


When Teenage Boys Have Been Sexually Abused



"Once I told
someone what
happened, I
knew I wasn't
alone anymore."

A Guide For Teenagers

This booklet answers these questions:

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Why this booklet?

Almost every day we read in the papers about children or teenagers who have been sexually abused. We also read about sex offenders who have been charged with sexual abuse, and possibly sent to jail for their crimes. When we think about an adult sexually abusing a young child, we may wonder if the adult is 'sick' or 'crazy' or 'perverted'.

What we know for sure is that a sex offender can do children and teenagers a great deal of emotional harm. The law recognizes the harm offenders do, and punishes them – usually with jail sentences.



If you've been sexually abused yourself, you'll recover from the abuse faster if you recognize that the offender is a wrongdoer, not just someone who is sick. If you call the offender 'sick', then you're making an excuse for the offender's behavior.

Every day teenage males and young men are *sexually abused*, *sexually harassed* and *sexually exploited*. If you're a typical teenager, it may be hard for you to admit that you've been a victim of sexual abuse. Or you may have been involved in a situation where it was hard to tell whether you were a victim or not. This booklet

will help you decide what really happened, and what to do about it.

This booklet will help you by:

- ① Defining sexual abuse.
- ② Defining sexual harassment and sexual exploitation.
- ③ Outlining the basic laws about sex between teenagers and between teenagers and adults.
- ④ Describing situations in which teenage boys are at risk of being sexually abused.
- ⑤ Describing the effects of sexual abuse.
- ⑥ Telling how you can get help – either for yourself or for a friend.

You can use this booklet by reading it yourself, reading it with a friend or trusted adult, or giving it to a friend who needs help.

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is an abuse of power. What this means is that someone with a lot of power uses this power over someone else in a sexual way. When someone who is older, stronger, or more experienced has forced sexual activity on you, you've been sexually abused.

You've also been sexually abused if an adult or teenager you admire and respect has talked you into sexual activity. Even if they didn't use force, there was still an abuse of power. Even if there was no sexual intercourse or sexual touching, sexual abuse could have occurred. If you've been forced to watch sexual activity or pornographic videotapes, for example, you've been sexually abused.

It's natural for some people to have more power than others; what's wrong is for any person to misuse that power.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is sexual attention you didn't want and didn't ask for. If a Grade 11 boy, for example, is told by a female teacher that he has 'nice buns' or that she would 'like to have sex'

with him, that is harassment. Sometimes we read about employers being charged with sexually harassing an employee. The stories are usually about a male employer and female employee, but it's important to recognize that older females and males also harass young males.

What is sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation means one person taking advantage of the sexuality and attractiveness of another person to make a personal gain or profit. If an adult made a video of you doing something sexual with someone else, and then showed the video to friends or sold it, that would be exploitation.

You can use this booklet by reading it yourself, reading it with a friend or trusted adult, or giving it to a friend who needs help.

Why do we have laws about sex?

There are laws about sexual activity written into *The Criminal Code of Canada* to protect people, especially young people, from exploitation and abuse. The laws recognize that some people are able to dominate and use others simply because they have more power. Some people are stronger, bigger, older, smarter or richer than others. Some may have positions of authority and trust, like parents, teachers or coaches. Some have weapons. Laws about sex are designed to protect less powerful people from more powerful people.

If you want to know your rights ask your parents or a counsellor to recommend a lawyer.

What laws should I know about?

Sexual Interference, Section 151. An adult must not touch any part of a child under age 14 for 'sexual purposes'.

Invitation to Sexual Touching, Section 152. An adult must not invite a child under the age of 14 to touch him/herself for 'sexual purposes'

Sexual Exploitation, Section 153. An older person who holds a special position of trust and responsibility, (for example, a teacher, coach, minister or doctor) must not touch any part of a young adult, aged 14–17 for "sexual purposes"; nor can that person invite a young person aged 14–17 to touch him/herself for sexual purposes.

Sexual Exploitation is like Sexual Interference and Invitation to Touching but the young person is older and the older person is in a position of trust. For example, a 23 year old camp counsellor having sexual relations with a 16 year old student could be charged under with Sexual Exploitation.

