

SEX ABUSE

IT'S NEVER YOUR CHOICE, IT'S NEVER YOUR FAULT

SPECIAL REPORT!

*Sex, lies and videotape
Getting straight answers*



"It'll be our little secret" – One girl's story

HANDS OFF!



**SEX
ABUSE
WHAT'S
THAT?**



**Get the
facts**

**IT CAN'T
HAPPEN
TO ME!**

The
lowdown
on who it
happens to
and why

**LIFT THE
LID ON**

*Text message
hell*

*Internet sex
pests*

*The stranger
with sweets*

*...and lots
more*

**ARE THEY
FREAKS AND
MONSTERS?**

*Who are they?
Find out the truth about abusers*



**PLUS!!! IT'S YOUR BODY! WHAT TO DO WHERE TO GO
WHO TO CALL... IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP**

NSPCC 
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

This magazine is all about sex abuse. Sex abuse is when something sexual is going on and one person:

**DOESN'T LIKE IT or
DOESN'T WANT IT or
DIDN'T CHOOSE TO HAVE IT HAPPEN or
CAN'T STOP IT**

You might be smaller or weaker or younger than the other person. They might be smaller or weaker than you but still have the power to abuse you.

If you don't have the chance to say NO – that's not right. We've written this to tell you all about it. So if it happens to you or a friend, you can take action.

Sex abuse doesn't happen to many people. Don't have nightmares about it because the chances are it won't happen to you. But it's something you need to know about. **You should know because sexual abuse can be stopped.** And sometimes, you can prevent it happening. **When people are being sexually abused, they often feel helpless. They think no-one notices and no-one cares.**

Or they feel what's happening is their fault. Or they feel they wouldn't be believed if they speak out. Or they think nothing can be done. NONE OF THAT IS TRUE.

There are people who would care, would notice, would believe and could help. We know that if young people did speak out, they could be helped.

**READ ON, GET THE FACTS, AND
LEARN WHEN AND HOW TO GET HELP.**

"Well, that's easy!

When some dirty old man grabs you and does stuff to you, that's not OK. Am I right?"

"But what about when someone you know touches you up?"



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What's not OK and what is?

You know it's not OK when a stranger makes you have full sex with them. But there are lots of other things that can happen that are just as nasty. Even if there's: **NO FORCE, NO THREAT AND IT ISN'T FULL SEX... IT'S ABUSE, AND IT'S NOT OK**

"WELL, I KNOW THESE AREN'T OK!"

When an older person has sex with you or gets you to have sex with someone else and watches or takes photographs or videos.

When an adult touches a young person's private parts or gets the young person to touch the adult's private parts.

When an older person puts a finger in a girl's sex passage (vagina) or a girl or boy's back passage.

When the adult rubs their private parts between the young person's legs or against their body.

Being kissed or touched in ways that make you uneasy.

When an adult gets a young person to touch their own private parts while they watch or touch their own and has the young person watch.

When an older person uses their mouth on your private parts, or gets you to use your mouth on theirs.

"SOME OF THESE DON'T SOUND TOO BAD – BUT NONE OF THEM ARE OK"

Having someone watch you when you've no clothes on, or ask you to look at them.

When the adult wants you to talk dirty, or listen to them talking dirty.

Having photographs taken of you in your underwear or with no clothes on.

Being made to go around in your home without clothes on when you want to cover up.

When someone older than you gets you to watch porn videos or look at porn magazines or photographs.

Having older people go around without clothes when you'd rather they didn't.

When someone older than you gets you to watch people having sex.

"I THOUGHT THESE WERE OK BUT THEY'RE NOT"

When the person abusing can get to you because you broke some rules.

When the other person doesn't hurt you.

When it's done to a boy, not a girl.

When it's brothers or sisters fooling about together.

When it's another kid who's doing things to you.

When it only happens once.

When it's touching or talking or looking but not going the whole way.

"THESE CAN BE OK!"

- When someone touches you on the arm, or hugs you.
- When a carer washes your private parts because you can't do it yourself.
- When someone gives you sweets.

"Hey – I get it!"

If someone is touching me for a good reason, that's OK. Like washing me if I can't, or hugging me because they care for me. Giving me sweets is OK too, as long as they're not softening me up for later. But if they're getting a sex kick out of it, there's a problem. And people get sex kicks out of all sorts of things, not just going the whole way."

