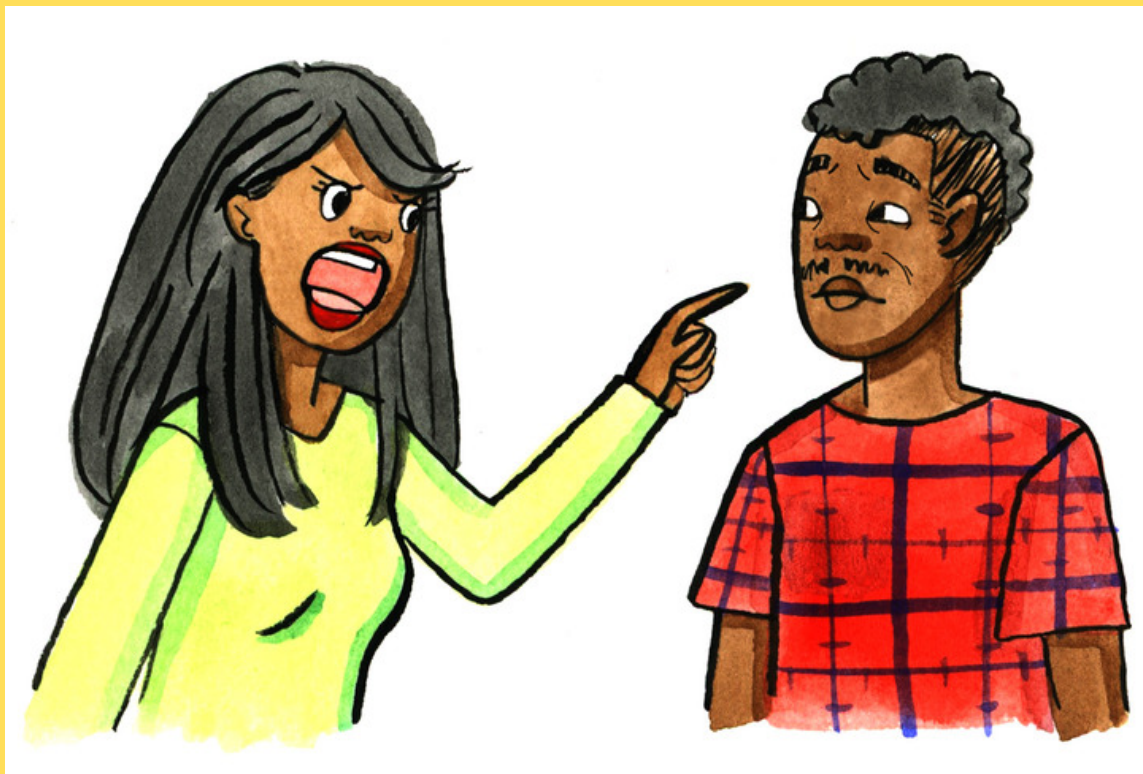
DEBUNKING THE MYTHS



Any child can experience child sexual abuse regardless of their sexual orientation. LGBTQ children sometimes find it difficult to talk to their parent about the abuse they experienced.



DEBUNKING THE MYTHS



Children who are abused will ultimately “turn gay”.

The fact is that children who are perceived to be gay or lesbian are targeted by harm-doers.



DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

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<https://lin6.org/family-and-friends/myths/>

Your child's trauma does have any connection to who they are attracted too.

It's not your child's job to educate you on child sexual abuse
nor is it their job to educate you on LGBTQ+ --

Don't automatically assume your child's sexuality based on
their trauma

What you say to and think of your child is extremely
important to the prevention of silencing them when they
have experienced trauma.

CONNECT

CRISIS INTERVENTION

**IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN CRISIS, AND IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE
HELP, PLEASE REACH OUT USING ONE OF THE NUMBERS LISTED
BELOW.**

ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE 24/7.

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