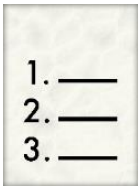




CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL
VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP

Self Help Booklet for people who have gone through sexual violence or sexual abuse

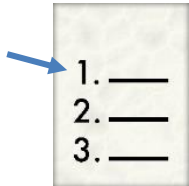




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About this booklet



This booklet is for people who have been raped or gone through other kinds of sexual abuse. It is to help you understand what has happened and to work out how you feel.

When you have been raped or gone through other kinds of sexual abuse it can make a difference to:



- How you think
- How you feel
- How you behave
- How you see the world

This booklet is for people who have gone through any kind of sexual violence.



Rape is when someone forces you to have sex with them when you do not want them to. This includes:

- Putting a penis in your mouth, vagina or bum.
- Putting other things in your mouth, vagina or bum.





Sexual abuse is when someone makes you do anything else sexual that you do not want to do. It could happen because someone:



- Makes you undress or show parts of your body you usually keep covered up.



- Touches you in a place that makes you feel uncomfortable.



- Shows you parts of their body that you do not want to see.



- Makes you touch them in places that make you feel uncomfortable.

- Takes photos of you when you are not dressed.



The person could be a man or a woman.



Men can abuse women and men.



Women can abuse men and other women.

Rape and other acts of sexual violence are also called sexual abuse.



It can happen to children and adults.



It is normal to feel confused, angry, upset or worried if these things happen to you. But it does get better.

Be gentle and patient with yourself as you go through your feelings and then find ways to feel safer. This takes time.



Each person's experience of sexual abuse is different, so everyone feels different things.



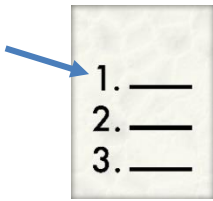
There is no right or wrong way to feel if sexual abuse has happened to you.



This booklet may help to explain some of the things you are feeling, and help you to feel better.



We call someone who has been through sexual abuse or sexual violence a **survivor**. This is because you have been through something bad and survived.



Introduction



It is possible to feel better after any kind of abuse. It can mean you need to be brave and patient.



Be kind to yourself, and do not make yourself do too much too soon.

If sexual abuse has happened to you, you may feel:



- Scared or angry.
- Like you cannot trust anyone.
- Like you want to shut yourself away from everyone.



You may feel like this for a long time.



You need to be brave to start work on making yourself feel better. You have opened this booklet, which means you are starting to get better already.



Read it as fast or as slowly as you want to. Take breaks and try to make sure you can cope with what you are reading.

It is important to remember:



➤ What happened was not your fault.



➤ Many people do not tell anybody what has happened for a long time.



➤ Most people who rape or sexually abuse know the victim. This includes people in a relationship.



➤ You are not alone and can get support.



What you might be feeling



When a person has gone through something shocking or unexpected, they can feel shock or stressed.

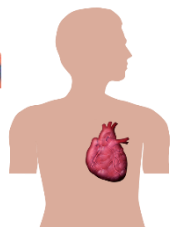
This could be physical (in your body) or emotional (what you are feeling).



What you feel is normal and will be different for each person.

Here are some of the things you may feel:

Physical – in your body



- Tight muscles
- Tired
- Headaches
- Dizzy
- Stomach upset or feeling sick
- It's hard to breathe
- Heart beating faster than normal



Emotional – your feelings



- Guilty
- Sad
- Scared
- Bad dreams
- Angry

You might do things differently than you usually do.



This could be:

- Feeling scared to go out
- Not looking after yourself
- Not wanting to go to work
- Not wanting to see friends or family
- Smoking
- Drinking more alcohol than usual
- Not wanting to eat much
- Eating more than usual



Why you feel this way:



When you are in danger or something bad happens, your brain does what it needs to do to keep going.

If sexual abuse happens to you, your brain will usually tell you to do one of these things:



➤ Fight back



➤ Run away



➤ Freeze



➤ Do what you are told



➤ Go floppy

This all happens very quickly and nothing you do is right or wrong.

If sexual abuse happens to you more than once your brain will usually do the same thing each time.



Your Thoughts



It can be hard to stop thinking about what has happened to you.

You may think:



- It was my fault



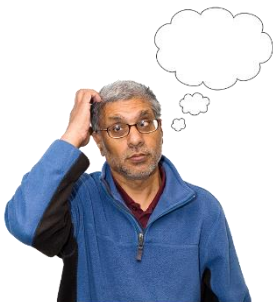
- I should have done something differently



- I deserved what happened to me



- I can't go on



These thoughts are not true, but you may feel like they are true.



Telling someone



Some people take a long time to tell someone what happened to them.



Telling someone can help you feel better.



It can be scary to tell someone what happened to you.

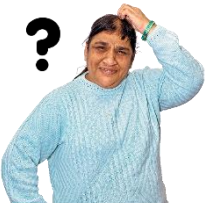
This is because:



- You may not want to think about what happened.



- You may think they won't believe you.



- You may not know how to say what happened.



- You may need to use words you do not like to say.



- You may be worried that it could make things worse.



- You may feel that you are dirty.



- You may think that people will not like you if they find out what happened to you



- If you are worried about telling someone, think about what you would do if someone told you that the same had happened to them:



- Would you blame them?