"That's it

So – it's **NOT OK** if someone

Older
Stronger
Bigger

With a hold on you

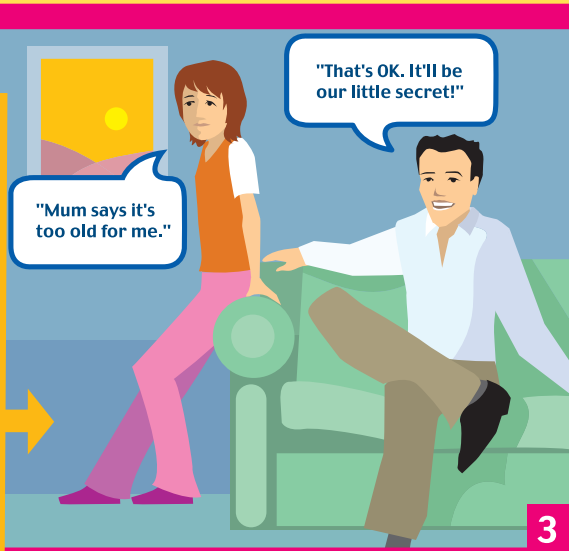
does anything sexual to you or with you or in front of you whether that's once, twice or lots of times."

"If it's someone your own age and it's what you both want, it could be OK.

Watch this space for more on that!"

"It'll be our little secret!"

Jo knows all about "Stranger Danger".
No-one ever told her sex abusers
can be people
you know...



HOW DID THIS HAPPEN...

2

AND HOW WILL IT END?
Is it Jo's fault? Will anyone listen to her?
Where can she go? What can she do?



"A monster, isn't he – a sex abuser? A dirty, pervy old man in a filthy mac who hangs around playgrounds. Anyone offers you sweets you run a mile, mate – that's yer sex abuser!"

"I don't think it's that simple. If you could always spot them coming, there'd be no problem, would there?"

When people talk about sex attackers, they usually warn you about people you don't know. You can get the idea that it's only strangers, and people who look dirty and nasty, who could be a danger to you. That's not the truth. You're far more likely to be abused by someone you know. And, they'll look normal. In fact, they may be someone you like or love, someone you look up to and trust.

A SEX ABUSER COULD BE:

A brother or stepbrother

A boyfriend or girlfriend

Someone you've met recently

A sister or stepsister, mother or stepmother, grandmother or aunt

Your father or stepfather

A friend of a parent or carer

A school mate or someone you know

A babysitter

An uncle, cousin or grandfather

A friend of a brother or sister

The parent of a school mate or friend

A neighbour

...or a stranger.

Are they freaks and monsters?

THE TRUTH ABOUT SEX ABUSERS

"WHAT MAKES A DAD, A TEACHER OR A NEIGHBOUR DO THAT TO A CHILD?"

Most don't. But sadly some people's Dads or other family members, teachers or neighbours could, and do. And so may people your own age – friends, school mates or someone you're dating. It could be anyone. Which means someone you love or trust and who loves you may do awful things. They don't turn into a monster – they could go on being the same person you looked up to. But they do monstrous things, and those have to be stopped. There are lots of reasons people abuse. But whatever the reason, there's no excuse for what they do. And you shouldn't blame yourself if it does happen.

"AND WHAT ABOUT MUMS OR FRIENDS? THIS IS SEX ABUSE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT – CAN WOMEN DO THAT? AND IF IT'S SOMEONE YOUR OWN AGE, THAT'S JUST PLAYING AROUND, ISN'T IT?"

Sex abuse can be sexual touching, showing a video or picture, talking dirty or showing their own body to get sexual kicks. So women can do it, or someone your age or a year or so older. The key is something called **"CONSENT"**. Consent means being able to say **"YES"** or

"NO" to what happens. It means having a choice. If one of you is an adult and the other a child, or one of you is bigger, stronger or has control, the other can't always make a choice. You may say **"YES"** or keep quiet but not because you really want to. It's because you don't think they'll take any notice if you say **"NO"**.

"SOMEONE WILL NOTICE AND DO SOMETHING, IF IT WAS SERIOUS SEX ABUSE, WON'T THEY?"

Many people who abuse have all sorts of tricks to let them get their kicks without being found out. They may have jobs that put them in charge of children. They can be clever at getting parents and carers to trust them. And they often know how to keep kids scared and quiet.

