

Counseling Sexually Abused Women and Children

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I. Introduction

A. In all communities

1. Statistics
2. In the church
3. Perpetrators

II. The need for women counselors to help girls and women.

- A. Able to help in a sensitive situation.
- B. It is not necessary to have been abused personally.
- C. Trained
- D. Godly and knowledgeable in the Bible. Rom. 15:14
 1. Need to have good theology.
 2. Able to find resources.
- E. Have the love of Christ. Is. 50:4 I Thess. 5:14

III. How to Protect Children and Women

- A. We need to be ready to ask the tough questions.
 1. Signs to look for: depression, bitterness, fear, anger, intense feelings of shame, false guilt, chronic pain or sickness, sexual problems with a spouse, nightmares, return to immature behaviors (bedwetting), sleep problems, “retail therapy”, desire to control others.
 2. Destructive behaviors: drugs, alcohol abuse, cutting, eating disorders, suicide, “acting out” sexually.
 3. Ask the counselee, “Has anything sexual happened to you which made you feel uncomfortable?” -- Laura Hendricksen.
- B. We are mandated reporters. Rom. 13:1-4 Prov. 31:8-9 Ps. 146:7 Psalm 82:3-4
 1. An abused person might need to be convinced that reporting will protect future victims. Matt. 7:12
 2. Report immediately before the offender destroys evidence or threatens a victim into silence.
- C. Develop a policy of protection in our churches.
- D. Teach boys and girls to “cry out.” Deut. 22:23-24
- E. Have a policy for dealing with abuse allegations. I Tim. 3:1-7 Ezek. 34:10 I Tim. 5:19-20
- F. Teach about danger on the internet.
- G. Be aware of possible false allegations. Prov. 25:2

IV. How to encourage a counselee to speak about abuse.

- A. The counselee may be reluctant.
- B. Don't talk someone out of a sense of violation.
- C. Gain trust. Eph. 4:31 Phil. 2:3-4
- D. Tell the counselee that God is pleased when we tell the truth. Ps. 51:6a Pr. 19:9 Col. 3:9-10
- E. Be patient. Prov. 15:28a I Cor. 13:4a

- F. Ask open-ended questions.
- G. Do not try to protect the abuser. Psalm 82:3-4
- H. Make sure parents are not part of the problem.
- I. Be aware that a counselee might speak about a "friend."
- J. Use creative means to communicate with a child.

V. The Spiritual Struggles of an Abused Person

A. Shame

- 1. Excessive washing is an evidence of shame.
- 2. Tamar felt shame. II Samuel 13, esp. v. 12-13
- 3. Jesus took our shame. Matt. 5:3

B. Guilt

- 1. Identify false guilt. Psalm 25:1-3 Psalm 26
- 2. Some need to deal with unwanted sexual feelings. I Cor. 10:3-6
- 3. Some need to confess the poor choices they made in order to receive God's restoration.
I John 1:9
- 4. Jesus took our guilt. Isaiah 6:7 Isaiah 61:10

C. Memories

- 1. Do not use visualization because that deals in fantasy.
- 2. Replace thoughts. Phil. 4:8 II Cor. 10:5b Rom. 12:2
- 3. Jesus can heal our memories. Matt. 5:4 Psalm 147:3

D. Fear

- 1. A loss of trust.
- 2. Evidences of fear: Obsessive and compulsive behavior, withdrawal from relationships.
- 3. We can trust God. Hab. 3:17-19 Gen 45:5-8a Prov. 3:5 Is. 12:2-6 Is. 26:3-4 Prov. 29:25

E. Grief

- 1. Natural because a sin has been committed. II Sam. 13:19 Jer. 17:14 Rom. 12:15b
- 2. There may be grief at losing a relationship.
- 3. Emphasize that God hates injustice. Is. 30:18 Is. 48:22
- 4. Jesus bore our griefs. Is. 53:4-6

VI. Forgiveness

A. This area needs to be carefully considered.

- 1. Wait to bring this up.
- 2. See if the counselee addresses this.

B. Forgiveness does not mean that the abuse is not reported.

C. Forgiveness does not mean that the abuse was ok or should be excused. Luke 23:34a

D. Forgiveness is not a declaration of God's forgiveness. Mark 2:7c Heb. 9:22

E. Forgiveness does not always need to seek out the perpetrator.

F. Forgiveness is an attitude of the heart before God. Mark 11:25 Eph. 4:32 Matt. 6:12
Matt. 18:21-35

G. The church can help. Matt. 18:15-20

H. Forgiveness is entrusting judgment to God. II Pet. 2:21-22 Rom. 12:19 Rom. 13:3-4 Gen. 50:19

VII. A New Identity

- A. The person who has been sexually abused needs the gospel.
- B. Avoid the term “victim”. II Cor. 5:17-18 II Cor. 12:9-10 II Cor. 11:30
- C. The Christian counselee must receive the love of God. Rom. 8:28-39
- D. The counselee must see the grace of God. Rom. 6:23
- E. The Christian counselee must receive the honor Christ gives. I Pet. 2:9-10
- F. The Christian counselee must cultivate the mind of Christ. Phil. 3:8-11
- G. The Christian counselee can “put the past in its place.” Phil. 3:13-14 Rev. 21:5
- H. The Christian counselee can be victorious. II Cor. 4:7-10
- I. The formerly abused person can become a servant to others. Gen. 50:20 I Cor. 1:4-9 I Pet. 4:10

Resources:

A Cry for Justice by Jeff Crippen and Anna Wood

Forgiving our Fathers and Mothers: Finding Freedom from Hurt and Hate by Leslie Leyland Fields

Putting your Past in its Place by Steve Viars

From Forgiven to Forgiving by Jay Adams

The Peacemaker by Ken Sande

http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/uploads/46748/holcomb_confronting_an_abuser.pdf

<http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/blogs/2013/07/24/lessons-learned-from-unthinkable-sexual-abuse/>

<https://theresurgence.com/2013/02/02/8-notes-on-counseling-abused-children>

“Sexual Assault—Healing Steps for Victims” by David Powlison CCEF New Growth Press

“Recovering from Child Abuse” by David Powlison CCEF New Growth Press

“Someone I Love Has Been Abused (Living in a Fallen World)” by Jim Newheiser

Sexual Abuse: Beauty for Ashes by Bob Kelleman

For the counselee to read:

When God Weeps: Why our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty by Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes

Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts by Jerry Bridges

Rid of my Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault by Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb

Glenda’s Story: Led by Grace by Glenda Revell