

KIDS AND SEXUAL ABUSE

sexual abuse from a kid's perspective

"I didn't know it was wrong. I thought he was protecting me."
—Fifteen-year-old survivor of sexual abuse

KIDS SPEAK ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE:

I didn't know it was wrong.
He makes me feel special.
She told me this was our secret.
I trusted her.
I thought it was normal.

He said I wanted it.
It felt weird that he was touching me there.
He said it was only a picture and he wouldn't send it out.

DID YOU KNOW?

- We can be victimized by other children or adults, at home, in school, or in other "safe" places.
- Someone we trust could be sexually abusing us.
- Sexual abuse isn't just physical.
- We can experience "peeping toms," unwelcomed sexual touching and fondling, exposure of private parts, exposure to pornography, oral/anal/vaginal penetration, sexting, and more.

WE SOMETIMES DON'T TELL BECAUSE:

We feel alone.
We feel ashamed.
We feel helpless.
We trust the person hurting us.

We don't want to cause trouble.
We don't know how to explain it.
We think it's our fault.
We don't know that it's wrong.



LISTEN TO US.

- Believe us.
- Don't shame us.
- Make us feel safe.
- Pay attention to our behavior.
- Don't make us feel guilty.
- Do something about it.
- Speak up for us.
- Remain calm and listen.

KEEP US SAFE.

- Teach us about appropriate boundaries.
- Remind us that our bodies belong to us, and that we have the right to say "no."
- Teach us the correct words for our "private parts."
- Believe us when we tell you what's going on.
- Help us determine who is a trusted adult.
- Encourage us to tell someone.
- If you're concerned that we're being hurt, talk to someone about it.
- If you don't know what to do to help us, find someone who does.

HOW WE RESPOND TO VIOLENCE

Some of us respond differently, but we may show physical symptoms (pain "down there," loss of appetite, trouble sleeping). We may hurt ourselves, show unusual interest in sexual activities, or not like to be hugged or touched. We may feel angry, ashamed, unable to focus, overwhelmed, sad, and alone.

ADVOCATES CAN HELP.

For more information, call the Virginia Statewide Hotline at 1.800.838.8238 (text at 804.793.9999), or a resource below: