

Sibling Sexual Abuse



Myths and Misconceptions

✗ "It's just normal sibling curiosity."

✓ While mild curiosity is natural, SSA involves a clear power imbalance and harm.

✗ "If both siblings are minors, it's not really abuse."

✓ Abuse is defined by coercion, manipulation, and lack of consent, not age alone.

✗ "They'll grow out of it."

✓ Without intervention, abusive behaviours can escalate, causing lifelong damage.

✗ "Parents should handle this privately."

✓ Professional intervention is essential to stop the abuse and support those that have experienced it.

An often-overlooked and under-reported form of abuse that occurs between siblings.

Key Statistics

- Studies suggest that up to 50% of all child sexual abuse cases involve siblings.
- SSA is three to five times more common than abuse by a parent or caregiver.
- It is highly underreported, with many survivors not disclosing until adulthood.
- Both male and female siblings can be victims or perpetrate abusive behaviours.



Contributing factors

Several factors contribute to SSA, including:

- **Dysfunctional Family Dynamics:** Lack of supervision, neglect, or an abusive home environment.
- **Parental Absence:** Parents who are emotionally or physically unavailable.
- **Exposure to Sexual Content:** Access to inappropriate material or witnessing adult sexual behavior.
- **Lack of Education on Boundaries:** Limited understanding of personal space and consent.
- **Power Imbalance:** Older siblings exploiting their authority over younger ones.
- **History of Abuse:** A sibling who has experienced abuse themselves may repeat behaviours.

Impacts on Survivors

Sibling sexual abuse can have severe short-term and long-term effects, including:

- **Psychological Trauma:** Anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidal thoughts.
- **Difficulty with Relationships:** Trust issues and challenges forming healthy attachments.
- **Shame & Guilt:** Internalized blame, especially when family members dismiss or deny the abuse.
- **Self-Esteem Issues:** Feeling unworthy, damaged, or unlovable.
- **Increased Risk of Future Victimization:** Survivors are more vulnerable to further abuse.