

VICTIM AWARENESS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of treatment is to never again sexually abuse someone. One way to achieve this goal is learn what it feels like to be a victim and to understand what your victim felt like.

Men who commit sexual crimes are not necessarily bad people. They are not usually men who set out to be mean to others. They do not go through their entire lives wanting to hurt and injure people. When they committed their crimes, however, they did not care or were unaware of the harm that they were inflicting. The goal of this section is to increase your understanding of the trauma to victims and the consequences of sexual abuse. It is hoped that this awareness can be a tool that you can use to prevent yourself from abusing someone again in the future.

??? WHAT IS VICTIM AWARENESS ???

Victim awareness is composed of three parts

- Victim Knowledge
 - Victim Sympathy
 - Victim Empathy

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Victim Knowledge refers to an understanding of the common feelings that people who are sexually abused may experience. It is not necessarily feeling sorry or bad for them. It is also not necessarily having the same feelings they may have. It is recognizing they have been injured, that the harm is long-lasting, and some of the specific effects that result from being sexually abused. This recognition is the first step in developing victim awareness.

**Victim Knowledge
Means Recognizing
Someone Has Been
Injured and Needs
Help**



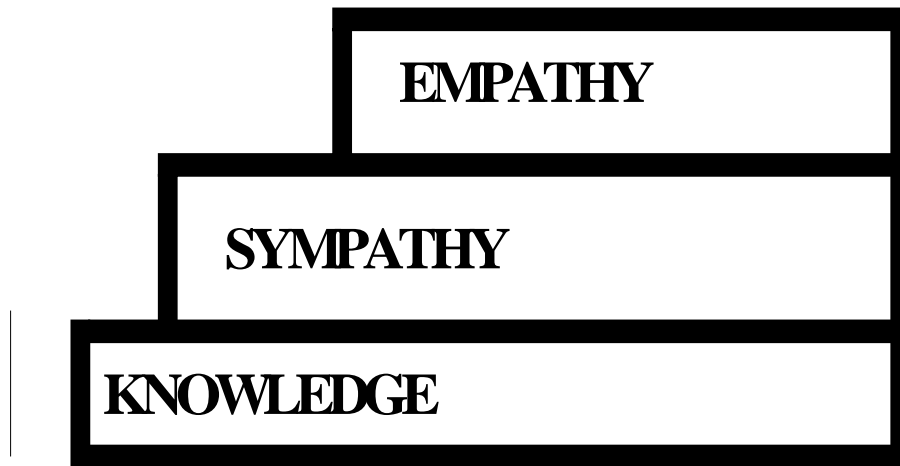
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Victim Sympathy refers to feeling bad or having compassion for victims of sexual abuse. It involves not only recognizing that children who have been molested and women who have been raped have been harmed, but feeling sorry for them because they have been injured. Feeling something for victims (not only your own but victims of other offenders as well) is a more advanced stage of victim awareness than simply recognizing the types of injuries they have sustained.

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Y** *Victim empathy* is the most advanced stage of victim awareness. Empathy is the ability to put yourself into someone else's shoes. It involves feeling what victims feel; seeing the world through their eyes. Victim empathy will allow you to view the sexual acts that you committed from the perspective of the child you molested or the woman that you raped. This is the most difficult phase of developing victim awareness and many offenders fail to ever achieve this level. However, all men are capable of reaching this degree of understanding, if they have the courage and motivation to confront these feelings.

Each of the three aspects of victim awareness builds on each other. It is first necessary to develop knowledge about what victims go through. This knowledge can then lead you to experience compassion and sympathy for victims. The final pinnacle of awareness is then empathy.

VICTIM AWARENESS STAIRWAY



It is an uphill climb on each of the steps. During the course of this module, you will take each rung of the steps separately. It will take patience, hard work, and concentration to reach the top. If you are willing (and with the help of your fellow group members and therapists) it is a goal well worth achieving.

??? WHY DEVELOP VICTIM AWARENESS ???

There are two chief reasons for trying to develop greater victim awareness:

- To remove the pleasure associated with memories of *past* acts
 - To inhibit the pleasure potential of *future* acts.

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Many offenders remember their past sex abuse of others with a sense of pleasure and sexual arousal. They may fantasize and masturbate to thoughts and images of previous rapes of women or molests of children. This is particularly most common when an offender is angry, bored, feeling deprived or in some other way feeling out of control. Fantasizing about past (or future) molests or rapes is one of the worst things you can do. It only further reinforces and encourages future abusive sexual behavior. If you can begin to associate these fantasies with thoughts about the damage being inflicted upon the victim, you will remove the pleasure that has been associated with them. The example of Carl is an illustration of how this works.

CARL

Carl repeatedly molested a 12 year old neighbor girl named Ellen. As Carl had few adult friends at the time, he had greatly enjoyed the attention that this girl gave to him. He truly believed he was in love with her, and that she was in love with him. He reported frequently experiencing intense sexual fantasies about Ellen, even though he was in treatment. He understood that such fantasies were risky for him, but he seemed at a loss as to how to get rid of them. He frequently talked to his therapist about these fantasies and how to interrupt them. He had tried to think about unpleasant things whenever he had such fantasies, but it didn't stop the arousal that he got from visions of Ellen. Finally, his therapist suggested that Carl picture a tear falling down Ellen's cheek whenever he thought about her in a sexual way. This teardrop would represent the pain and suffering that Carl had caused her. Surprised at such a suggestion, Carl said, "But that would ruin my whole picture of her." "That," replied his therapist, "was the whole idea".

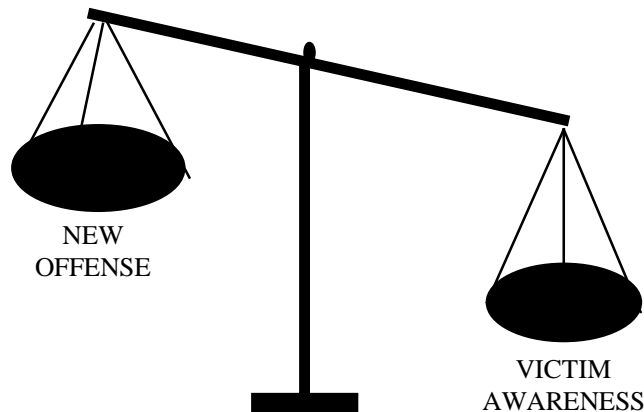
The second major reason for developing victim awareness is to provide strong motivation to avoid re-offending in the future. Sex offenders are basically good

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people. They don't necessarily intend to harm people. At the time of the offense, most offenders suffer from some sort of twisted or distorted thinking (refer to the Cognitive Distortions module of this workbook). They go through a variety of mental gymnastics that gives them permission to act out their immediate urges. This twisted thinking involves a minimization or denial of the harm that is being done to the victim. By being aware of the awful truth about what victims of sexual crimes go through, you are preventing yourself from falling prey to such distorted thoughts. You will be less able to give yourself permission to molest a child or rape a woman when you are aware that this is going to harm and haunt them for years to come. A highly developed sense of victim awareness can provide the brakes when you find yourself careening down a hill towards re-offending.

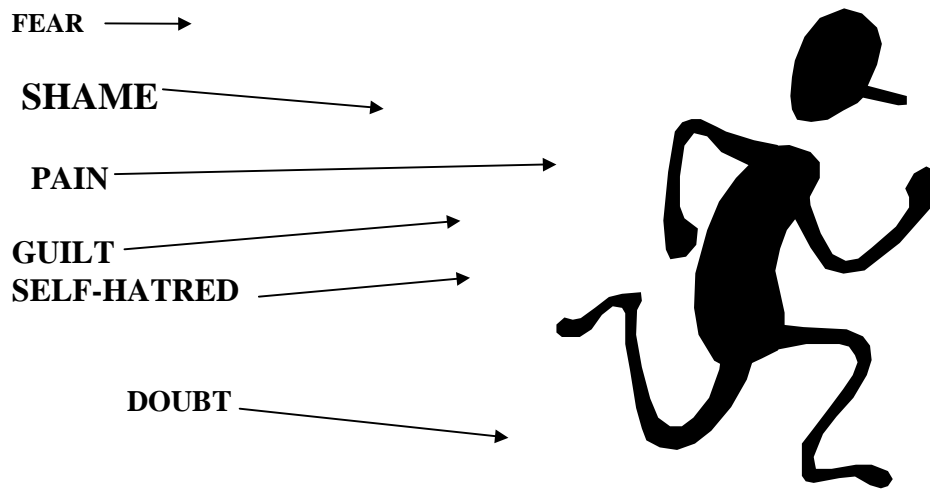
THE GREATER THE VICTIM AWARENESS
THE LESS CHANCE OF RE-OFFENDING



??? **WHAT MAKES VICTIM AWARENESS SO HARD** **???**

Most offenders find developing victim awareness a very difficult task. In fact, many report it is the hardest part of their treatment. For many offenders, sex was one of the few enjoyable and pleasurable parts of their lives. It was a way they could feel intimate or close to someone. Or, it was a way to relax and release tensions. Sex should be fun and enjoyable. It should also be a way to gain intimacy and to express feelings. When it involves hurting and harming someone, however, it can hardly be seen as a source of innocent pleasure. Some offenders invest much of their time either fantasizing about past molests and rapes, dreaming about such future sexual scenes, or searching for new victims to exploit. To now attach strong bad feelings to this source of great pleasure is something that many offenders are reluctant to do.

A second reason that most offenders find developing victim awareness so difficult is that it involves experiencing very negative and harsh feelings. It feels bad! It brings up feelings of guilt, shame, and pain. These are often the same feelings that offenders try to cover up by their deviant sexual behavior. Sometimes offenders try to avoid experiencing these difficult emotions by accusing their therapists of trying to punish them by making them feel bad. They act as if the therapist is trying to run a “power trip” on them. This act is seldom very convincing, even to other offenders. Attempts to block out the feelings that begin to emerge as you become more aware of what victims experience are a natural part of the treatment process. Just remember, they are only ways you are running away from yourself and from the truth.



With the help of your group members, your therapists, and your support system you will be able to confront those feelings. It will take energy and hard work on your part.



READING ASSIGNMENT

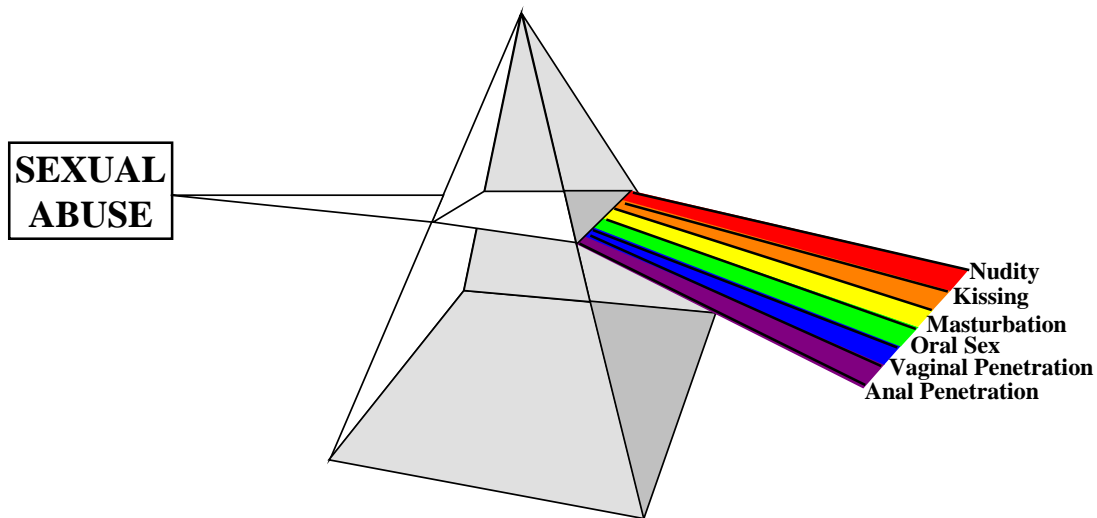
Read the Introduction and Chapter 1 (“What is Empathy”) in Empathy and Compassionate Action.