If an 18 year old and a 16 year old decide to have sexual relations on a date, that is perfectly legal as long as the older person was not looking after or was not responsible for the younger one in any way. The nature of the relationship is what decides whether sexual exploitation has taken place.

Anal Intercourse, Section 159. No two persons may engage in anal intercourse (putting the penis in another person's anus) if one of those persons is under 18, or if one person does not consent.

These laws are not made to stop sexual activity between teenagers. They are to protect teenagers from sexual exploitation by adults. They are also to protect all children under age 14 from sexual exploitation by both older teenagers and adults.

Some More Laws About Sex:

Sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, and wilfully transmitting sexual diseases are considered serious crimes.

Incest, Section 155, says that sexual intercourse with other family members is a crime.

Section 140 says that if you are over the age of 12 it is a crime to tell the police that a sexual offence took place if you know it did not.

What is consent?

When one person agrees to a sexual activity with another person, the law says that person has *given consent*, and the sexual activity is legal. However, there are a number of situations in which a person *cannot legally give consent*.

There is no consent when:

- ① One person is under 14 and the other more than two years older.
- ② One person is between 14 and 17 and the other is in a position of trust and authority.
- ③ One person is older than 17 and the other person uses authority, threats, lies or force to get consent.

The laws about Sexual Exploitation apply *whether the young person believes he/she has given consent or not*.

So There Are Laws About Sex! by Wendy Harvey and Thom McGuire is a book that explains what is legal and what isn't. It's available in Canada and it's easy to read. You can usually get it from a local sexual assault centre or from a sexual abuse counsellor. If you want to know your rights, ask your parents or a counsellor to recommend a lawyer. Each province has a Law Society which will give them the names of lawyers specializing in sexual matters.

Who is sexually abused?

Every year thousands of children and teenagers are sexually abused in Canada. Many sexual abuse counsellors believe there are as many boys abused as girls, even though girls report sexual abuse more frequently. Some sexual abuse counsellors think this is because older boys are often too proud or macho to admit that they have been sexually abused.

Age makes a difference. Younger boys are more likely to be sexually abused by family members and caretakers. Teenage males are more likely to be sexually abused by friendly authority figures such as teachers, coaches or youth leaders.

Who are the offenders?

Older teenage or adult women; Older teenage or adult men.

Jerry's story

When Jerry was 15 his father died and his mother took in boarders to help pay the bills. When Susan, who was 20, moved in as a boarder, she was new to town, looking for a job and she was lonely. She invited Jerry to come into her bedroom at night, and they were soon having sexual intercourse. This was Jerry's first sexual experience, and he felt quite proud of himself.

Susan became more and more demanding, and Jerry started to feel trapped. He was falling behind in his schoolwork, and wanted more time to play video games with his friends. When he told Susan he wanted more time to himself, she was angry and threatened to tell his mother. Jerry was already afraid his mother would find out, so he kept coming to Susan's bedroom.

Then Susan met a man her own age. As soon as she started that relationship she told Jerry that she couldn't be bothered spending any more time with a 'kid'.

Jerry was humiliated, and could hardly believe that she would be so cold to him all of a sudden. It shook his confidence, and for a long time Jerry was afraid to have any girlfriend. Even when he became an adult, he had difficulty keeping a girlfriend because he really didn't trust any women.

*The most important thing
we can say to teens, is
"Talk about it."*

Sexual abuse by females is often not reported or even seen as abusive. As a teenage boy, you're under strong social and peer pressure to 'score' sexually. You're often taught to believe that a sexual experience with an older female is a great way to learn about sex. Or you may have been taught that a 'real man' never passes up a sexual opportunity.

It would have been better for Jerry if he had been able to talk to a counsellor after the abuse had ended. But Jerry refused to admit he'd been sexually or emotionally abused. He felt that he wouldn't be a real man if he had to admit that. And anyway a lot of his friends believed that having sex with an adult woman was something to be proud of.

Many teenage boys have attitudes like Jerry's. These attitudes make it hard for you to admit you feel victimized or exploited by an older female. But if you can't express these feelings now, you may mistrust and resent all females when you are older.

If you have been sexually abused, you're not the only one.

