



### **What is Sexual Abuse?**

Sexual abuse occurs whenever a person (child or adult) is sexually exploited by an older or more powerful person for the satisfaction of the abuser's needs.

Sexual abuse is a felony in all 50 states. By age 18, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men will be sexually abused. (NIMH) Sexual abuse is probably even more common because of the secrecy involved in reporting.

The average age of the child when abuse begins is between 6 and 12.

The majority of abusers are male. Most perpetrators are considerably older. Some states require an age difference of 5 years, but the age of the perpetrator does not determine whether the person is harmed by the experience.

### **Criteria for Sexual Abuse**

As a child I experienced an older person or an adult making sexual threats, sexual comments about my body, lewd or suggestive comments and inappropriate discussions. (Talking with a child about sexual needs and preferences).

Before adulthood, I experienced exposure to pornography or to any sexually provocative scene.

I've experienced physical situations of sexual abuse that includes touching and/or other sexual stimulation. Sexual Abuse is much broader than intercourse (forced, unforced or simulated). It includes touching that is intended to sexually arouse the abuser. Also includes exposure of the victim's body to others.

### **How Was I Affected?**

Certain triggers remind me of the abuse. (smells, locations, sounds)

I experience vague times where I feel like a child again and I can't escape. The memory is so powerful it feels as if the present has faded away and I am actually back in the time of the abuse.

I have a tendency to become involved in relationships that are destructive.

I've gone through periods of dependent relationships.

I've gone through periods of promiscuity.

I have difficulty with physical intimacy, even when I'm in a good relationship.

I don't trust in relationships.

I feel very powerless in relationships.

I have difficulty regulating my emotions. At times I am VERY emotional. At other times I have NO emotion.

I have difficulty connecting on an intimate level and may sabotage relationships.

I feel stuck. I want to run when it comes to emotional situations.

*How Was I Affected?* If you checked more than three boxes, it is important you get healing for any past sexual abuse you may have experienced...even if you feel like it is a "sleeping dog" that needs to lie.