VICTIM AWARENESS

SECTION 2: SPECTRUM OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Before it is possible to understand what victims may experience, it is first necessary to be clear about what exactly the term “sexually abusive behavior” means. Many men who commit sexual crimes fail to recognize their full range of abusive acts. Some acts, although not illegal, are just as traumatizing to victims as those that are against the law. They may minimize or deny the full extent of the harm to the victim by saying their behaviors were harmless and of no consequence. From the victim’s view, this is not true.

Sexual abuse is not just one type or kind of behavior. There are many different acts that make up sexual abuse. One of the first steps you must make in developing victim awareness is to be very clear what type of abuse you committed. The drawing below indicates that this process is like putting light through a prism. When a light goes through a prism it separates all the different colors that make up that light. Similarly, you must act as a prism and separate all the different behaviors that made up your abuse of your victim(s).



A SPECTRUM OF SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS¹

Below is a list of some common types of sexually abusive behaviors that have been noted by an expert in the field of child sexual abuse. As you review the list, think about examples of these behaviors which you may have experienced either as a victim or as a perpetrator.

Staring: where the adult leers or stares at certain sexual parts of the child's body such as the chest, buttocks or crotch.

Example: The girls in Mr. Hayes 7th grade science class often talked about how "creepy" they felt when they noticed his eyes focusing on their breasts or trying to look down their blouses.

Nudity: where the adult parades around the house nude in front of all or some of the family members.

Example: A stepfather walked around the house naked in front of his 16-year-old stepdaughter. He continued this behavior even though his wife protested that it was inappropriate and seductive. He claimed that his wife had a "dirty mind". Later the child revealed the secret of a 3-year period of molestation by the stepfather.

Disrobing: where the adult takes off his clothes in front of the child. This generally occurs when the child is alone with the adult.

Example: Twice a week, while viewing television, a father allowed his bathrobe to slip open. This exposed parts of his naked body to his pre-teenage daughter. The mother was always out of the home when this occurred.

¹ S. Sgroi, (1982) Handbook of Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse, D.C. Heath & Company

Genital Exposure: where the adult exposes his genitals to the child. Usually the man directs the child's attention to his genitals.

Example: A father came into his 11-year-old daughter's bedroom. He opened the front of his pants, exposed his penis, and requested that she touch it.

Observation of the Child: where the adult secretly or openly watches the child undress, take a bath, or use the bathroom.

Example: Several times a week over a period of years, the parents of teenagers gave their son enemas. They would then watch him void. They excused this behavior as a good health and hygiene practice.

Kissing: where the adult kisses the child in a lingering and intimate way. This type of kissing should be reserved for adults. Even very young children sense that this is inappropriate and are likely to be uncomfortable with it.

Example: A 10-year-old girl reports that her uncle tried to French kiss her.

Fondling: where the adult places his hands on the child's breasts, abdomen, genital area, inner thighs, or buttocks. The child may also touch the adult in similar areas of his body.

Example: An adult woman reports that she remembers waking up in her bedroom when she was eight years old because her mother's boyfriend was rubbing his hands between her legs.

Masturbation: The adult masturbates while the child observes him. The adult watches the child masturbating. The adult and child watch each other masturbating. Or, the adult and child masturbate each other.

Example: A 16-year-old teenager discussed his history of sexual abuse. Several times a week his grandfather, who was living with the family, would masturbate him to ejaculation.

Fellatio: where the adult has oral sex with the child or asks the child to perform oral sex on him. This type of oral-genital contact requires the child to take the man's penis into his or her mouth or the adult to take the male child's penis into his mouth.

Example: Nine-year-old Jimmy told his mother, "Uncle Mark made me suck on his thing and then he sucked on mine".

Cunnilingus: where the adult male places his mouth on the vaginal area of a child. Also, where an adult female has the child place his or her mouth on the adult's vaginal area.

Example: Six-year-old Tommy was asked to draw a picture of his babysitter and place X's where she made him kiss her. The child marked X's on the chest and "pussy" (the child's own word), making the largest X in the genital area.

Finger Penetration of the Rectum: where there is penetration of the anus or rectal opening by a finger. Offenders may thrust objects such as crayons or pencils inside as well.

Example: Christopher, a small child, revealed to his therapist that his father had put his fingers into his rectum. He drew a picture describing this.

Penile Penetration of the Rectum: where there is penetration of the anus or rectal opening by a man's penis. A child can often be rectally penetrated without injury due to the flexibility of the child's rectal opening.

Example: Fourteen-year-old Steven was sexually abused by his twenty-year-old brother on numerous occasions. This included the brother penetrating Steve's rectum with his penis (sodomizing him).

Finger Penetration of the Vagina: where there is penetration of the vagina by a finger. Objects may also be inserted.

Example: When questioned by the police, four-year-old Barbara said that her mother's boyfriend put "... a pen in my pookie." (vagina).

Penile Penetration of the Vagina: where the adult male places his penis in the girl's vagina.

Example: Thirteen-year-old Jennifer was examined by her doctor because she missed several menstrual periods. Upon examination, it was discovered that Jennifer was five months pregnant. She then revealed that her father had "been having sex with me."

"Dry Intercourse": a slang term for when the adult rubs his penis against the child's genitals, buttocks, or inner thighs. This act mimics intercourse but does not actually involve penetration. It can occur with clothes either on or off.

Example: Under the pretense of just horsing around, Frank would wrestle with his 12-year-old son. Frequently he would press his groin into his son's buttocks until he had an erection and sometimes ejaculated. This would occur even though they were both fully clothed. Because his son never said anything about it, Frank assumed that his son did not realize what was happening.

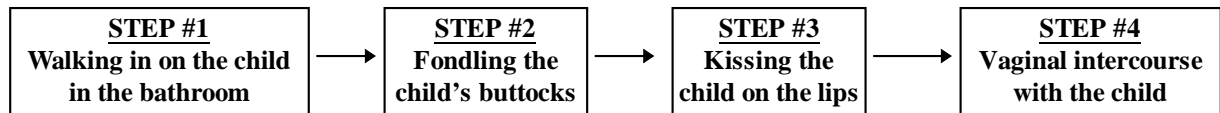
Rape: The act of forcing sexual penetration on another person. This may be done by physically over-powering them, threatening them with physical harm, tricking them, or taking advantage of them while they are unconscious.

Example: Charles threatened to beat his stepdaughter if she did not have intercourse with him.

PROGRESSION OF SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS

Usually there is a progression of sexually abusive behaviors with children. The behaviors may begin as less intimate and intrusive acts such as staring at certain parts of the victim's body or "accidentally" exposing one's genitals to the victim. Then the behavior becomes more intentionally intimate such as fondling and touching the victim. Finally, the behavior becomes more invasive with such acts as oral, anal or vaginal penetration.

Below is a simple example of the way one stepfather ended up molesting his stepdaughter.



This progression can occur for two reasons:

1. **Grooming.** For some men who molest children, there is a step-by-step plan to molest the child. This is often referred to as “grooming” the child. It is an attempt to seduce the child into having sex with them. They will attempt to first gain the child’s (and sometimes the parents’) trust and affection. Once this is secured, they will then gradually become increasingly physical and sexual with the child. “Accidentally” exposing themselves, giving back rubs that may go just a bit too far, showing the child pornography, or any number of steps may be part of the grooming process. Each step along the way there is an attempt to gain the child’s cooperation and trust. This process can take from a few hours to several years for the molester to accomplish. All along the way, he is aware of his final goal, to molest the child.
2. **Need for Increased Sexual Gratification.** The pattern of some other men who molest children may be less obvious to them. They may notice that a certain child sexually arouses them. They attempt to be around the child as much as possible. However, they get less of the “charge” that use to come with just being in the presence of the child and start increasingly more intimate behaviors in an attempt to regain that same level of arousal and excitement.

For sexual stimuli to maintain it’s level of arousal and appeal, it must be relatively new and novel. When most teenage boys see their first copy of Playboy or Penthouse magazine, they find it very exciting and arousing. Quickly, however, the same pictures become less and less interesting. This is why such magazines are able to sell new issues month after month. By the end of the month, the centerfolds hold much less appeal and there is a desire for a new centerfold. As the teenager matures and gains more sexual experience, the idea of just looking at pictures (although still arousing) carries less intensity.

Many couples experience this same phenomenon. The first time they are sexually intimate may be very exciting and stimulating. As they gain greater familiarity, the level of arousal and stimulation may decrease. Thus, many couples attempt to explore new and novel ways of sexually pleasing one another to sustain the initial level of excitement.

The case of Kurt below describes such a situation with a molester. Although Kurt told himself that he wasn’t hurting anyone, he quickly got seduced by his own desires. The process of giving into one’s desire for increasing sexual stimulation, like grooming, may take a short or long time. The similarity between the two processes is that they both result in a progression of sexual acts.

KURT

It seemed that Kurt had always been aware of his attraction for 9 and 10-year-old boys. Although he had never molested a child, his thoughts of boys had filled his fantasies for as long as he could remember. One hot summer day, by chance, Kurt passed the local swimming pool in the middle of the afternoon. There he saw lots of boys in their swimming trunks playing in the pool. He became immediately aroused as he lingered to watch. It soon became his routine to go every afternoon to the pool, and linger outside watching the boys. He reasoned to himself that this was an innocent way of getting some sexual satisfaction that wasn't hurting anyone. After several weeks, however, he realized that it wasn't as interesting just watching the boys from outside of the fence. He did not get as turned on as he did the first time.

One day Kurt brought along his own swim trunks and ventured into the pool area. The sight of the young boys in the changing room immediately brought back those old feelings of arousal that he'd experienced when he first noticed the swimming pool. Kurt continued to reason that he was just looking and no one would be the wiser. He continued to go to the changing room every day thereafter, and he found himself staying longer and longer. He lingered in a vain attempt to get the same "charge" that he had first received.

Finally, Kurt began touching some of the boys. At first, he made it seem "accidental". Just a brush against a boy here and there. Although these quick touches were initially quite exciting, they too soon lost their power to arouse him. So, he quickly became more invasive in his touching; allowing his hands to linger longer and longer. Finally, some of the boys complained to the pool management and the police were called

SEXUAL ABUSE TERMS

The definition of sexual abuse is ever-changing as we understand more about its effects on victims. Behaviors that were once considered innocent are no longer acceptable. Some behaviors, like sexual harassment, are resulting in huge financial penalties against offenders. Below are some definitions of common types of sexual abuse. Not all of these terms are described as the same way as their legal definitions. Legal definitions may vary from one part of the country to another. What they have in common is that all of these behaviors consist of harm or injury inflicted by one person on another. Frequently a single act could be classified by two or more of the terms below.

Review each of the terms below and determine which of the terms could be used to describe your past sexual behavior.

Child Sexual Abuse is when children are dominated or controlled through sexual activity by an adult or older child. Older boys who make girls undress and then fondle or touch them is an example. It can be committed by strangers, but it is most often committed by adults or older children who are entrusted with taking care of the victim.

Incest can occur with either children or adults. It is the most common form of child sexual abuse. It refers to sex between two family members. This may include mother or father, stepparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters, or grandparents.

Molestation occurs with both children and adults. It refers to sexual stimulation to body and genital areas, including penetration. Sexual molestation occurs when the victim does not or cannot give consent. Legally and psychologically children cannot give permission for this type of behavior. People who are asleep or unconscious also cannot give consent. Molestation can happen at any age, by a perpetrator of any age.

Stranger Rape is when violence, anger, control, and power are expressed sexually in an attack on a victim. This term is used when the victim and the rapist do not know each other. It may involve penetration of body openings (such as the mouth, anus, or vagina), but does not have to.

Date or Acquaintance Rape is a type of rape committed by someone known to the victim. Often it may be a friend in a trusted social relationship.

Marital Rape is an act committed by one spouse on the other. It may also include a sexual partner in any long-term relationship. It occurs when one partner (the victim) does not give consent or permission for the sexual act.

Sexual Assault is a physical attack to a victim's sexual body parts. It often involves force or violence. This term can cover a wide range of activities and is often used to describe the rape of boys and men.

Exhibitionism or Exposure is the displaying of the naked body or genitals in an attempt to shock, intimidate, or sexually arouse a victim. This is sometimes referred to as "flashing".

Voyeurism is the invasion of a victim's privacy either secretly or openly with the intent of gaining sexual gratification (being a "Peeping Tom").

Obscene Phone Calls is the invasion of a victim's privacy by passing suggestive messages over the telephone in an effort to shock, intimidate, or sexually arouse a victim.

Frotteurism is the unwanted rubbing of body parts against an unsuspecting victim in an attempt to gain sexual arousal and satisfaction. This is usually done to strangers and in crowded spaces like elevators or buses. The offender is usually attempting to arouse feelings of disgust, surprise, or powerlessness in the victim.

Sadistic Sexual Abuse is when the offender attempts to create reactions of dread, horror, or pain in the victim as a means of increasing his sexual arousal. These activities may involve the use of physical restraints, fake religious rituals, use of animals, insertion of foreign objects, mutilation, or torture.

Sexual Exploitation is the use of another as a sexual object. It may include photographs, prostitution, or public humiliation in order to gain money or sexual gratification.

Sexual Harassment occurs as a result of unwanted sexual behavior from another. It may be verbal, physical, or visual. It employs power differences to intimidate or control a victim. It may be expressed as inappropriate flirting and sexual suggestiveness.

Gender Attack is the demeaning actions against another because of their sex. Often these attempts to humiliate another has sexual overtones. Cross-dressing a child (having a boy dress in girl's clothes for example) or verbally demeaning another's gender are examples of this type of abuse.

Gay Bashing is the verbal or physical attacks against someone who is perceived as homosexual, gay, or lesbian.

Sexual Violence is any act involving harm to the sexual parts of a victim's body.

Misogyny is the showing of hatred or distrust of women.



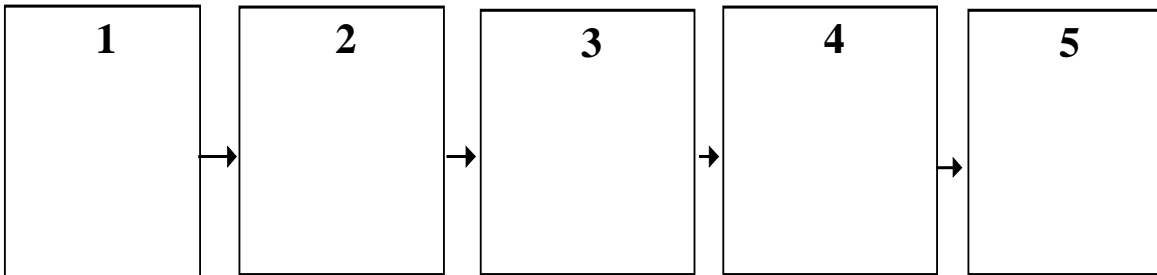
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

1. Below is a list of terms introduced in this module. Check each term that applies to a sexual behavior that you committed at some time in the past. For each term that you have checked, briefly described how that behavior was likely to make the victim feel. If you committed the act more than one time, consider the most recent time you did so in describing the feelings of the victim. For some behaviors (like voyeurism), the victim may not have been aware of your actions. In those situations, describe what you think the victim would have thought if he or she knew what you were doing.

<u>TERM</u>	<u>FEELINGS OF THE VICTIM</u>
_____ Unwanted Staring	
_____ Nudity in Front of Children	
_____ Disrobing in Front of Children	
_____ Genital Exposure	
_____ Sexual Observation of a Child	
_____ Intimate Kissing of a Child	
_____ Fondling	
_____ Masturbation in Front of a Child	
_____ Fellatio of a Child	
_____ Cunnilingus of a Child	
_____ Finger Penetration of a Rectal Opening of a Child	
_____ Penile Penetration of a Rectal Opening of a Child	
_____ Finger Penetration of the Vagina of a Child	
_____ Penile Penetration of the Vagina of a Child	
_____ Dry Intercourse with a Child	
_____ Stranger Rape of an Adult	

- _____ Acquaintance Rape of an Adult
- _____ Marital Rape
- _____ Exhibitionism of an Adult
- _____ Voyeurism of an Adult
- _____ Frotteurism
- _____ Obscene Phone Calls
- _____ Sadistic Sexual Abuse
- _____ Sexual Exploitation
- _____ Sexual Harassment
- _____ Gender Attack
- _____ Gay Bashing
- _____ Misogyny

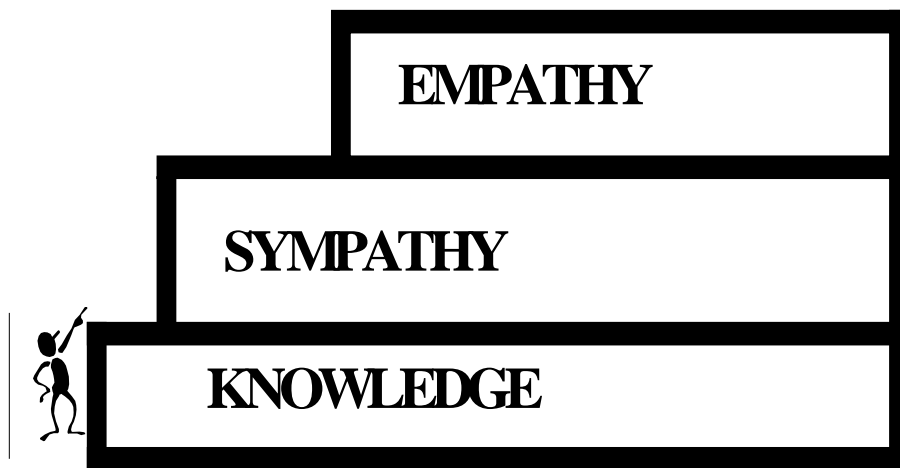
2. Sexual abuse never just happens. It doesn't just "come out of the blue". It almost always involves a progression of behaviors. Using the terms found in this section, list at least 5 behaviors or acts that led up to your last offense. These behaviors could have been with the same victim or with different victims. Place the most important 5 in the boxes below. Step #1 should be the least intrusive and Step #5 the most intrusive.



VICTIM AWARENESS

SECTION 3: VICTIM KNOWLEDGE

As described in the first section of this module, one of the initial steps in gaining victim awareness is the simple understanding of how victims are hurt and injured as a result of being sexually abused. This step has more to do with gaining information about what victims go through rather than truly appreciating their feelings. That will come later.



The effects of sexual abuse are extremely complex. Some victims of sexual abuse are very traumatized and the abuse ends up affecting them for their entire lives. Others seem to be able to resolve and deal with the abuse in a healthy way and go on to lead happy and productive lives. The thing to remember is:

!!!! ALL VICTIMS ARE HARMED !!!

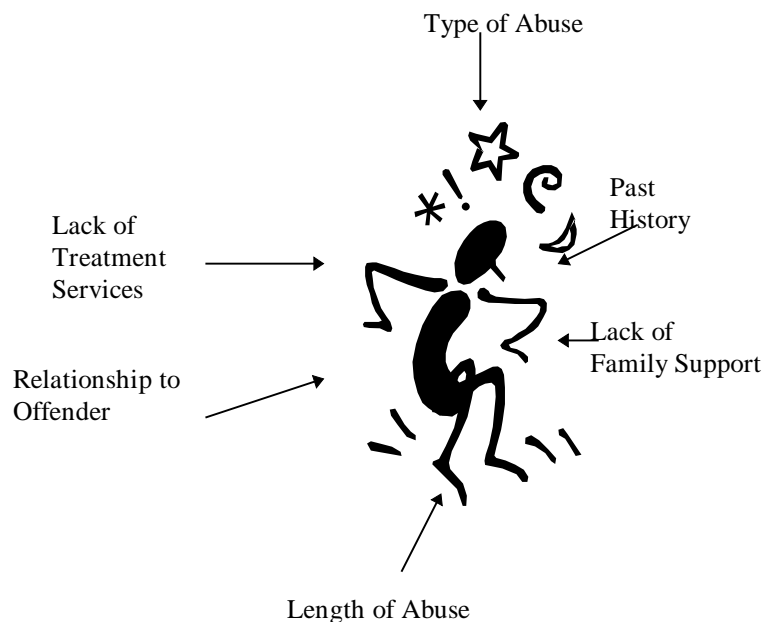
Many offenders like to believe that because their victim *seemed* to go along with the sex or even wanted to have sex that they were not harmed. Others say that because the victim wasn't physically hurt, no real harm was done. This is simply a way that offenders try to fool themselves to avoid facing the consequences of their actions. Don't fall into that trap. It is a trap that will lead you right back to re-offending. It is only after you have been able to face the consequences on other people that you will be able to learn to deal with your past behavior, develop into a healthy individual, and not create any more victims.

???WHO SUFFERS THE MOST FROM SEXUAL ABUSE???

Because not all victims react the same, many offenders are curious as to who is most likely to experience the most trauma from being sexually abused. Usually, this interest comes from an attempt to believe that their victims are among the lucky ones that will be able to deal with their abuse and minimize its impact on the rest of their lives. These offenders are more interested in relieving their own guilt than any true feelings for their victim.

The extent of trauma to any given victim is an extremely complex matter. There are many factors that determine how much the sexual abuse puts them at risk for continuing problems in the future. Some of these factors include:

- how psychologically healthy they were before the abuse
 - the support they get from family and friends after the abuse is discovered
 - their access to treatment services
 - their relationship to the offender prior to the abuse
 - their psychological maturity
 - the amount of physical harm they sustained
 - the type of abuse they suffered
 - the length of the abuse
 - their relationship to the offender after the abuse



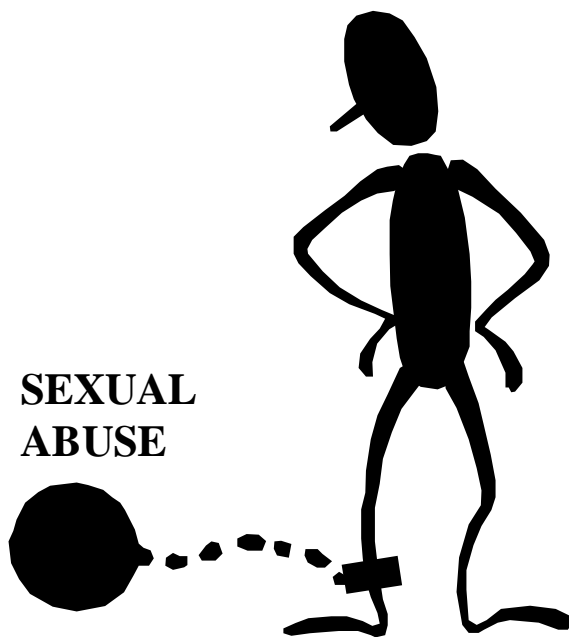
Because all the factors interact in complex ways, there is no way for even experts to predict who will be the most harmed by sexual abuse. Some victims go many years without visible signs of great trauma; then some event in their lives may trigger severe physical and emotional reactions later that is connected with their sexual abuse. Others are immediately affected and then seem to have only minimal effects later on in life. Still

others are immediately traumatized and seem never to be able to get beyond what has happened to them. Only time will tell what effects your victim will experience and for how long.