"BUT IF YOU CRY OR ARE MISERABLE, A SEX ABUSER IS GOING TO LEAVE YOU ALONE, AREN'T THEY?"

People who abuse may persuade themselves that what they are doing is OK. Because they believe this, they won't recognise or care how you really feel. They may not stop even if you make it clear you hate what's happening.



"OK. So you can't tell someone is a sex abuser by what they look like. And you can't say someone doesn't abuse because of who they are. You can only tell by what they do."

"Right! So forget what or who you think an abuser should be. If someone is doin' any of this stuff to you, that's sex abuse and you need help!"

"Yeah. It's your body and you should get to say who can touch and who can't. Check out pages 9 and 10 for what to do if any of this stuff is happening to you!"

Why me?

“This friend of mine got flashed at a couple of times. Then a cousin started mucking around. A year later, this man up the road did it too. Is that unlucky, or what? Makes you wonder why it happens to one person, not another.”

Getting picked out by someone who abuses isn't your fault. You don't ask for it, deserve it or want it. Mostly, it's a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sex abuse happens because of a problem in the person who abuses, not the person they abuse.



“GOT ANY IDEAS FOR KEEPIN' SAFE?”

PEOPLE WHO ABUSE OFTEN CHOOSE TO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

So you may be in a class, a youth group or a sports group and find the person in charge abuses. Or, you may be living next door to someone who abuses. A friend of your parents may do it. Or a family member. Or there may be someone who abuses in an internet chat room. They may get hold of your mobile or pager number and start phoning or texting you. But you don't pick them – they pick you.

BUT IF THEY PICK YOU, WHAT DO THEY LOOK FOR?

They may go for someone who's keen on sports or something. They may offer coaching or help, so the young person, and their parents, lets them get close. Or they pick on kids who are often on their own, who may have been bullied. Or those who are disabled or can't communicate well. Or those in care or staying away from home and their main family. Kids who use internet chat rooms and don't stick to the rules can be targeted. When parents break up or get new partners, they may be wrapped up in their own problems. People who abuse may use this chance to make friends with the kids and take advantage. Some go out of their way to make friends with mothers on their own. They seem kind and helpful. What they really want is a chance to get at her kids.

IF YOU FEEL ALONE AND UNLOVED BY FAMILY OR FRIENDS, SOMEONE WHO GIVES YOU SOME ATTENTION CAN SEEM NICE.

People who abuse are very clever and may look out for kids who could feel left out. But whoever they choose, it's not that person's fault.

A PERSON WHO ABUSES MIGHT ALSO COME BETWEEN YOU AND OTHER PEOPLE.

They may work on you, so you lose belief in yourself find it hard to make or keep friends. You may feel so angry and upset that you hide away or hit out at everyone. Or they may make you feel special and chosen. Kids may be abused by more than one person. A person who abuses can pass them or their email or mobile number on. Or they may come to think abuse is what you have to expect. The way they act suggests that they are up for grabs.

“Well... trust your own feelings, for a start. If you think someone or something is wrong, tell an adult you trust. If they won't listen, tell someone else.”

“You've got no reason to feel guilty. Not for having it happen, or for not stopping it. IT'S NOT YOU CHOICE AND IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.”

“So speak out and get help! Look at page 9 and 10 and you'll see how to get help and a whole list of people who will listen.”

“But what if you do something bad?”

People who abuse often tell the people they harm that they've been bad. Then you may think you have to keep quiet or get in trouble. Sometimes, the person who abuses forces kids to take part in hurting even younger children. They do this so you feel guilty and keep it secret. But whatever happened, you didn't choose it and it wasn't your fault.



“We're told not to talk to strangers or take sweets. But if the weirdo is someone we know, how can we keep safe?”

4

If any of the things described here have happened or begin to happen to you, get help. Walk away or tell the person to stop. But it can be very hard for a young person to fight it on their own – you do need help, from adults who are to be trusted and will listen to you.



What abuse can do to you

You may not realise what's happening at first. People who abuse can be very clever. They often don't jump on you and do something bad, all at once. They may start giving you a treat or being nice. This is called **"grooming"**, getting you ready for what they want. They may get you to do things or go places with them.

By the time the sex stuff starts, you think **"maybe this is what happens to everyone"** or **"I broke rules. I'll get in trouble if I say anything"** or **"it's all my fault"**.