- Would you believe them?



- Would you be kind and try to help them?



Memories



You may try to forget or block out what happened but it might come back into your mind when you do not expect it to.



This is called a flashback.

You might remember only parts of what happened.

Sometimes a flashback happens because something starts it off. This could be



➤ A smell

➤ A sound or a song



➤ A place



➤ A person



➤ A feeling



If you know what causes a flashback, you might be able to keep away from that thing or person in future.



Self Harm

This is when someone hurts themselves on purpose.



Self harm might be cutting, pulling out your hair, burning yourself or hitting yourself.



You could also harm yourself by drinking or smoking too much. Or by eating too much or not eating enough.



You may do it because you are sad or angry.

You may think it will help you feel better.



Sometimes people self-harm because they feel they need to be punished for what happened.



You may feel that hurting yourself helps you to cope. Pages 18 and 19 of this booklet may help you find things to take your mind off hurting yourself.



Ways to cope



There are lots of things that can help people deal with what has happened to them. These things may also help you if you have a flashback.



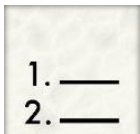
These things could be:



- Writing down how you feel.
- Drawing a picture about how you feel – you could use different colours for different feelings.



- Writing or drawing things that make you happy.



- Writing down a good thought to match every bad thought.



- Talking to someone you trust.

Aa Amazing



- Thinking of a good word that describes you for each letter of your name.



- Writing down something good that happens to you each day or drawing a picture of it.

These things do not have to be big. On some days you might be pleased that you made a cup of tea or went for a walk.



Grounding



Grounding is when you think about things around you to help you stop thinking bad thoughts.

Grounding exercises:



- Look at what is around you. What can you see? What can you hear?



- Try to think of an animal for each letter of the alphabet.



- If you are feeling scared, you could tell yourself that what happened is in the past and you are safe now.



- Concentrate on your breathing: breathe deeply or count how many times you breathe in and out.



- You might want to carry something with you that you can touch if you feel sad – perhaps a photograph, small toy, stone or squeezey ball.



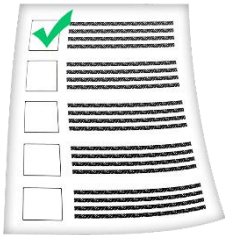
- Try holding your muscles or your fingers tight, then stretch them.



- You might have a special place you like to think about when you are feeling sad or scared.



- Think about something good you have done or something you are looking forward to.



- If you practise these things you will get better at doing them when you feel worried, scared, angry or sad about what happened to you.



Talking to someone and getting help



There are lots of people who can help you if you want to talk to someone.



You could talk to:

- ✓ A friend
- ✓ A family member
- ✓ Your doctor
- ✓ Someone at work you trust
- ✓ Someone at a day centre you trust
- ✓ The police



Work Place



Day Centre



There are also specially trained people you can talk to. You can talk to them on the phone or face-to-face.



These people can help you to understand what happened to you. They can also help you to make plans so that you feel better.





Getting justice



It is important to remember that the person who sexually abused you has done something wrong.



They could be punished by the police and go to prison – this is called justice.



If you tell someone it might stop them doing it to someone else.



There are people who can help you talk to the police and support you if you have to go to court.

Easy Read version of booklet by:



People who can help you



For women and girls



Rape Crisis England and Wales gives information about how to get help if you have gone through or are going through sexual violence. It has details of:



✓ Your nearest Rape Crisis organisation



✓ Information for friends, partners, family and other people who support a sexual violence survivor, or who want to help them.



You can call Rape Crisis on **0808 802 9999** any day of the week at these times:



12 noon – 2pm



7pm – 9.30pm



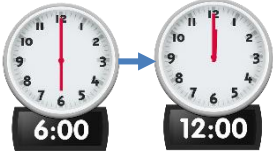
Website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk



Rape Crisis Scotland has a telephone helpline and can give email support to anyone affected by sexual violence. They will do this no matter where it happened or how.



You can phone the helpline on **08088 01 03 02** any day of the week from 6pm – midnight.



Email: support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk



For men



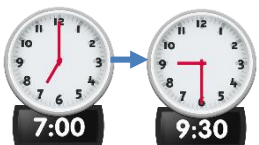
Some Rape Crisis Centres give support to men and boys as well as to women and girls. Contact Rape Crisis England and Wales and they will tell you if your local centre does this.



You can call Rape Crisis on **0808 802 9999** any day of the week at these times:



12 noon – 2pm



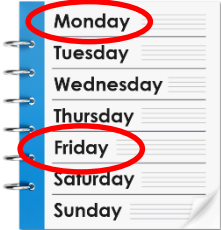
7pm – 9.30pm

Website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk



M Power has a helpline for men who have gone through sexual violence. You can call them on

0808 808 4321 at these times:



Mondays 6pm – 8pm

Fridays 12 noon – 2pm



Website: <http://www.male-rape.org.uk/>



Survivors UK gives support by computer to men who have gone through sexual violence.



Website: <http://www.survivorsuk.org/speak-to-us/>



Mankind gives support to men aged 18 and older who have gone through sexual abuse at any time in their lives.



Website: <http://www.mankindcounselling.org.uk/index.php>

Easy Read version of booklet by:

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