EFFECTS ARE BOTH SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM

The effects on sexual abuse victims are always both short-term (lasting a few months) and long-term (lasting many years). Both the severity and type of symptoms will vary between victims. Some victims have their most intense reactions immediately after being abused, while others have their most severe symptoms many years later. Also, the types of symptoms that they experience are likely to change as time passes.

No matter what type or severity, victims remain chained to the problems that result from being sexually abused for a long period of time.



COMMON PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY VICTIMS

Not every victim suffers from each of the problems listed below. Every victim is an individual and will respond to his or her abuse in an individual way. The description of these problems, however, have been compiled by therapists who have worked with large numbers of victims. All victims experience some combination of problems, and most will suffer some symptoms from each of the broad categories listed.

SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-IMAGE

Sexual abuse makes people feel like “used property” or “damaged goods”. They may feel “bad”, “sinful”, or “evil”. This is because they often incorrectly assume that the abuse was in some way their fault. They shouldn’t have trusted you, looked so attractive, or must have done something wrong to bring this upon themselves. Often victims are left with a sense of no personal power or control. They feel they cannot protect themselves or their loved ones around them. There may be a sense of shame about his or her body, especially if there was any physical arousal that occurred during the attack. This is especially true for sexually abused children because their sense of self-worth is just developing. Also, sexually abused children are often those who already have low self-esteem which makes them easy targets for sexual assault by an adult.

Some of the long-term problems include:

- Feeling ugly inside.
- Feeling worthless.
- Feeling that they are in the way.
- Being overly submissive and anxious to please.
- Feeling that they are stupid, a failure, a loser.
- Guilt and shame.
- A tendency to blame themselves for whatever goes wrong.
- An inability to concentrate and complete tasks successfully.
- A tendency to sabotage their own successes (Victims often do not believe they deserve good things).
- A tendency to be victimized by others. This is particularly true for children who have learned that one way to get attention from adults is through sex. Also, they come to believe that they deserve to be victimized and allow people to walk all over them in a variety of ways.
- Feelings of helplessness.

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Most victims report some form of relationship problems after being abused. For children, the offender is often someone the child loved and trusted. The offender betrays this trust by lying, coercing, and manipulating the child into doing things that hurt, humiliate, and frighten the child. It is no surprise that child victims have a difficult time as adults trusting others. Because the relationship with the perpetrator was based on manipulation, deception, lies and secrecy, a terrible foundation is established on which to build later relationships. Women who have been raped report intense feelings of fear. They fear physical injury, mutilation, and death. These feelings color their emotions and reactions to others in the future, particularly men. They become cautious with all people. They may be overly irritated and feel that no one understands them.

Some of the long-term problems in personal relationships include:

- Difficulty trusting others.
- Being distant and aloof. A deep sense of isolation.
- A tendency (especially among abused children) to get involved with destructive people who abuse them physically, verbally, emotionally, or sexually.
- A lack of empathy or concern for others. Victims may be so concerned with their own survival that they are unable to reach out or notice other people's problems.
- Difficulty with physical affection; not wanting to be touched or hugged. An inability to express physical affection. A fear of the motives of others or being misunderstood when they are affectionate.
- Secrecy, evasiveness, and a tendency to withhold information from others. Sometimes children who have been sexually abused have the opposite reaction, a tendency to "tell all".
- Child sexual abuse victims have a tendency to try and "buy" love. They may help others so much that they become exhausted, depriving themselves in order to give to others. They may give away personal possessions or have sex with anyone who desires them just to be liked.
- Difficulties with authority figures like bosses, teachers, or leaders who may remind them of the abuser.
- Difficulty communicating desires, thoughts, and feelings to others.
- Difficulty receiving from others. This includes awkwardness in accepting presents, favors, or compliments. They feel they are dirty and unworthy. Sometimes the opposite may occur where they expect others to show their love by buying presents or giving money. This may be particularly true of child victims who were showered with gifts and toys by the molester as a ploy to gain trust and positive feelings so the child could be molested.

SEXUAL PROBLEMS

Because these crimes attack the sexuality of the victim, often they result in long-term sexual problems for the victim. For children, this may be the first sexual experience they had. Instead of being the exploration of tenderness, this initiation was one of exploitation and violence. Because of the early age of sexualization and the bad circumstances surrounding it, there has been little opportunity to distinguish between love and sex for these victims.

Almost all victims have difficulty overcoming this violation and making sexuality a positive experience. Instead, sex brings with it fear, pain, and anger. Each new sexual encounter may be accompanied by memories and flashbacks of the abuse and the abuser.

Some of the long-term problems may include:

- Lack of sexual desire or inhibition of sexual feelings (i.e., frigidity).
- Inability to enjoy sex or to have an orgasm.
- Sexual dysfunctions. For females this may include vaginismus (an involuntary contraction of the vaginal muscles making intercourse painfully difficult or impossible). For males, this may include problems in achieving or keeping erections (impotence).
- Inability to enjoy certain types of sexuality (can't be penetrated; can't be touched on certain parts of the body, etc.).
- Problems with sexual identity. This may be particularly true for boys who have been abused who may question their masculinity or are overly conflicted about being gay.
- Promiscuity, continuing to allow themselves to be used as a sexual "object".
- Attraction to "illicit" sexual activities such as pornography or prostitution.
- Feeling that all sex is dirty and should be avoided.
- Anger and disgust at any public display of affection, sex, or nudity.
- Feeling that sex is a way to manipulate people and get what you want in your social, marital, or business relationships. Sexualizing all relationships.
- Sexual addiction. The process of coping with all anxiety and unpleasant feeling by daily sex or masturbation.

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Victims have a difficult time understanding, acknowledging, and expressing their emotions. They feel overwhelmed by their feelings. Many victims suppress their emotions, which results in severe depression. Other victims have a difficult time controlling feelings like anger, and they may become violent towards others or abusive toward themselves.

Long-term emotional problems may include:

- Intense anger and rage that sometimes bursts out unexpectedly.
- Mood swings, ranging from deep depression to an overactive excited state.
- Chronic depression, resulting in sleeping too much and feeling listless, helpless, hopeless, and even suicidal.
- Dissociation, the experience of not feeling a part of oneself. Often victims report severe memory lapses. Others report that it was as if they were outside of their bodies watching themselves during the abuse. They get a far away look in their eyes as if they are somewhere else. This comes from an emotional protection mode to the devastation of the sexual abuse.
- Extreme fears. This may include a fear of leaving the house, going to a doctor or dentist, taking a bath or shower, going asleep, or using public restrooms.
- Sleep disturbances such as nightmares, not being able to get to sleep, or waking up in the middle of the night.
- Addiction to food, alcohol, or drugs. These serve as a way of avoiding feelings of anger, pain, and fear.
- Obsessive thoughts or compulsive behavior such as shoplifting, gambling, over-eating or excessive cleaning. These are ways that victims ineffectively try to deal with anxiety.
- Eating Disorders such as anorexia (slowly starving themselves) or obesity.
- Flashbacks or hallucinations where the victim is suddenly flooded with memories of the abuse. These are usually triggered by something that reminds the victim of the abuser. These flashbacks are associated with a sense of panic, dizziness, feeling sick to their stomach, or fear.
- Abusive behavior towards others. This may include physically, verbally, emotionally, or sexually abusing others. Victims can become victimizers of others!
- Self-destructive behavior. The rate of suicide among sexual abuse victims is much higher than for the general population. Also self-mutilation, such as cutting or burning oneself, is frequently seen.

PHYSICAL PROBLEMS

Because the sexual assault was against the body, victims frequently suffer from a series of psychologically based physical illnesses. In addition, their bodies continue to give them important messages about what the abuse was like and what their bodies need now in order to heal.

Long-term problems may include:

- Migraine headaches.
- Bladder and vaginal infections.
- Skin disorders.
- Numbness or tingling in the legs or arms.
- Frequent sore throats.
- Difficulty swallowing.
- Unexplained vaginal pain.
- Unexplained rectal and anal pain.
- Frequent stomach upsets.
- General pain in the muscles and joints.
- Changes in the menstrual cycle.
- A tendency to be accident prone (victims may unconsciously be punishing themselves or their bodies).



**SEXUAL ABUSE
OFTEN LEADS TO
LONG-TERM
EMOTIONALLY
BASED PHYSICAL
PROBLEMS**

3. Sexual abuse (whether rape or child molest) is a crime against the body of the victim. In this section and the reading you were assigned, there were descriptions about the effects of the abuse on the bodies of the victim. What body part do you think would most remind your victim about the acts you committed against them? Why?

4. In this section a variety of the long-term and short-term problems that victims experience were described. In each of the areas listed below, describe the most likely problem that your victim experienced or will experience in the future. Explain why you think this might be a problem for your victim, and indicate if you think this would be a long-term or short-term difficulty.

Problems in Self-Esteem and Self-Image

Relationship Problems

Sexual Problems

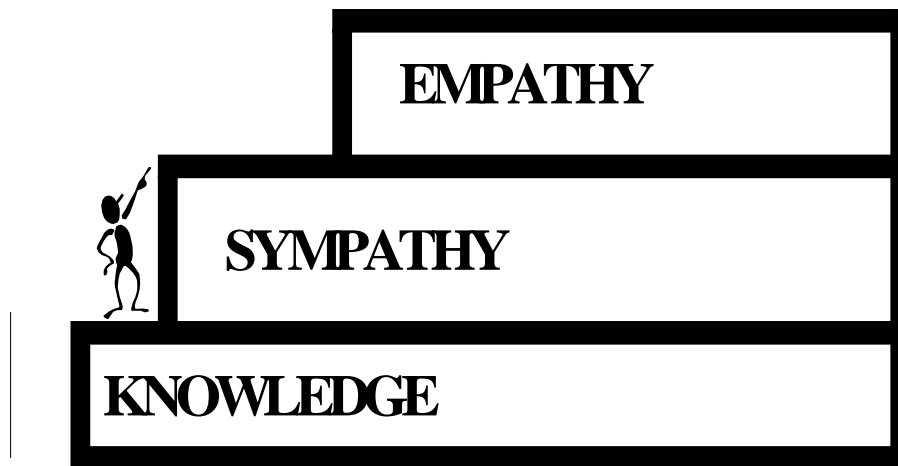
Emotional Problems

Physical Problems

VICTIM AWARENESS

SECTION 4: VICTIM SYMPATHY

Now that you are more informed about some of the problems that victims face after the trauma of sexual abuse, you should be prepared to make the next step. This step involves allowing yourself to experience some feelings of compassion and sorrow for the pain that victims go through. This second stage of victim awareness is the development of victim sympathy.



We are continually surrounded with information about the suffering of people around the world. The newspapers and TV are filled with stories of wars, heinous crimes, and natural disasters. These all lead to immense human suffering. They are so frequent that people in our culture have become immune to these reports. After all, you can't go around all day feeling overwhelmed by the grief for the tens of thousands in pain around the world.