You may feel too shy to say what happened. You may want to ask questions or ask for help but think saying the words will get you in trouble.

People who abuse will try to shift the blame onto you. They'll often say **"you asked for this"** or **"you like this"**. They could make you think that you're the one who will get in trouble if you tell. They may get you to believe your parents or family would be shocked and disgusted with you.

People who abuse often trade on the idea that you have to keep secrets. They may say **"this is our secret"** and make you feel you're a grass or a snitch if you tell. They may say that if you grass on them, they'll go to prison and everyone will blame you for breaking up the family.

People who abuse may use threats to get what they want and keep you quiet. They may say if you speak out, the shock would make the people you love ill. Or tell you they'll kill you, or kill your Mum or a pet. Or they may say you'll be put in care. Or, that if you don't let them do what they want to you, they'll do it to someone else instead and that will be your fault.

"OK, SO YOU MIGHT BE TOO SCARED TO ASK FOR HELP WHILE THE PERSON WHO ABUSES IS AROUND. ONCE YOU'RE WITH PEOPLE WHO COULD HELP, WHY DON'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?"

People who abuse often run you down. They'll make you believe you don't matter, so you'll think no-one will help you. You may not have the confidence to fight back or ask anyone else to stick up for you.

"BUT IF SOMEONE IS INTERFERING WITH YOU – YOU KNOW THEY'RE DOING SOMETHING WRONG, DON'T YOU?"

If it's someone you look up to, it can make you feel confused. You trust them so you may stop trusting yourself. It may be difficult to accept a parent or a parent's friend, a big brother or uncle or grandfather, a teacher or any other adult is in the wrong. So you may start thinking you must be in the wrong, instead.

Another way you may stop trusting yourself is that being abused can make you feel special. The person who abuses might make a fuss of you and buy you presents. If you feel no-one cares about you or loves you, the attention you're getting from the person who abuses may seem better than being left alone.

Even the sex stuff can feel good. Your own body can let you down. While most of you is hating it, another small part may be liking it. And sometimes it seems to help to tell yourself **"I want this"** than to say **"this is horrible and hurting me"**.

"I can't see the problem. If someone messed with me, I'd do 'em. I'd tell my Dad and end of story!"

"But it's not that simple. There are lots of reasons why kids don't get help if they're abused."



"WELL, IT ALL SOUNDS NASTY BUT IT'S GOT TO STOP SOMETIME. ONCE IT DOES, YOU'LL GET OVER IT, WON'T YOU?"

The worse part of being abused is the way it makes you feel about yourself. For a lot of people, that doesn't stop when the abuse does. You still feel dirty and to blame for what happened. You may not trust yourself. You go on thinking no-one cares or no-one will think you're worthwhile. You may feel guilty you didn't stop the abuse. Or angry with people who should have stopped it for you. People who have been abused often find it affects them for years after, unless they get some help.

That's the bad news. This is the good news: it doesn't have to go on like that. You can get help and you can get better. It's hard to recover from sex abuse by yourself. You can do it, if you ask for help. Look on page 9 and 10 for ways to do it.

"That might be more than I wanted to know!"

"No, I learnt a lot."

"Like what?"

"It's not your fault, whatever anyone says. So you ain't got nothing to be ashamed of."

"It might be tough speaking out, but keeping quiet is worse. Whatever happens when you do say something, it's the abusers fault, not yours."

Sex, lies & videotape



SEX

Some people get straight answers if they ask about sex at school or home. But sex talk is a no-no for lots of us. All of us are curious. We want to know how it works, how it feels and what is normal.

It's normal to be curious and have questions you want answered. It's normal to feel good when you touch yourself. It's OK to touch yourself to feel nice. As you get older, it's normal to want to touch other people, and to share the good feelings. In due time, it's normal to want to have sex with someone you fancy. That doesn't mean you have to do any of this. Don't forget it's against the law to have sex with someone under 16.

So far so good. What's NOT OK is if any of this happens with someone or in front of someone when one of you:

- Doesn't like it or
- Doesn't want it or
- Didn't choose to have it happen or
- Can't stop it

People your own age may push you to have sex, or to join in with some sexual games. You may get the idea there's something wrong with you if you don't.

There's nothing odd in leaving this stuff till later. If you don't want to have sex, you're normal too. Tell your friends you're not going to be pushed into anything just to please them. Just say NO!

LIES

The internet is a great way to find things out and chat rooms are fun. But it's also a place where people who abuse find kids. A lot of us mess around in chat rooms pretending to be someone we're not. If you do it, so can other people. You may get a message that says "Hi, I'm 14 and live in Derby". If you were face to face, you'd know if it was true or not. On the internet, you don't know. They could be 40, live next door... and abuse.

So, you need to be careful what you say about yourself. Even if you say something privately, the other person may put it about on the net. It'll then be out of your control. It can be hard to recognise someone who abuses or is trying to soften you up. They know the questions to ask to find out about you. So it's important to follow the rules about safe internet use. Ask someone if you're not sure what's going on. Avoid chat rooms that don't have a moderator.

Always use a nickname, NEVER your real, own or family name. Don't give your address, phone number, where you go to school or anything that may be used to track you down. And don't send anyone your picture or any description of yourself. If someone asks, tell a carer or teacher, at once. And if the talk makes you feel uncomfortable or confused, ask an adult to have a look. Think carefully before giving anyone your email address. NEVER agree to meet an on-line friend without getting

an adult involved. If you do meet, make it in public and have your trusted adult with you. And don't phone people you've met on-line. With caller ID they can see your number.

You may come across porn on the internet. It's OK to be curious – it's also OK to be shocked. If you see anything that shows sex with children, tell an adult at once. The people putting it up are breaking the law. You may find you can't get out of such sites by pressing the back button or Escape. You'd have to turn off the computer to get away.

Mobile phones and pagers aren't always good, either. Bullies might send you filthy or threatening messages. Or a stranger might get hold of your number. It can be scary because it feels as if they step right up close. Think carefully before giving anyone your phone or pager number. Ask your friends to keep it to themselves, too. If anyone sends you nasty messages, save them and show them to an adult you trust. It's not your fault if you get stuff like that. It happens to lots of people.

VIDEOTAPE

There's a lot of dirty videos around. Members of your family or other adults you know may watch them. And someone you know may suggest getting one. It may seem harmless or a good way to learn but it isn't. People who abuse often use videos or porn as a way of "grooming" or setting you up. You look at it, you get used to the things it shows. Sooner or later, the nasty stuff starts. If an older person suggests you watch some together, tell a trusted adult at once. Even watching videos with friends isn't such a good idea. The sort of ideas you get about sex from them aren't helpful. They won't teach you about relationships – quite the opposite. You'll learn about how to use and abuse people, not get on with them. And while a lot of boys watch it, most girls think it's gross. If you want to learn about sex, ask your parents, your school or your library to come up with something better. You need and deserve good sex education. If you are not getting it, ask your parents and teachers to answer your questions.

For further information on internet safety read NCH's NetSmart rules. For a copy call the NCH Supporter Helpline on 0845 762 6579 or visit www.nch.org.uk/itok

1

Tom is 25, Efia is 15 and Ahmed is 17. If Tom has sex with either Efia or Ahmed is:
a. Tom breaking the law?
b. Efia or Ahmed breaking the law?
c. Both breaking the law?

2

Gita is 14. She goes to school in a tight T-shirt. A teacher comes up to her in the library and puts his hand on her breast. Is:
a. She to blame – she asked for it?
b. He at fault – he’s in charge of her and should have known better?
c. Nobody guilty – it happens?

3

Declan is 13 and he “touches up” 11-year-old Sean while babysitting. If someone finds out could:
a. Both of them get into trouble?
b. Declan be in trouble?
c. Sean be in trouble?

4

Wayne and Leona are both 15 and having sex together. If they went to a clinic, would the doctor:
a. Tell her parents?
b. Tell the police?
c. Give her birth control?

5

Tania is 16 and had sex with her last boyfriend. Her new guy puts pressure on her to have sex with him too. Do you think:
a. He has a right to expect it?
b. She has the right to refuse?
c. She shouldn’t be having sex anyway?

6

12-year-old Sammi discovers how good it feels to touch your own body and shows a friend how to do it. Is this:
a. Illegal and immoral?
b. Unnatural and abnormal?
c. A normal part of growing up?

8

John is 15. His best friend’s mother is giving him a come-on. He doesn’t feel happy but thinks he would be crazy not to take it up. Would sex with her be:
a. Every boy’s dream?
b. Illegal for him?
c. Illegal for her?

