

## If you were sexually abused, these ideas might help:

- Talking to someone you trust can help you feel less alone
- It can be a relief to accept that the abuse really happened and that it caused you great pain. This pain is a normal reaction to trauma
- Try to trust your memories and feelings
- Remember - it was not your fault - the person who hurt you is to blame
- You have lived through the abuse and survived

'Even though it may seem frightening to accept that you have been abused, it is an important step and there is support out there when you need it.'

'I struggled with depression for years. I have only recently understood how it is connected to the abuse I suffered as a child.'

'A big thing for me has been to learn to feel connected to the world again. For years I felt like a zombie, it was like I wasn't connected to my feelings or to other people.'

## There are services that can help

### In Victoria, Centres Against Sexual Assault can offer you:

- free counselling and support
- information about other understanding counsellors and groups
- information on your legal rights

Free call throughout Victoria,  
24 hours a day 1800 806 292  
TTY: (03) 9635 3620  
(or after hours TTY 9344 2744)

### The Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre has:

- A website with helpful information and contacts for services Australia wide [www.dvirc.org.au](http://www.dvirc.org.au)
- Information on support groups and services
- A library with books, articles and videos you can borrow

You can also phone us for information on other services (03) 9486 9866  
TTY (03) 9417 1255.



### Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre

292 Wellington St.,  
Collingwood, 3066

Phone: (03) 9486 9866

TTY: (03) 9417 1255

Fax (03) 9486 9744

Email: [dvirc@dvirc.org.au](mailto:dvirc@dvirc.org.au)

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# 'Now I know it wasn't my fault'

Information  
for adults  
sexually abused  
as children



'I didn't tell anyone at the time because I thought no-one would believe me.'

### **You are not alone**

It is against the law for adults to behave in a sexual way towards children. But this happens to many children, both girls and boys. It often involves someone you know and trust such as a parent, sibling or other family member, carer, babysitter, religious leader, teacher, or friend of the family.

Any form of sexual activity with a child by an adult or an older person, is abusive. This could include sexual touching, sexual acts, flashing, making sexual comments, being made to watch sexual acts or pornography.

### **If you remember this happening you may feel:**

- scared to tell anyone
- worried about what people will think or that they won't believe you
- sad because you lost a part of your childhood
- disbelief that it happened
- angry at the person who did this and because no-one protected you
- guilty because they tricked you into thinking you did something to make it happen
- ashamed at not being able to stop it
- confused about what happened or because it was someone you liked
- betrayed

'For many years I blamed myself for the abuse because I didn't stop it.'

'He told me he was doing it because he loved me'.

'I think my mother suspected what was happening, but she was too afraid of my step-father to do anything about it.'

### **It's OK to feel angry**

### **It's not your fault**

### **You were a child**

### **They knew it was wrong**

### **Child sexual abuse is a crime**

The trauma of sexual abuse shows up in different ways because everyone has their own way of coping. The effects may not be noticed for many years.

### **Many people who were abused say that they:**

- hate their body
- feel bad about themselves
- don't trust anyone or find intimacy in relationships difficult
- often 'space out'
- sometimes feel crazy 'without reason'
- hurt themselves
- force themselves to be busy and 'on the move' all the time
- feel angry at someone or angry at everyone
- have nightmares and flashbacks of the abuse