We see homeless people around everyday. There is the panhandler asking for spare change on the streets and the military veteran on the side of the road with a sign that begs for work in return for a handout or food. People commonly ignore them, passing them by as if they aren't even there.



FOCUS ON THE VICTIM

In order to develop any sense of sympathy towards victims, it is first necessary to pay attention to them. To notice them.

In our homeless example, people are often too concerned with their own problems (e.g., getting to work on time, getting to the store before it closes, looking forward to getting home to spend time with their families) to pay any attention to the plight of these people who are less fortunate. Even a moment's pause to focus on the person can lead to a sense of sympathy and sorrow for their plight. No matter what people's individual feelings about the homeless, we are thankful that we are not in the same situation. Thus, we recognize that such an existence can hardly be a pleasant one.

HECTOR

Hector's wife had just left him for another man. He felt humiliated and embarrassed, and he wanted to get back at his wife. He went to an unfamiliar bar in town to drown his sorrow, anger, and frustration. A woman at the bar soon began to flirt with him, and it was clear that she wanted to have sex. Although he wasn't all that attracted to her, he decided he would go with her in order to try and feel better. He thought it would build his self-esteem and restore his sense of manhood. As soon as they were in his truck, she demanded money for her sexual favors. Hector was enraged. He began to beat the woman savagely and force her to perform oral sex on him. Suddenly, he looked down at her face and saw blood gushing all over her nose and mouth. Hector was terrified that he was going to kill her. He immediately rushed her to the hospital, even though he knew this would result in his arrest.

This is similar with sex abuse victims. Just a moment's pause and reflection would be all that it would take to realize that you wouldn't want to trade places with them. Men who commit sexual crimes are the same. If they take a second to pay attention to what the victim is experiencing and recognize that it is a traumatic and painful experience, they would decrease their chances of offending.

Hector's case is an example of suddenly switching his focus from his own feelings and desires to that of his victim. As soon as he was able to switch his attention to what he was doing to the prostitute, he became immediately sympathetic. He switched from the role of abuser to helper.



BLAMING THE VICTIM

A common obstacle to feeling sympathy for someone who is in a terrible situation is to blame the victim. This makes us feel superior and in control of our own destinies.

In our homeless example, it is not uncommon to attribute the misfortunes of these people on their laziness or some other defect. This helps us feel like it won't happen to us. The more blame we can place on the victim, the more secure we feel and assured that we will avoid a similar fate.

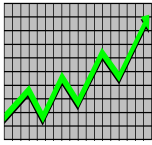
PAUL

Paul married a woman with an 11-year-old daughter. The marriage was a disaster from the start. His wife neglected Paul, the house and his stepdaughter. Paul and his stepdaughter slowly got closer and closer. They became each other's best friends. Paul counted on her to do much of the cooking and keeping up the house. The stepdaughter loved the attention she got from Paul, and often chose to be with him instead of her own friends. He fell in love with her, and he was infatuated by her. As the stepdaughter began to physically mature, Paul found himself becoming sexually attracted to her. He misinterpreted her desire to hug him as a sign of sexual desire. Paul ended up molesting the girl over a period of a year. He never saw this as abuse, instead he thought of it as the fulfillment of their "special" relationship. He was very surprised when the police came to his job one day to arrest him. The stepdaughter had talked about her special relationship with a friend who reported it to the school authorities.

Blaming the victim is a common way many abusers try to avoid recognizing and dealing with the trauma they have inflicted. This blame comes from the false perception that the victim was in some way in control of the abusive situation. That the victim wanted to be abused. This notion is clearly untrue. The act was abusive because the victim could not control what was occurring either because they were too

naïve or they lacked the power to control the situation.

The case of Paul is a prime example of an offender who attempted to blame the victim, his wife, and the system. He felt betrayed by the one person he loved and cared for the most, his stepdaughter. Once he recognized that he was at fault (and not everyone else), he was able to then deal with the trauma and pain that he had inflicted on the one person for whom he truly cared.



PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND SEXUAL URGES

A third set of obstacles that prevent abusers from becoming sympathetic towards victims is their own physical state, including their level of sexual arousal. They allow their sexual desire for the victim to blind them from seeing what the victim is experiencing. They assume that because they are aroused, the victim must be turned on too.

TONY

Tony was very proud of his size and physique. He had a buffed, gym-toned body that he always thought men admired and women desired. The bigger and stronger he was, the more masculine he felt. He had no trouble getting dates with women. When he first met Alice and asked her out, he was not surprised that she immediately accepted. Their date seemed to be a great success, and he was really getting turned on by her. When the date came to an end, however, Alice resisted his moves towards seduction and told him no. This surprised him. How could she not be turned on to him when he was so excited by her? He decided that this was just a “game” that she was playing either because she didn’t want to appear too easy or maybe she liked it kind of rough. Despite her repeated protests, Tony found that overcoming her resistance to be a real turn-on. It made him feel like a powerful conqueror and victor. After sexual intercourse, he was gratified to hear Alice say she had liked the sex. Tony was arrested early the next morning at his apartment and charged with rape.

A similarity might be drawn with our homeless example. Hunger, like sexual arousal, is a strong physical drive. When we see the homeless person with the sign that reads “will work for food”, it is much harder to concentrate upon and be sympathetic with their plight if we are hungry. Instead, we are concentrating on our own needs and desires. The same can be said of sexual arousal and the sexual abuse victim. Don’t allow your own sexual desires to trap you into not seeing and feeling for others around you.

Some offenders falsely assume that because they are aroused and stimulated that the victim is too. That was the case with Tony. Because Tony was so aroused by having sex with Alice, he never allowed himself to see that she did not enjoy it. In fact, she only stopped resisting because she was terrified that he was going to hurt her. Alice saw this as an awful and scary experience. She had only told him that she enjoyed the sex to get rid of him and because she feared he would hurt her worse if she made him angry.

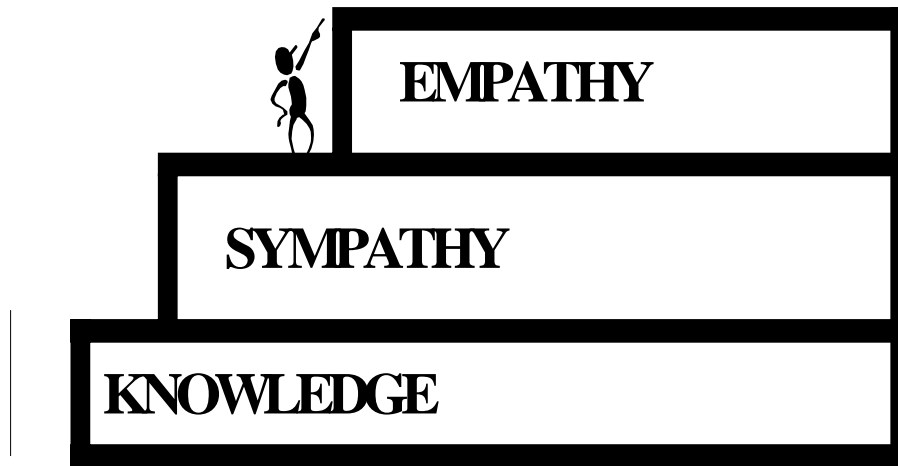
For many offenders, viewing the plight of victims sympathetically will take away one of the most pleasurable parts of their lives. Their sexual fantasies.

An additional physical condition that can prevent an offender from seeing the perspective of the victim is intoxication. Abuse of drugs and alcohol distorts perceptions of reality. It is impossible to be able to clearly see what others are feeling when you have clouded your own mind with intoxicants.

VICTIM AWARENESS

SECTION 5: VICTIM EMPATHY

Empathy is the final stage in developing victim awareness. It is also the most difficult step. Empathy involves feeling some of the same feelings that your victim has. It is being able to put yourself in your victim's shoes and experiencing the world as he or she does. It is seeing the world through the eyes of your victim.



EMPATHY IS SHARING THE VICTIM'S FEELINGS!!!

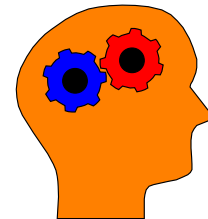
Empathy is a state of mind. It is not something you are born with and not something that you have all the time. Everyone has the capacity to be empathic - to feel similar to another person.

Most offenders can be very empathic people. Offenders are not always the cold, calculating, heartless predators that the media and public often perceive them to be. They can be kind, generous, and understanding. Sex offenders may be able to identify with a whole range of feelings that other people feel. They may know what it is like and be able to share sorrow with someone who has lost a pet, a loved one, or a job. Yet, they have difficulty understanding and appreciating how their victim(s) may feel.

If you had similar tragedies to someone else, it is easier to identify with them and be empathetic. If you have been divorced or separated, it is easier to understand and appreciate the pain and sorrow that someone may be going through during their divorce. If a significant person in your life (like a parent, brother, sister, or lover) has died, it is much easier to get in touch with those same feelings when it happens to someone else. Because we remember what those feelings were like for us, it is natural to be able to bring up those same feelings again when it happens to someone else. The more alike we see the other person is to us, the easier it is to understand their feelings and reactions.

Sex offenders are often accused of treating their victims like “objects”. That means they view them as inanimate things that exist only to give them pleasure. Although this may well be true of some offenders, it is not true of all. The more you are able to view your victim(s) as living, breathing persons the more you will be able to identify and relate to the effects of your abuse upon them. The better you are able to see them as having the same right to be safe from harm and the right not to have their bodies controlled by others, the more you will be able to connect with their reactions.

The more that you are able to climb into the head of the victim, see life from their perspective, and see your abuse through their eyes, the closer you will come to achieving true empathy.



KEN

Ken never saw himself as a victim. When he was 12 years old, a neighbor woman who was 23 began having sex with him. Ken always looked back on this episode of his life as a sign of his good fortune. He was able to brag to his buddies about what a man he was and how he was more knowing and worldly. He got a lot of respect and admiration from the other guys, and Ken felt like a big man. Eventually, the woman became pregnant with his child. Because she was married, it was kept a secret. She had the baby and told her husband it was his. The affair she had with Ken always remained a secret.

Ken went on to having sex with lots of girls after that. Some his own age, some older. He took great pride (and boasted frequently) in what a great lover he was. His relationships with women were brief and always intensely sexual.

When Ken was 24 years old, he was arrested for having sexual intercourse with two 11-year-old neighbor girls.

The case of Ken illustrates the point that the more an offender can identify with the victims, the easier it is to develop an awareness of the impact the abuse is likely to have on their lives.

When Ken entered into a treatment program after his arrest and conviction, he had difficulty appreciating that what he had done was wrong. When confronted by other group members, he frequently defended himself by describing how willing his victims were. He went on to describe how he began to have sex that young and it never hurt him.

Then it suddenly dawned on him that being taken advantage of by the older woman in his youth was very much related to why he was arrested and in jail. He saw how his self-image was all tied up in his sexual prowess and how he had used sex to feel good for all of his troubles. He had sexualized all of his relationships, and he regretted never being

able to get close to others (either male or female) because he saw relationships in only sexual terms.

Eventually, with further treatment, Ken remembered how scared he actually was those first couple of times with the older neighbor. He also recalled that he had no idea what he was doing, but felt that he had to go along with her because otherwise he wouldn't seem grown-up. This led Ken to further explore how he had been hiding all his feelings ever since, just so he would seem like he was a man.

With this knowledge, Ken was able to develop an awareness of what his victims may have felt at the time and why they were so compliant (and seemed so sophisticated) at the time. It also helped him get a glimpse of some of the problems that may lie ahead for them.

Empathy Development



EMPATHY

All sex offenders reflect a lack of empathy for their victim at the time of the offense. If you had been able to feel the pain and humiliation your victim was feeling at the time of the offense, it is likely that you would not have sexually abused him or her. It is important for you to gain an understanding of and appreciation for your victim's experience so you will not reoffend. Victims of sexual abuse often experience guilt, shame, depression, anxiety, nightmares, poor self-esteem, self-doubt, distrust of others, relationship problems, and confusion about appropriate sexual behavior. You cannot actually climb inside the heads of other people to know what they are thinking or feeling, but you can ask, and make reasonable estimates based on what you would have felt in the same or similar situation.

In this section, you will learn the definition of empathy. While it is important to know the definition of the word, it is more important to be able to apply it by acting in a caring and compassionate way. If you truly do not want to hurt anymore innocent people, it is imperative that you keep your empathy active at all times. As such, you will also learn the skills needed to develop empathy and to use it in an active manner.

What is empathy?

Empathy means:

- "Walking a mile in another's shoes."
- Feeling concern and understanding for another's situation.
- The process of imaginative projection of one's own consciousness into another being.
- The capacity for participation in or a vicarious experiencing of another's feelings.

You may have experienced empathy while reading a book or watching a movie, if you imagined yourself as a character in the story. You may have thought about what it must be like to be a victim of some tragic event, such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. That is empathy.

Describe the last time you felt empathy for someone.

Developing Empathy

Understanding the concept of empathy is important. But knowing about empathy is not the same as having empathy. Developing empathy doesn't just happen. It takes hard work and practice!

If you care about someone, you will probably think twice before you hurt him or her. However, only feeling empathy for certain people (i.e., people you like or know) is the just the first step in becoming an empathic person. Real empathy is a feeling of compassion for ALL people, not just those you care about. That being said, a truly empathic person feels compassion for friends, relatives, strangers, and enemies alike.

Consider these tips for building empathy.

1) Work on empathizing with people you don't like.

If you are prejudiced against people because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender, you are not truly empathic. You would not make assumptions about groups of people or behave differently towards them if you truly felt for them. In situations where you feel the urge to think or act in a prejudiced fashion, you must say to yourself, "Deep down we are all the same. We all have the same wants, fears, difficulties, and desires. We have more similarities than differences."

Consider groups of people who are typically discriminated against: homosexuals, African-Americans, the poor, the mentally ill, etc. Now, think about how you would feel if people made fun of you because of your background, physical characteristics, or limitations.

Give an example of this, and describe how it would make you feel.

2) Practice using healthy humor.

It is important not to take life too seriously. People who don't have a sense of humor about life are often depressed. Humor is great, as long as it is healthy. One way to evaluate your use of empathy is to look at the way in which you use humor. When you put people down or make jokes that dehumanize others (e.g., racial or sexual jokes), you are not exhibiting empathy.

Have you ever been guilty of using inappropriate humor or laughing when someone else did so?

3) Set aside alone time.

In order to develop empathy you need to spend some time alone with your feelings, allowing yourself to truly experience your own emotions and the emotions of others. Set aside a few minutes of private time every day. During this time, think about a specific event you can use to cultivate empathy. It may be thinking about a friend who recently lost a loved one or about a tragic event you saw in the news (e.g., earthquake, 9/11, tsunami, etc.) Put yourself in the shoes of the person(s) involved in the event. Think about how that person would deal with the consequences of the event (e.g., losing a family member, losing a home). Allow yourself to feel how that person would feel. At the end of the private time, sit up, take stock of where you are, and realize how lucky you are...but, never forget how you felt in those few moments.

Imagine yourself as your victim. How would you have felt during the sexual offense?

4) Give yourself permission to experience your emotions fully.

Allowing yourself to experience difficult emotions (e.g., fear, vulnerability, shame, guilt, inadequacy) can be scary. Most people who have no empathy have cut themselves off from painful emotions. You must learn to stay with and accept all of the feelings you have in order to accept those feelings in others. If, for example, you are not willing to experience guilt, you are not truly able to empathize with someone else's guilt.

What emotion do you have the most difficult time allowing yourself to experience? Describe the last time you felt this way and how you dealt with the emotion.

5) Being self-centered is the opposite of empathy.

Being self-centered means putting yourself first and others second. This is the opposite of empathy. You act empathically without expecting something in return. Criminal acts, particularly acts of sexual abuse, are always self-centered. Up to this point, you have put a lot of energy into getting your wants and needs met at the expense of others. In

order to reverse this pattern, you must constantly be asking yourself, "How will my behavior affect the other person?"

Think about your current or most recent relationship. How would you feel if your partner cheated on you?

Based on that response, how would your partner feel if you cheated on him or her?

6) Think before you act.

The next time you get angry or upset with someone, and you feel the urge to react with harsh words or actions, STOP. Stop for 60 seconds, and allow yourself time to cool down before you hurt someone. Think about how that person is feeling and how they would want to be treated.

Suppose you are having an argument with another offender over what television station to watch in the dayroom. You want to watch "Days of Our Lives," and he wants to watch "Jerry Springer." Think about the situation from the other offender's perspective. His desire to watch "Jerry Springer" is just as strong and valid as your desire to watch the soap opera.

In this situation, how would you want to be talked to and treated?

7) Share your thoughts and feelings with others.

Living in isolation makes you feel empty and distrustful of others. You cannot develop empathy in isolation. That being said, you must be involved with people in order to develop empathy. You have to learn to share your thoughts and feelings with others. Surrounding yourself with healthy people will help you to become more empathic. These people may include family members, counselors, chaplains, other group members who are working on improving themselves, etc. When you share your thoughts and feelings with these people, you can learn from their reactions to you. Observe what they do and say that makes you feel better. Eventually, people will come to you for help, and you will want to listen to and support them just as they supported you.

Think about the last time you had a bad day and you went to a support person for help. What did that person do or say to make you feel better or understood?

8) Prepare for people not to believe you.

The people you hurt by your sexual offending behavior (both primary and secondary victims) have good reason not to trust you. So, don't be surprised if they don't believe that you are genuinely trying to change and improve yourself. This is a normal experience for sex offenders. It is in these moments that you can practice empathy. Ask yourself how many times you betrayed the trust of your wife, children, parents, etc. when you were offending. Put yourself in their shoes. One betrayal, especially one as significant as a sexual offense, sets you back below where you started. The rebuilding of that trust is usually a slow, gradual process. You must strive to be consistent in your efforts to change your behavior in order to prove to others that you have truly changed for the better.

Suppose you call your family tomorrow and express remorse for your sexual offending behavior, and they don't believe you are being sincere. How will you respond?

What Others Are Feeling

Read the following scenarios and answer the questions.

1. Bill came home from work and his wife started picking on him. She told him that he was lazy, stupid, and an S.O.B. who could not do anything right. She also told Bill she wished she had never met him.

How did Bill feel after his wife said these things to him?

2. Tom worked hard landscaping his yard.

When Tom won first prize for the best looking yard in the neighborhood, how did he feel?

3. Charlie's girlfriend gets loud and obnoxious in the evening when she is drinking.

How does Charlie feel when his friends come over to visit and his girlfriend is drinking?

4. Mary's husband is in prison.

How does Mary feel when her friends start talking about their husbands?

5. Bob's mother told him she was very proud of him and the accomplishments he made.

How did this make Bob feel?

6. Sally and her mom are on welfare, and most of their clothes are hand me downs.

How does Sally feel when her friends at school talk about their new clothes and the computer they have?

7. Some of John's friends give him a hard time because he is white and is dating an African-American.

How does John feel?

8. Liz found out her husband is having an affair with a woman at work.

How does this make Liz feel?

9. Rich is gay but not open about it at work.

How does Rich feel when his co-workers make fun of gays?

10. Karl's sister was raped and beaten.

How does Karl feel when his friends make jokes about forcing women to have sex?

11. Darlene is big-breasted. All the guys whistle as she walks by.

How does Darlene feel about this?

12. Jason calls Ted a "*dirty junkie.*"

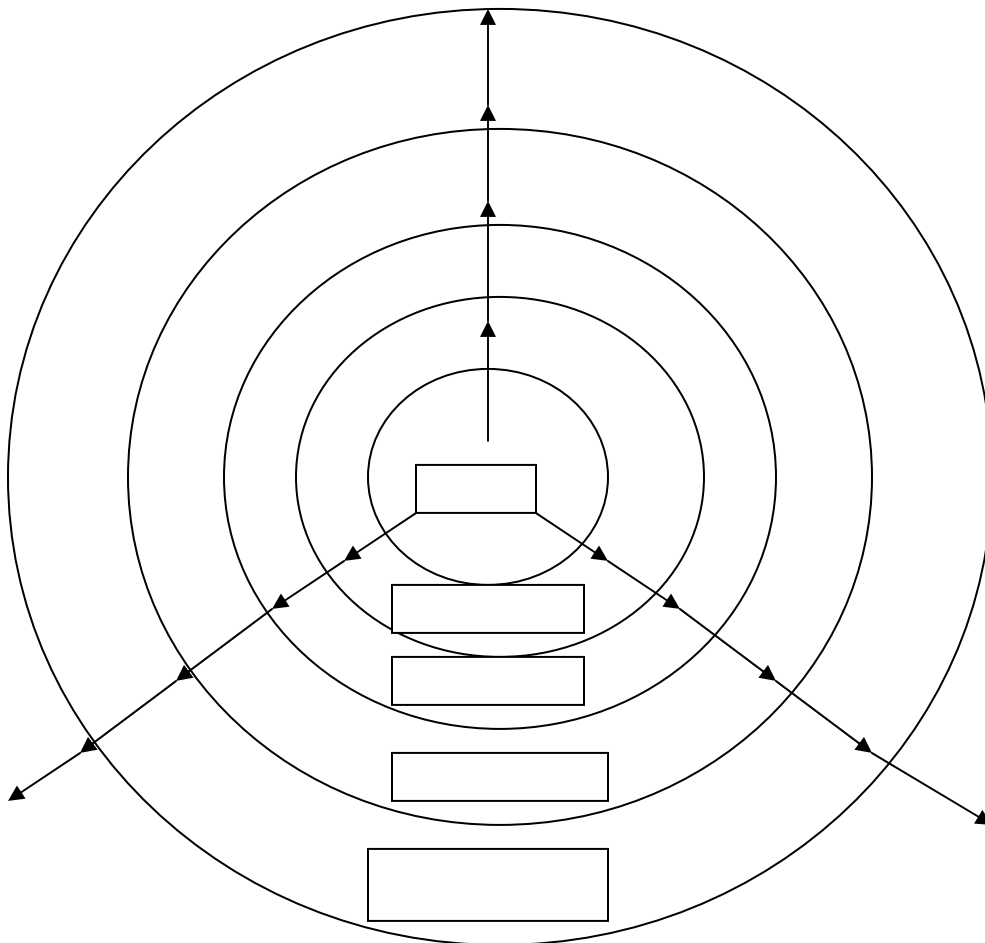
How does this make Ted feel?

Adapted from: Sexual Assault Treatment Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Waves from a Pebble

Just as a pebble tossed into a pond causes rings of waves to radiate outward in all directions, our actions also radiate and impact on the lives of other people. The diagram below shows how sexual offending can have wide-ranging effects like the waves from a pebble.

Exercise: Starting in the center and working outward, list ALL those people whose lives have been effected by your offending behavior. You may have to think deeply about this. List as many as you can think of. Starting with the victim, think about the impact on the victim's immediate family (spouse, children), primary family (parents, siblings), extended family (aunts, uncles, in-laws), friends and neighbors, legal personnel (lawyer, courts) and others. Then consider the impact on your own immediate family, primary family, extended family, friends and neighbors, and other people. You can include additional persons who are not suggested.