It's much more common than you might think, and it happens to both boys and girls.

Michel's story

Michel was on the high school soccer team. One day after the team had won a game against another high school, the principal brought the team to his office. He congratulated them on an excellent game, especially Michel who had scored the winning goal. The principal asked him to stay behind for a few minutes after everyone else left. Then he told Michel that he had a great future as a soccer player, and he talked about how he had played soccer himself when he was in high school.

Michel was feeling proud of himself and didn't suspect what the principal really wanted. The principal gave Michel some whiskey to celebrate. He told Michel he was well-built and that he must have lots of girls



chasing him. Then he started rubbing Michel's penis until it was erect. The principal told him they had a special relationship, and that he could come to the office for a drink any time he wanted. Michel was confused when he left the principal's office. When the effects of the whiskey wore off, he felt ashamed: ashamed that he had accepted the whiskey, ashamed that he had an erection when the principal touched him, and ashamed that the principal considered him a friend. After all, some of the kids made rude jokes about the principal. Sometimes they even wrote graffiti about him on the school fence. What if someone found out about him and the principal

and wrote graffiti about both of them?

Then Michel had a terrible thought. Maybe the principal was a homosexual. Worse still, maybe he was a homosexual himself. Michel decided he had to keep the story from his father. Only yesterday he had heard his father making jokes about homosexuals. What if his father thought he was homosexual and made jokes about him? And anyway he couldn't go against the principal. Who would believe him?

Michel kept the secret for almost two years. But then the principal was charged with sexual abuse. It turned out that he had been sexually abusing a number of other students, and not just Michel. Michel was relieved, because he was finally able to tell a sexual abuse counsellor his own story. But when the principal went to jail, Michel felt sad as well. After all, he had been really supportive to the soccer team.

Michel was really confused. He couldn't understand how he could be so mad at the principal and so sad about losing him at the same time.

Teenage boys can also be sexually abused by men or by older teenagers. These sex offenders are usually *pedophiles*. Pedophiles are men or older teenagers who are sexually attracted to young boys. They are often in positions of trust like camp counsellors, teachers and ministers. They are frequently married, and may be father or step-father to some of the boys they are abusing. They are attracted to young teenage boys for the same reason they are attracted to younger children. They are sexually turned on by youth and by the fact that they can exercise power over their victims.

Many young men who are sexually abused by older males have the same confused feelings that Michel did. If you have been abused, you may be afraid that you'll grow up to be homosexual, especially if you were turned on sexually by the abuse as Michel was. You might be afraid of the power of the offender, and this may stop you from reporting the abuse. Then if the offender goes to jail as the principal did, you may feel grief from losing someone who had played an important part in your life. Worst of all you may be afraid someone will make fun of you, just as Michel was afraid his father would make fun of him if he found out.

Many people
know what it
feels like to
be abused and
can understand
when you're
honest with
your feelings.

Richard's story

Richard was in Grade 12 and counting the days to graduation. He was also working in a fast-food outlet so he could have money to buy clothes and to go out with his girlfriend. One day an older man in a Mercedes stopped by and told Richard that he was too smart to be working there, and that he could easily find him a job with big money after graduation.

Then he told Richard that he got his own start in life by having a 'sugar-daddy' to help him, and to return the favour would happily be a 'sugar-daddy' to Richard. Richard liked the man's clothes and car, and wanted to find out how he could be successful without working too hard.

The man invited Richard to a party where he met several other boys about his own age. Some he recognized from school. He also met an older man who owned the apartment. Richard took a quick look around and decided these people were rich. The two men were witty and they talked about art and poetry a lot. They had lots of liquor and they also brought out some cocaine.

Many teens
will tell a
grandparent, or
aunt, or uncle
because they
may have
more time
to listen.

The host came over to Richard, and asked him if he had ever "really explored his sexuality" and if his parents "respected his need for independence". Richard was excited by the liquor, the drugs and his host's conversation. The host invited Richard into his bedroom to see some art prints. Here he pulled Richard's pants off and performed oral sex on him.

The next day after the party, Richard realized he had been set up and felt ashamed. But he kept going to the parties. He kidded himself into believing that the sex parties were really okay because the party organizers were rich and cultured, and because other boys his own age were there too.