7

Rich’s Dad has gone to live with Leigh’s Mum. Rich and Leigh are both 12 but Leigh is two inches taller, much heavier and tougher. When Rich goes to visit, Leigh expects him to have sex with him. Is:
a. Leigh abusing Rich?
b. Are they just fooling around together?
c. Are they both misbehaving?

9

At a party 14-year-old Tracy is told by the most popular girls in her year that if she has sex with the boy she fancies she can join their gang. Is this:
a. A prime offer?
b. The usual entrance fee?
c. Abuse?

1 a)
An adult who has sex with an underage girl or boy is breaking the law. The young person is not to blame. It doesn't matter if the young person seemed to agree or even made the first move. The greater the age gap between them the more seriously it is seen as a crime.

2 b)
It doesn't matter what she did or how she looked. This is sexual assault. It's illegal for any adult to do this to an under 16. But more than that, teachers aren't allowed to sexually touch a student under the age of 18.

3 b)
Kids can sexually abuse too. With a couple of years age gap the older person is getting their kicks at the expense of the younger. Even if Declan believed Sean was enjoying it, he's in the wrong.

4 c)
Strictly speaking Wayne is breaking the law but Leona isn't. Unless she's abusing a younger person, the girl is not to blame in law. This is why under 16-year-olds can and should go for birth control help and advice if they are having sex. If there is no abuse going on, a doctor should keep the visit private between them.

5 b)
Having said yes once doesn't mean you say yes for all time. Certainly not with a new person. Whether she should be having sex is up to her. For him to insist is abusive.

6 c)
It's perfectly normal and natural for young people to want to explore their bodies and sometimes to share their discoveries. As long as Sammi was not forcing anything there is nothing abnormal happening here.

7 a)
Even if they're the same age, it can be abuse. If Leigh is getting his own way and Rich has no say, Leigh is abusing.

8 c)
This may seem like a fantasy come true. But it's just as much abuse as if John was Jane and it was a friend's Dad. It's a myth that boys are always up for it. This isn't two people sharing something nice. It's an older person getting what they want at a younger person's expense.

9 c)
Putting pressure on "friends" to do something is a form of bullying and abuse. It doesn't matter if Tracy fancies this boy. If she has sex to join the gang she's being used.

*The government is looking at the laws on sex offences at the moment and some of these may change.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What's legal and what's not? What's normal and what's not? Sex abuse is wrong because it hurts and harms people. It's also wrong because it's against the law. Some sexual contact between young people is normal and natural, and some is not. Do you know what's legal and what's not, what's normal and what's not, when it comes to sex?



Dear Suzie...

Our own agony aunt has the answers.

Q “Dear Suzie, my brother comes into my bedroom and touches me. I’m scared to tell my Mum. What if she won’t believe me?” **A**

Some adults find the idea of child sex abuse so awful that they don’t want to think about it. If you try to tell them what’s happening they may not listen. Your Mum may tell you you’re mistaken or making it up. Don’t take this personally. It’s not that she doesn’t believe you. What she may not want to believe is that your brother could do this. Don’t lose faith in yourself. You know you’re telling the truth. If she won’t listen, tell someone else and go on telling until you get some help.

Q “Dear Suzie, my grandad touched me but it only happened once. There’s no point in making a fuss, is there?” **A**

It may be a one-off. But most people who abuse do it again, to lots of children, for years. That’s why telling an adult and getting help is so important. It’s important for you. It’s also important to make sure the person who harmed you is stopped, and doesn’t go on to abuse others.

Q “Dear Suzie, this guy showed me a video and told me not to tell ’cos it’s a secret. I can’t grass on him, can I?” **A**

There are Good Secrets and Bad Secrets. A Good Secret is keeping quiet about something because it makes it more fun when it finally comes out – like a surprise party or a birthday present. “Don’t tell Jane but I’ve bought her a bike for Christmas” is a Good Secret. But if someone asks you to keep anything quiet forever, think twice. If it’s about something they’ve done to you or someone you know, or asked you to do to them, that’s a Bad Secret. Tell someone about it... at once.