Crumbled Paper Exercise

The crumbled paper exercise is an exercise designed to help you understand the impact your sexual offending behavior had on your victim. Use colored paper for this exercise. You will keep this paper with your assignments after you are finished. The colored paper makes it easy to spot.

Think of the person you love most in the world and write that person's name at the top of the paper. Then, below the name, list all the things you love about that person. Think about all the things that make that person special and dear to you. You should be able to fill the sheet with your thoughts about that loved one.



Empathy Paper

Given all you have learned about the pain and lasting impact of sexual abuse on your victim(s), write a detailed report of what it is like to be your victim. Write a description of what it is like to be sexually abused in the first person – that is, use “I” rather than “he” or “she” when describing the experience. Respond to the following questions:

- 1) Write as though you are your victim and the offense is happening to you now. Write how the victim is feeling as the offense is being committed. It is not enough to write, “she/he may have felt bad.” Instead describe the feelings and emotions such as, “I am afraid” or “What is happening?”

- 2) Write about your victim’s experience after the offense.
 - a) What did your victim experience as he/she reported the offense? Who did he/she tell first and how do you think your victim felt after having to repeat the story of the offense to police, social services, etc.

 - b) What were your victim’s experiences in the medical examinations? How did he/she feel during the waiting and examination process?

 - c) Describe your victim’s experiences in the court process. How did he/she feel having to describe his/her sexual abuse to the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, and witnesses?

- 3) Your offense did not end when you walked away, or when you were convicted. Write about the long-term effects of your offense on your victim. If the victim was a child, then how has the abuse affected his/her teenage years and adulthood? If the victim was an adult what has been the effect of the offense on the victim?

- 4) How did the victim’s family and friends react to your offense? Were they supportive? Did some blame the victim? In incest cases, how has the offense affected your relationship with the victim?

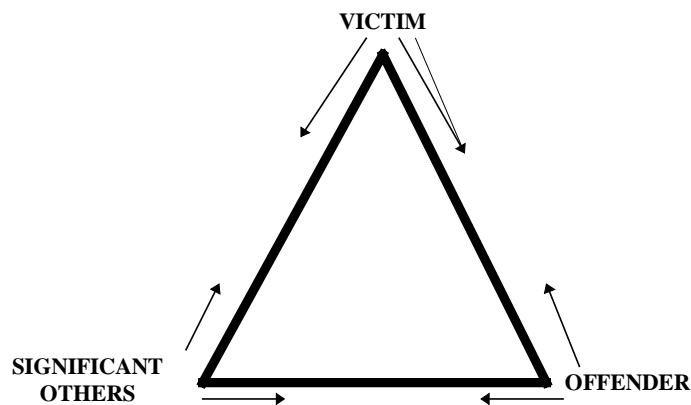
VICTIM AWARENESS

SECTION 6: THE RELATIONSHIP TRIANGLE

In Section 3 (“Victim Knowledge”) of this module, the idea was introduced that the effects of abuse on a victim is determined by many factors. One of those factors was the relationship that the victim had with the abuser. Another of those factors was the relationship the victim has with his or her support system. By support system we mean the significant other people in the victim’s life.

Jan Hindman, a therapist who has worked with many victims of sexual abuse coined the term “Relationship Triangle” to describe the role of relationships that affect a victim. These relationships determine the kind and severity of problems that victims experience after being sexually abused. This Relationship Triangle is presented below.

THE RELATIONSHIP TRIANGLE



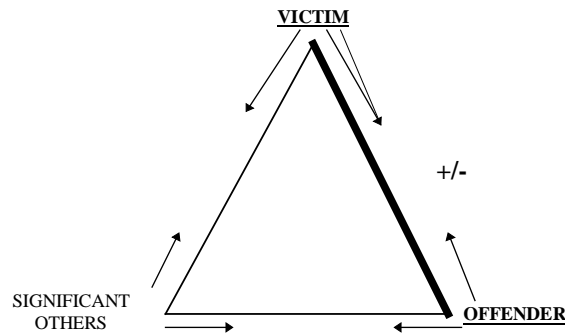
This triangle shows how the victim is affected by the complex nature of his or her relationships. These relationships are changed by the abuse. The way the victim sees the offender is changed as a result of being abused by him. The way significant others view the victim is also going to change. The significant others are going to relate to the victim differently after they find out he or she has been sexually abused. Finally, the significant others in the victim’s life is going to relate in a different way to the offender after the abuse is detected.

For the sake of simplicity, you can think about each set of relationships as either positive or negative. A positive relationship is where the victim likes, cares for, and values the other people. A negative relationship is where the victim dislikes, distrusts, and rejects the relationship.

In order to understand the impact of the abuse on the victim, it makes sense to look at each of these important sets of interactions separately.

VICTIM & OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

The first leg of the triangle to examine is the victim-offender relationship. The way victims see the abuser plays a critical role in how they will understand and be able to overcome the trauma of the offender using them.



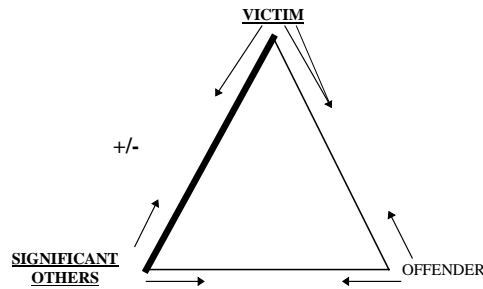
-/- The type of relationship that was negative before and negative after the abuse is, perhaps, one of the easiest situations for the victim to handle. When they saw the offender as someone they did not like or trust prior to the abuse, it does not require them to shift their thinking to continue to see the abuser as someone who is to be avoided and not trusted. It is relatively easy for them to place the blame for the abuse on the offender, where it belongs. An example of this type of relationship is stranger rape. Victims who are raped by strangers were aware that people they don't know may pose a potential harm or threat. They must watch out for them. They have an easier time struggling with any thoughts that they may be responsible for what has happened to them.

+/- The type of relationship that was positive before the abuse, but switches to a negative relationship is common for many victims. It often represents a way of handling the abuse in a healthy manner. Before the relationship, the victim viewed the abuser in a positive way. They liked and trusted them. They enjoyed their company and attention. After the abuse, however, they learned that they were wrong. The abuser was not to be trusted. They recognize the abuser did not really care for them. The victim realizes the abuser was only out to meet his own needs and wants. Anger directed at the abuser, therefore, is an indication that the victim may be handling their abuse in a healthy way.

+/+ The type of relationship that was positive before and remains positive after the abuse is one of the most difficult for victims to handle. When victims continue to love, care for, and admire the abuser, it is difficult for them to properly place responsibility for what has happened to them. They are likely to incorrectly accept the blame and guilt for the abuse. They will think it is their fault that the abuser was arrested and sent to jail or prison. These types of relationships are common in incest situations where the victim was abused by a father figure. They miss the attention they got from the abuser. They may feel responsible that the family no longer has the financial support of the abuser. A major step in helping victims with this type of relationship with the abuser is to help them shift the blame onto the offender, where it belongs.

VICTIM & SIGNIFICANT OTHERS RELATIONSHIPS

The second leg of the triangle represents the relationships that victims have with important people in their lives. We look to others to help us interpret the world. How others view the abuse will also help determine the extent of their own reactions.



Significant others include: friends, other family members (like brothers and sisters), relatives (like aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents), teachers, ministers, neighbors, therapists, and anyone that has an important influence or impact on the life of the victim. We look to other people to see if we are interpreting things in a way that others are seeing them. How others view us plays a major role in determining how we view ourselves.

+ Victims who are valued and cared for by others almost always have a better outcome than those who receive scorn, disgust, or criticism. If significant others support the victim, the trauma of being abused can be decreased. In a positive relationship, they do not blame the victim or hold the victim responsible for what happened. Instead, they try to understand what the victim is going through. They are there when the victim needs them. This is not just in the days or weeks that immediately follow discovery of the abuse, but the support goes on for the long haul.

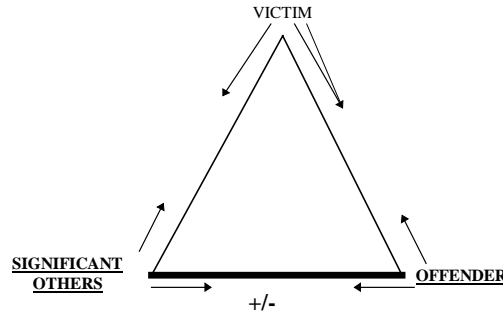
- All too often, unfortunately, the relationships with important people in the victim's life are not healthy. Victims who receive messages from others that they are not liked or loved typically have much more difficulty dealing with the trauma of sexual abuse. Significant others may blame the victim or find them at fault for being abused. Boyfriends and husbands of rape victims may see the victim as "damaged goods". They may withdraw their love and affection.

Frequently children who do not get adequate love and support from their parents and families are particularly vulnerable to being sexually abused. They feel ignored and unimportant. These children are susceptible to the attention that a molester may shower on them in order to manipulate them into having sex. Because such children do not have the confidence that comes from being raised in a supportive and caring environment before they were molested, they have not developed the psychological foundation to cope afterward with the effects of being sexually abused.

Cases of incest are particularly difficult. Often mothers of incest victims may resent the child or feel in competition with the child for the offender's affection. They may give messages (either subtle or obvious) that the child and not the offender is to blame. That the victim is a slut or whore and reject the victim. This makes it difficult to handle any guilt or shame they may experience from the abuse.

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS & OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS

The last leg of the relationship triangle is the relationship that significant others maintain with the offender. Because we try to view the world the same way that others around us see things, the way the others view the offender is important for the victim. Victims pay close attention to the way that the important people in their lives treat the offender.



Sexual abuse impacts not only the victim, but also other people in the victim's life. How those people cope with the victim being abused and how it affects their relationship with the victim can either hinder or aid the victim in the recovery process.

+ Important people in the community or the life of the victim who support the offender often do so at a heavy cost to the victim. Victims see such support as a betrayal. It is a sign that they are to blame for what has happened or that what happened to them wasn't so bad. Well-liked members of the community such as boy-scout leaders, church youth group leaders, or favorite teachers often enjoy the support of the community. Community members may try to assist the offender in getting a lighter sentence or come and testify on their behalf. When this occurs, what is the victim to think? Often they are left with the feelings that the abuser is more important than they are. They may feel more the victimizer than the victimized.

Incest cases are often particularly difficult in this respect. The mother of the victim may continue to love and choose to remain with the offender. In such situations it is not unusual for the child victim to feel that their mother is choosing the abuser over them. Imagine what it must feel like to believe that your own mother loves someone who hurt you more than they love you. Such situations are often very difficult and require years of work in clarifying that a mother can despise what her husband did to her child, but still love both the child and the abuser.

- When it is clear to the victim that the significant people in their lives hate the abuse that they suffered and despise the abuser for what he did, it helps the victim come to terms with what has happened. It provides a consistent message that the abuse was not their fault. They are not to blame and are not responsible for what occurred. It provides a clear message that the offender is at fault. It is possible for the support system to hate the abuse and to hold the offender fully accountable for what occurred, without hating the offender himself.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP TRIANGLES

A healthy relationship triangle is one that will assist the victim in overcoming both the short and long-term effects of the abuse.

A healthy relationship triangle occurs when:



Everyone (abuser, victim, and significant others) recognizes the abuse was not the victim's fault.



Everyone recognizes the abuse was the offender's fault.



No one blames the victim.



Everyone supports the victim.