Gradually the other parts of Richard's life started falling apart. His grades dropped, he was fired from his job for being late and tired all the time, and he stopped talking to his parents. His grandmother sensed that something was wrong, and talked to him. Richard had always been able to tell her things he couldn't tell his parents, so he told her about the sex parties. His grandmother went to the police who raided one of the parties and arrested the organizers.

Sex offenders who are mainly attracted to older teenage boys are sometimes called 'chicken-hawks'. Chicken-hawks are attracted to older boys not just for the sex, but also because they need to have admirers. They try to impress their younger victims with how intelligent or talented or rich they are. They may want to be guides or mentors to their victims, and even help them begin a career.

People commonly believe that teenagers should be able to look after themselves sexually, and if they're sexually abused, it's probably their own fault. In fact, many older teenage males are sexually abused by older men through no fault of their own.

Like Michel, Richard sometimes thought that his experiences with a male adult would turn him into a homosexual. He became sexually aggressive with his girlfriend to prove to her (and himself) that he wasn't homosexual. Richard's grandmother and his girlfriend urged Richard to go to a sexual abuse counsellor to help him get over the sexual insecurity he felt.



"The counsellor kept reminding me that I wasn't responsible. After a while I knew it was true and I felt a lot better."

Why are teenagers targets for sex offenders?

In your teens you go through a lot of physical and emotional changes and you have a lot of needs.

Sex offenders take advantage of your needs in several ways:

① Experienced adults can exploit a male teenager's need to have mentors, successful adults who can be role-models. An adult who is an artist, for example, can easily exploit your dream to become an artist.

② In your teens you want to experience 'rites of passage', to move from adolescence into manhood. Having sexual experiences is probably the most powerful of the rites of passage. Both male and female offenders exploit your need to learn about sex.

③ As you mature, you need the love and approval of a male parent just as much as you did when you were younger. But fathers these days are busy or often absent altogether. The male offender may fill this gap.

④ Offenders play on your need to have someone acknowledge your sexuality, and your need to feel in charge of it. The host at the party Richard attended, for example, told him that he was experiencing sexual independence. Richard believed him.

⑤ Offenders often offer you drugs and alcohol. This plays on your need to try new things.

Why should I tell?

① Telling someone means you're not carrying the load all by yourself. You'll have people who care about you and are willing to help.

② Telling someone is the only way to make sure you get the right kind of counselling. You'll need this counselling to help overcome the fears and guilt feelings you'll experience even after the abuse has ended.

③ If you were sexually abused when you were younger, you may begin to sexually abuse younger children. This gives you a feeling of power over another person, just as your offender once had power over you. To get help you must tell someone what you have been doing to the younger children, and also admit that someone sexually abused you. This is the only way to stop yourself from hurting others.

④ You run the risk of contracting AIDS from the offender if he has forced you into high-risk sex. There are several ways of contracting AIDS, but anal intercourse without a condom is one of the riskiest.

What might keep me from telling?

① You may be embarrassed. You may think you've been stupid, or that others will think you're stupid. Intelligence has nothing to do with it. Offenders can convince even the smartest people. The offender is older than you, and probably has a lot of experience in seducing younger people.

② If you are being sexually abused along with other teenagers, you may feel pressure to stay and keep doing what they're doing. They'll pressure you because if you drop out of the group, it makes them look bad.

③ You may believe that by telling the police, social workers or your parents, that you're 'ratting' on the offender(s) and on other teenagers who are part of a group. The answer to that idea is that anyone who is endangering your mental and physical health doesn't deserve your protection.

How can I break free?

If you are being sexually abused by an adult or another teenager and are feeling trapped, the first step is to admit that you have a problem and need help. If the offender tricked you into believing that you were exercising free choice, you may have trouble admitting you were tricked.

Admitting you have been sexually abused takes courage. But your sense of self-esteem, both now and as an adult, depends on this vital first step.



Telling someone
means you're
not carrying
the load all
by yourself.

Who should I tell?

When a crime has been committed, tell the police. One possible difficulty is that adults don't always believe teenagers. If the officer who interviews you understands the problem, and has other information about the offender, the interview could go really well. If the officer believes that anything that happens to teenagers is their own fault, it could be harder. But you have to take that chance.