Q “Dear Suzie, me and my mate are 14 and our boyfriends are 19. She says hers made her have sex and she feels awful. My boyfriend tries it on but I can’t believe he’d do that.” **A**

It might seem great to have an older boyfriend. But even a couple of years age gap means you’re coming from very different places. Someone of his age may expect sex, and not recognise you don’t. I think you’re playing with fire. My advice would be to leave it until you’re older to go out with someone that much older. Meanwhile, what her boyfriend did was very wrong – it’s against the law and could be seen as rape. Give her lots of support. Help her to speak to her parents or a teacher, and perhaps the Police.

Q “Dear Suzie, the person who made me have sex with them is the same sex as me. Will this make me gay? And I’ve also heard if you’ve been abused, you’ll become a sex abuser yourself.” **A**

No to both. It doesn’t mean you’re gay and it won’t make you gay, and it won’t make you into someone who abuses. Being abused can leave you feeling dirty, unloved and unlovable. You may feel angry and lose all belief in yourself. You may feel your body and your life are no longer your own. You may feel no-one cares, no-one listens. Worse still, you may think you’re worthless and people are right not to care or listen. Well, none of this is true. You need someone to listen and help you get over what has happened. Look at the advice on pages 9 and 10 on getting help and where to go, and ask for some support.

Q “Dear Suzie, my Mum makes such a fuss. She’s always on at me to come home early or tell her where I’m going to be.” **A**

You want to be all grown up and stand on your own two feet. Well, fine. But even grown ups have the manners to tell their family where they are and if they’re going to be late. Save your arguments for things you really want. Tell her **WHO** you’re going to be with, **WHERE** you’re going and **WHEN** you’ll be back. If you have a mobile, keep it on. Then, when you need a favour from her, she’ll be in the mood to give in without a fuss. Oh – and her knowing where you are may save your skin!

Q “Dear Suzie, I was a bit rough with my girlfriend one night. She got me hot for it and then said ‘no’. So then I was playing around with this stuff on the internet and I did some things with my little brother. That’s not abuse, is it?” **A**



What you did wasn’t what either of them wanted. So, yes, it was abuse. It was down to you, it was wrong and it was against the law. You need to face up to that. You or anyone who does this to another young person or a child should get some help so you don’t do it again. Have a look at pages 9 and 10.

Suzie is sorry she can't answer letters personally. She says "Look at page 10 for people who are there to help. Good luck".

Q "Dear Suzie,
my Dad does stuff when my Mum is out. I don't want him to go to prison, I just want it to stop. But a friend of mine told on her Stepdad and it got out of hand. Things happened she didn't want and the family was split up."

A

It can be difficult to tell. You may worry it can get out of your control. Talk it through with someone you trust. In some parts of the country the NSPCC runs Young People's Centres and provides counselling services in schools where you can talk, on your own terms, about things that are worrying you. To find out about these services and other forms of help contact the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline (see page 10). You can also phone ChildLine in confidence. Once you're being helped, the social workers should explain what will happen and tell you your rights. These include the right to complain if no-one seems to be listening to what you want. Your Dad needs to recognise what he's doing is wrong and to accept help to stop. He may have to leave home for a time, or you may need to go somewhere safe. But the important thing to remember is **it's not your fault**. Don't wait any longer – ask someone for help.

**"Dear Suzie,
I just want to tell people that asking an adult for help can work. My stepbrother was abusing me. I thought he was cool before and then he began to be strange and nasty. I hated it but I didn't know what to do. My Mum wouldn't listen. I finally got the nerve to tell a teacher and she was brilliant! They sent a social worker round and at first it was horrible. But in time my Mum and Stepdad understood and said they were sorry. I talked to a social worker and he was really nice so I stopped feeling bad about what happened. My stepbrother spent some time away. He's back now. He said he's sorry but he's not allowed to be alone with me so that's OK. Speaking out and asking for help was hard but it was the best thing I ever done."**

I'm really glad to hear it worked out for you. Speaking out is hard, especially when the person abusing you is someone in your own family. You may feel confused that you can love and hate the same person, at the same time. And you may be scared you'll get blamed. But as you found, all of you were better off in the end because you told.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE



"If a friend of mine was being abused, what could they do?"

If you or someone you know is being abused, you need to

- ➔ get some help **and**
- ➔ get it stopped.

