If We Don’t End Child Sexual Abuse, This Is How It Can Affect A Person’s Adult Life

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The 1999 World Health Consultation on child sexual abuse stated that “Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to: — the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; — the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; — the exploitative use of children in pornographic performance and materials.”

Victims of sex crimes often develop behavioral problems, tendencies towards physical aggression, non-compliance, and/or self-destructive behavior which might lead to delinquency. Running away, vandalism, and even going into sex work (without any real understanding of it) are common outcomes too. Further evidence suggests that adult survivors are twice as likely to be arrested for crimes like violent abuse than the their non-abused counterparts.
What The Numbers Show

Children who experience child sexual abuse are nine times more likely to commit crimes than non-victims, research finds. And 50-70% of all women and a substantial number of men treated in psychiatric settings have histories of sexual or physical abuse or both (Carmen et al., 1984; Bryer et al., 1987; Craine et al., 1988).

Over 95% of perpetrators who sexually abuse female children and over 80% of those who abuse male children, are men. Most of these men went through childhood abuse themselves (Fergusson & Mullen, 1999). Numerous-studies have documented that the most violent criminals were physically or sexually abused as children (Groth, 1979; Seghorn et al., 1987).

A study of convicted killers reports 83.8% suffered severe physical and emotional abuse and 32.2% were sexually violated as children (Blake, 1995). Many survivors of child sexual abuse are counted among the orphaned, abandoned, and the destitute. They are counted among children of those compelled to do sex work. They are counted among migrants and refugees too.

Victims of child sexual abuse often face psychotic disorders, drug and alcohol dependency, or depression. They also suffer from post-traumatic symptoms which may turn into often criminal behaviours, as well as substance abuse, attempt to suicide, and aggression, among other things. Research shows that male survivors face the same symptoms as female survivors but act out in different ways. Where boys prefer to act out the trauma, girls tend to show symptoms of self-destructiveness and rage.

Abuse And Victimization

Research has shown that women with a history of child sexual abuse are more likely to experience trauma and victimization in adulthood. Many will suffer from sexual victimization as they tend to acquire a greater number of sexual partners.

A Cause For Female Delinquency

Survivors have a tendency to run away from home, particularly females. By running away, a girl may take to various kinds of delinquency, like stealing, and even snap decisions about going into sex work, which can lead to arrest and incarceration. Research suggests that at least half of all female delinquents have been sexually abused in childhood.
A Highway To Substance Abuse And Violent Crime

Victims of child abuse often become drug abusers. Research has shown that children who have experienced sexual assault, often fall prey to cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs to vent out their frustration. They show a greater probability—compared to non-abused children—to use intravenous drugs later in life.

A Way Forward

Children survivors of sexual assault often suffer from symptoms of physical aggression and may get arrested for committing crimes which are violent in nature.

They must also deal with feelings of shame and self-blame, and, as a result, they are hesitant to speak out about it, they do not receive counseling and are never able to recover from it.

It is important that child sexual abuse is recognized as a serious ailment in our society. It is important that various non-governmental organizations begin conducting various outreach programs in schools so that children know that child sexual abuse is a crime. It is important that all the states develop a National Child Traumatic Stress Network which will provide services for children who are traumatized by child sexual abuse so that they can heal and can reconcile back to the community. It is important that therapy is made available for survivors of child sexual abuse.

Each of these interventions destroys the internalized negative messages in the minds of the survivors, guardians and society at large.

As a part of the healing process victims of child sexual abuse, abused children should be introduced to the art of Writing Therapy. This kind of intervention helps them to vent out their frustrations through writing.

References


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