If you live in a city, try to find out the name of an officer who usually does sexual abuse interviews. If you live in a smaller place, you might not have that choice.

Your parents should be the best people to tell, but that depends on how well you get along with them. If you think one or both of them will understand and help, tell them. If you feel you can't count on them, tell another adult you trust. Whoever you tell must report the abuse to the police, so your parents will find out sooner or later.

If you have a special friend you can count on – either a boy or a girl – consider telling that person. You might feel embarrassed, and your friend may be shocked at first. But if he or she really cares about you, that friend could be your best help. Many people know what it feels like to be abused, and can empathize with you if you're honest with your feelings.

Consider telling one of the other important people in your life – a teacher, a relative, or a counsellor.

Once you've told the truth, it means you're not alone anymore. If you stick with the lie – i.e. that you're not really being sexually abused – you really are stuck. Telling the truth can make you feel lighter. It gives you the power to move ahead, make changes and get on with your life.

"I thought we'd just talk about the abuse, but my counsellor and I talk about video games, hockey – everything. It feels good."

Should I go for counselling?

Yes, you should. Telling the police or your parents that you have been sexually abused is an important step, but it's only the beginning. When you've been sexually abused as a teenager, you have a number of fears you must admit to and confront before you can be whole again. The best person to help you may be a trained sexual abuse counsellor. If there are no fully trained counsellors in your community, you should consider going to whatever adult has the best helping skills. This may be a social worker, a minister, or a lay counsellor. Lay counsellors are adults who don't have a university degree, but do have some training in counselling skills.

A counsellor will help you feel more comfortable with yourself.

What can a counsellor do?

A trained counsellor will be able to help you with these common fears:

① That you will become 'gay' or homosexual. If you have been sexually abused by a man, you may have the idea that this will make you homosexual. However, your sexual orientation is set early in life, and is not affected by whether or not you have had homosexual experiences or been sexually abused. If you do happen to be homosexual, a counsellor will help you understand and accept your sexual orientation. Being homosexual or heterosexual is a fact of nature, not a result of sexual abuse.

② That other people will think you're a wimp. Many teenage boys who have been sexually abused think they have to do something to prove their masculinity, like continually 'making it' with girls or getting into fights. A counsellor will help you feel more comfortable with yourself.

③ That you have contracted AIDS as a result of having been sexually abused. A counsellor will help you deal with your fears realistically.

④ That as a sexual abuse victim you are likely to become a sex offender yourself. Many sex offenders have been sexually abused, either as teenagers or as young children. However, most sexual abuse victims – male or female – do not become offenders. The more you can talk about your own sexual abuse in counselling, the less likely you are to abuse others.

⑤ That everyone knows about the abuse, that people are talking about you, and that people are secretly rejecting you. A sexual abuse counsellor will understand these fears which usually come up shortly before or after you report the abuse.

⑥ That the offender will try to get revenge after he gets out. They seldom do.

⑦ That reporting the abuse was a bad thing to do especially when the offender was someone you admired and respected. You may also be sad, because you've learned the hard way that people are sometimes not what they seem .



Experienced counsellors know all about these fears and they can help you overcome them. Counsellors can help you with drug and alcohol problems which can interfere with your recovery. They can also help you prepare for court if the offender is going on trial.

Most important, the counsellor can support you in taking responsibility for your recovery, starting with reporting the abuse. The counsellor can also help you remember that the abuse itself was the offender's fault, not yours.

Will I ever recover from sexual abuse?

The answer is absolutely "Yes!" There are thousands of men today who were sexually abused as young children or teenagers, and are leading productive, happy lives as adults. The two things that helped the most were having family support and good counselling.

Your memories, thoughts and feelings about the sexual abuse may stay with you in adult life, but the help you get through counselling now will give you power over the abuse. The choice you have to make is this: to allow the abuse to run your life – or to run your life in spite of the abuse.

Books mentioned

Harvey, Wendy, LL.B. and McGuire, Thom, R.S.W., *So, There Are Laws About Sex!*, Vancouver: Butterworths Canada Ltd., 1989.