You can tell the person who's abusing to stop. Say it's wrong and you don't like it. This might not work, especially if the person doing it is in charge of you. So you need to get help from an adult. Whatever the person who's abusing says, it's not your fault. You don't deserve it. Speak out. Choose someone you trust and tell them. Get their help. **YOU CAN GET IT STOPPED.**

"It's so hard to know what to do"

Being abused can leave you feeling really confused. If it's someone close to you, you may have mixed feelings about them and what they have done. You may feel shocked, angry, scared. You may also feel guilty and think you might be to blame. It's really hard talking about abuse and asking for help. But the help is there.

"But if you speak out to your Mum or Dad or a teacher, what if they just tell you off?"

Don't be put off asking for help. If the first person doesn't do something, just keep going until you find someone who does. You could ask:

- ➔ A parent or carer
- ➔ A teacher, youth worker or someone from your religion
- ➔ An adult you trust such as an aunt or uncle, grandparent, older brother or sister or a friend's parent
- ➔ A doctor, nurse or health visitor

"I keep wanting to talk to someone but I don't know what to say!"

If you find it hard saying the words, write it down. Explain what's happening and how you feel about it. Friends can often be a great help. If you have one you know will listen, start off by telling them. You can practise what to say. When you're ready, you can tell an adult you trust or give them what you've written.

"What happens next?"

When you find an adult who does listen they can take it from there. If you can't find an adult to help you, don't despair and don't give up. You can go directly to the people who will help you, listed overleaf. You could be sure that they will believe and that they will listen to you. You can phone most of them and check out what they'd do without having to give your name.

"What will they do for you?"

- ➔ Protect you and get the abuse stopped
- ➔ Help you get over what has happened
- ➔ Help you feel better about yourself
- ➔ Stop the person who abused harming anyone else

"What if I tell and can't stop what happens next?"

Once any of the people listed overleaf know abuse is happening, they have to do something. It can feel as if you lose control over the situation. If you're afraid of that happening, talk it over with the adults helping you. They should explain what is going to happen as it goes along. They should tell you your rights – including the right to complain if you feel no-one is listening to what you want. However painful it may seem, getting help will be a lot better than letting the abuse go on. There are so many people who **DO** want to help and who **CAN** help. All you have to do is **SPEAK OUT!** Turn to page 10 for where to go for help.

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Where to go for help

**Don't think you have to be alone.
Or that you or someone you know has to
put up with abuse. Talk to an adult you trust:**

- Someone in your family
- A family friend
- A teacher
- A friend's parent
- A school nurse
- A social worker or key worker if you have one
- A youth worker

Tell them what is happening.

You can also:

Call the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

**Talk to a health visitor or doctor or get in touch
with the police or social services.**

**You can't do it on your own – you and your trusted
adult may need help from someone trained to deal
with abuse.**

**If you can't talk to anyone you know, or you have
and nothing seems to be happening, you can go
direct to one of these:**



NSPCC CHILD PROTECTION HELPLINE

The contacts below are free, 24-hour services
that provide counselling, information and advice:

 Call us on: 0808 800 5000 or
textphone for deaf people: 0800 056 0566
or email help@nspcc.org.uk
Also visit www.nspcc.org.uk 

YOUR LOCAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Look in your local phone book
under "Social Services". Call the
office nearest to you and ask to
speak to someone about reporting a
child protection concern.

CHILDLINE

Free, 24-hour helpline for any young person in trouble or danger.
Lines can be busy but please keep trying and your call will be answered.

 Call 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk 

YOUR OWN DOCTOR

You can see your doctor, or a
nurse or health visitor, without
your parents or carers having to
know. Ring for an appointment
and if they ask why, say
it's private.

BROOK ADVISORY CENTRES

For advice and someone to talk to about birth control, pregnancy or relationships, for young people only.

 Call 020 7617 8000 (24-hour helpline); call 02890 328 866 for N.Ireland
or visit www.brook.org.uk 

YOUR LOCAL POLICE

Look in your local phone
book under "Police". Call the
station nearest to you and
tell them you want to talk
to someone about
reporting a child
protection concern.

THE SAMARITANS

For anyone in despair.

 Call 08457 909090 or visit www.samaritans.org.uk 

YOUTH ACCESS

Will put you in touch with local services that can offer information, advice and counselling.

 Call 020 8772 9900

The NSPCC offers a wide range of resources. For more information or to order further
copies of this magazine please send an A4 SAE (with two 1st class stamps) to:
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NSPCC National Centre, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
or email: infounit@nspcc.org.uk

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