READING ASSIGNMENT

Read "It's All Relative - The Relationship Perspective" by Jan Hindman

Read Chapter 4 ("The Four Poisons") in Empathy & Compassionate Action.

Read Chapter 5 ("Compassionate Action") in Empathy & Compassionate Action.

6. Think of a specific time when you were hurt by a friend. Maybe it was a time when someone you trusted let you down. Perhaps it was a time when someone talked about you behind your back. Or, maybe it was when people you considered friends turned their back on you after you got arrested.

Briefly describe the situation that occurred to you.

How did you view this person beforehand?

How did you view this person afterwards?

How did your significant others view this friend after they did this to you?

What were the long-term affects on you as a result of this situation?

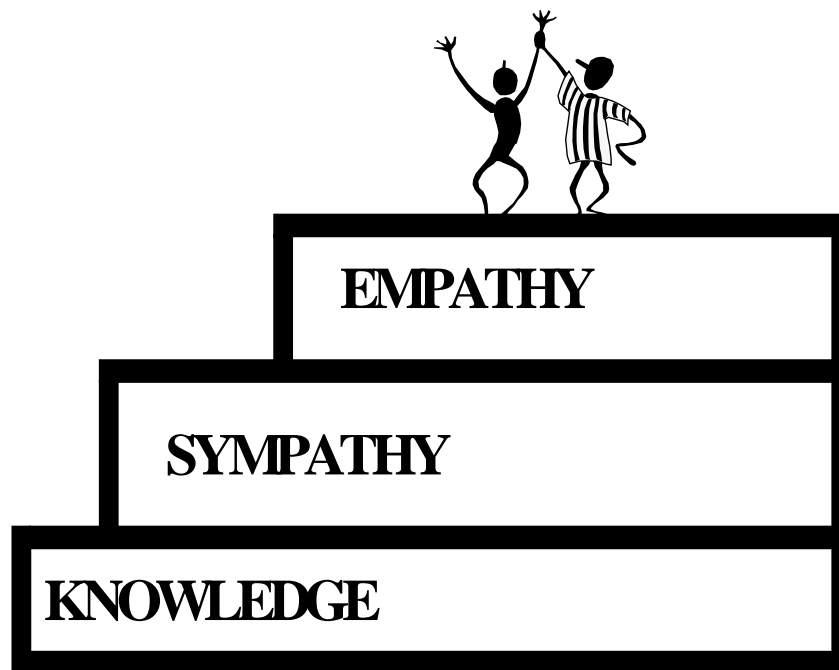
In what way might this situation be similar to the situation with your victim(s)?

VICTIM AWARENESS

SECTION 7: CLARIFICATION AND VICTIM LETTERS

Thus far, you have reviewed some of the typical problems that victims of sexual abuse have experienced, and you have examined some of the common obstacles that offenders use to prevent themselves from acknowledging the pain that victims experience. You have read a variety of accounts of victims of different types of sexual abuse, and you have watched victims tell their stories. Hopefully, you have also realized how a victim's relationship with the abuser and his or her support system can determine some of the lingering effects they will experience.

Now it is time to make the final step in gaining victim awareness. This involves putting all of the information that you have gained into an understanding of how your specific victim(s) experienced your abuse and the problems that they may be having as a result of it.



This final phase of achieving victim awareness means accepting responsibility for what you have done to the victim by putting together all you have learned so far.



??? QUESTIONS OFFENDERS ASK ???

Offenders trying to develop a full awareness of the effects of their abuse on their victims are often troubled by a series of questions. Some of these common questions include:

How much am I responsible for?

It is seldom the case that victims had a perfect and totally happy life prior to their abuse. Many children and adults who are sexually abused come from unhappy and neglectful homes. Some of your victims may have been sexually victimized before you abused them. Other victims will continue to be in abusive relationships or experience many other tragedies in their lives. It is unreasonable to expect you to be totally responsible for every problem that your victim(s) has or will have. It is enough, however, to recognize that your sexual abuse harmed your victim unnecessarily and that the effects of this abuse are painful and long-lasting.

How Do I Help My Victim Now?

There is little that you can do to help the victim, other than not to continue victimizing them. If there is to be a future relationship between you and your victim(s) (as there sometimes is in incest cases) allow the victim to control that relationship. At some point in the future, your victim may want to discuss your abuse of them with you. If you are able to listen and understand their pain, give them this opportunity. In such situations, however, it is always best to have an objective and supportive person (such as a therapist) with the victim to help them understand and communicate their feelings. If you are unable to sympathetically listen to the victim, avoid such a confrontation.

Will My Victim Ever Forgive Me?

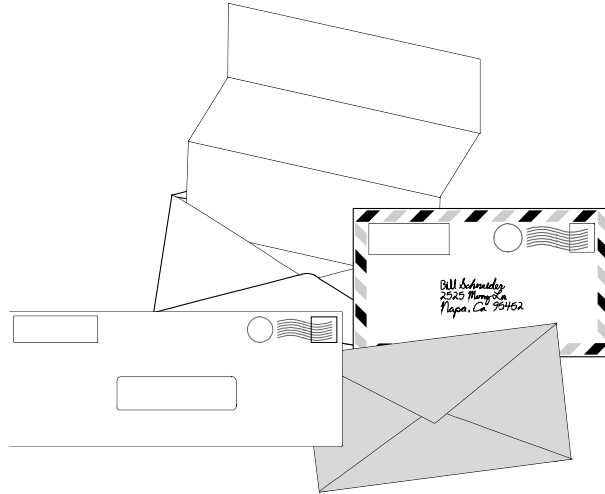
It is impossible to answer this question. It depends on the degree to which your victim is able to gain enough outside support and help to overcome the problems that you have created for them.

How Do I Make It Up To My Victim?

There is no way to ever fully compensate a victim of sexual abuse. Working hard to never sexually abuse someone again, however, is at least one small step you can make. Making restitution is another way of owning up to your responsibility.

What If I Never Can Feel True Empathy For My Victim?

Some offenders are never able to reach the highest level of victim awareness - being able to feel the same things that a victim does. Being able to recognize that children who are molested and that women who are raped are harmed is at least a step that may prevent you from hurting another person in the future.



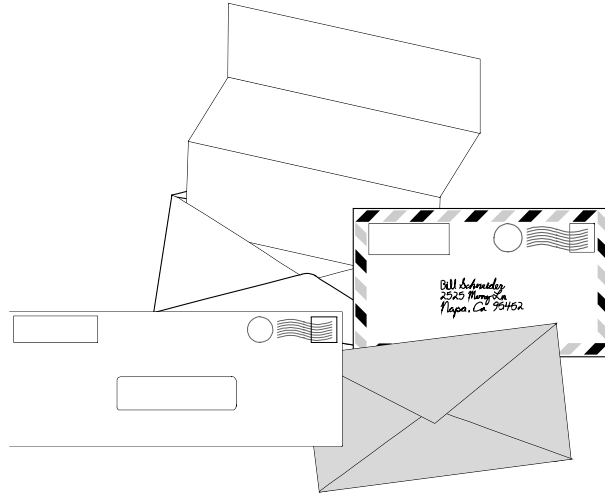
VICTIM CLARIFICATION LETTER(S)

You are going to be asked in this section to write what is referred to as a victim clarification letter. These letters clarify or make clear that you are responsible for the abuse and the effects that have resulted from it. In this letter you should:

- **Apologize to your victim.**
- **Take full responsibility for your behavior.**
- **Fully describe your behavior in detail (without minimizing your actions or behavior).**
- **Make clear your responsibility for both the abuse and its consequences on the victim.**
- **Recognize that the victim has a right to be upset with you.**
- **Tell the victim to blame you, not him or herself.**
- **Tell the victim not to blame others for what you have done.**
- **Give the victim hope for the future.**
- **Encourage the victim in the recovery process.**

Some tips and hints about victim clarification letters:

1. You should write a separate letter for each of your victims.
2. It may take several drafts of the letter before you are satisfied with the letter. Be prepared to re-write the letter several times.
3. **DO NOT ACTUALLY SEND THE LETTER TO THE VICTIM!!!!**
Contact with an abuser can be very traumatizing to a victim. Some victims report feeling abused all over again when they are contacted by their abuser. Any communication that you may have with your victim(s) should be carefully timed and supervised. Hopefully your victim has a therapist. If so, the therapist can be of great assistance in determining if and when any contact from you might be helpful.
4. Keep the focus of the letter on the victim. Avoid describing how hard you are working to get help for yourself. This is only a disguised way of keeping the relationship focused on you. The purpose of this letter is to focus on what the victim is feeling and thinking.
5. Avoid asking the victim for forgiveness. The purpose of this letter is not to make it all "OK" between you and the victim. Instead, it is a tool to help you identify your responsibility for the abuse and its aftermath.
6. It is acceptable to mention how your abuse of the victim has hurt other people in the victim's life. However, the major theme of the letter should be how the abuse injured the victim. So, if you decide to add this to your letter, describe how the harm done to others affects the victim as well.
7. You may want to refer to pages 32 and 33 in the book Empathy and Compassionate Action when preparing your letter. The guidelines and examples provided there may be of assistance as you struggle with this task.
8. Ask for feedback and help from others in completing this task. You will be asked to read your letter to your group. Your therapists and other group members will help you see things in the letter that you are likely to miss because they can be more objective in this situation.
9. Refer back to the notes that you made in completing the homework exercises in this manual, the books and articles that you read, and the videotapes that you reviewed for information that you can include in your letter.



LETTER AS A VICTIM

The final stage of developing victim awareness is truly attempting to walk in the victim's shoes. Trying to see yourself as the victim sees you. Attempting to view the abuse as your victim sees it. To help in this process you may be asked to role play scenes or aspects of your abusive behavior, taking the part of the victim. Another exercise is to write yourself a letter from the victim's perspective. This means writing a letter as if you were your victim.

In this letter you should include:

- **Describe how your victim saw you before the abuse.**
- **How your victim saw you after the abuse.**
- **How your victim experienced your behavior.**
- **How your victim feels about you now.**
- **What were the effects on the victim immediately after the abuse. How did he/she feel, what did he/she think, how did he/she behave?**
- **What effects your victim may still be experiencing now, many months or years after the abuse.**
- **What questions you think the victim has for you?**
- **What kind of relationship the victim may want to have with you (if any) in the future.**

Some Hints and Tips for Writing a Victim Letter

1. You should write a separate letter as if it was from each of your individual victims.
2. Like the clarification letter, it may take several drafts of the letter before you are satisfied with the letter. Be prepared to re-write the letter several times.
3. Try to use the language and words that your victim would use. If your victim is still a child, use the words and phrases a child of that age would use.
4. Review the previous material in your readings, in this module, and in the videos to identify things the victim would say or think.
5. If you have talked with or received letters from your victim(s), review them in your mind as to what they said to you.
6. Seek feedback from your other group members, therapists, or support system. Ask them to review the letter to see what you have missed or how you may be unrealistically thinking about the victim's point of view.
7. Avoid having the victim forgive you (even if he or she has) in this letter. The purpose of this letter is not to get rid of your guilt. Rather, it is an opportunity to see the abuse through the victim's eyes.



READING ASSIGNMENT

Read Chapter (“Becoming a Better Person”) in Empathy & Compassionate Action.



HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

1. Write a separate clarification letter for each of your victims. Copy your best clarification letter (after it has been approved by your group members/therapist) on the following pages.
2. Write a separate letter as a victim for each of your victims. Copy your best letter as a victim (after it has been approved by your group members/therapist) on the following pages.

CLARIFICATION LETTER

CLARIFICATION LETTER

LETTER AS A VICTIM

LETTER AS A VICTIM

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