

TAKING CONTROL

Sexual Violence



South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre
Registered charity no. 287762

SERICC Helpline: **01375 380609**

National helpline: **0808 802 9999**

Visit: www.sericc.org.uk

www.rapecrisis.org.uk



TAKING CONTROL SEXUAL VIOLENCE

What is sexual violence?

Sexual Violence is **any kind** of unwanted sexual attention, including child sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, group and ritual abuse, exploitation through pornography and prostitution, grooming and harassment - which can be spoken (such as calling or talking to you) or non spoken (such as by email, IM, chat rooms, gaming or mobiles SMS or picture/video text).

Tricks used by abusers

If someone wants to sexually abuse you, they often start by paying lots of attention to you and making you feel special. Online they will often use information they found out about your hobbies, friends and feelings from your posts.

In the beginning they may seem to understand you and care about you better than other people, but then their behaviour may start to make you feel uncomfortable or confused. They may start with gentle touching, and gradually increase the force and violence they use. They may threaten you to keep you from telling anyone. If you have kept what's been happening secret from your friends and family, it can be hard to know who to talk to or what to do. Try and talk to someone you can trust, or ring our telephone helpline for support.

Social networking sites

Because we are so used to using social networking sites, we sometimes forget that not everyone using the sites is being friendly. Abusers use the sites to find out things about you, like who your friends are or where you hang out, they can then use this information when they contact you.

Remember that people are not always who they say they are online, protect your privacy and think carefully about what you post. There is useful information on the web, have a look at www.thinkuknow.co.uk. If you decide to meet this person - talk to a friend or someone you trust before you go and ask yourself how do you know this person is who they say they are?

Remember:

People are not always who they say they are online.



Warning signals

So, what are the sorts of things to look out for? It can be really hard to know that someone is doing something wrong - especially if everyone else thinks they are a nice person, or they sometimes do nice things for you, or it is someone you thought you really liked. It can be even harder to be sure that they shouldn't be behaving this way if they have been doing it since you were very young. However, there are some warning signals which might tell you something is wrong. They include:

- ! The abuser telling you what they are doing is okay even if you feel strange or uncomfortable or hurt by it;
- ! If you feel embarrassed and don't want anyone to know what the abuser is doing or making you do;
- ! If the abuser tells you to keep it a secret - they might threaten to hurt you, a pet or member of your family, or tell you something awful will happen if you tell;
- ! If the abuser says you deserve what they do to you;
- ! If they offer gifts or treats in return for sexual activity;
- ! If they ask for pictures of you;
- ! If they tell you to look or move in a sexy way while they watch or film you;
- ! If they say things like "If you really loved me, you'd make me happy by doing that"; or
- ! If something is hurting you or making you feel uncomfortable.

How you might feel

Everyone responds differently to being hurt in this way, and people cope with it in different ways too. You might get nightmares or flashbacks, you might blame yourself for what the abuser did and withdraw or feel out of control, and you might have lots of confusing feelings including:

Anger • Numbness • Powerlessness • Shock
Fear • Loneliness • Shame • Guilt • Self Hatred
Worthlessness • Sadness • Grief • Anxiety • Frustration

Improve your self esteem

Survivors of sexual violence can feel worthless and undeserving of care and respect as a result of their experiences. It can be useful to write down a list of all your positive qualities and add them to these reminders:

- I have the right to be treated with respect
- I have the right to say "no" to sex I don't want
 - It's okay for me to change my mind
- No-one has the right to hurt me in any way
- It's okay to express my feelings, thoughts and opinions
- It's okay for me to make mistakes - I can learn from them

Remember:

There is no right or wrong way to react or feel - everyone is different.

Reporting sexual violence

The most important thing to remember is that **any** form of sexual violence is the fault of the abuser, not the victim - you are NOT to blame for what the abuser did to you. If you have been hurt, it is important to get help for yourself, whether it is just to be with someone you trust in a safe place, or to report what has happened. You do not have to report what has happened to the police in order to get medical care or counselling, but if you think you might want to report to the police at some point you can use a place called a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

What is a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)?

A Sexual Assault Referral Centre is a place where victims of any kind of sexual violence can ask for help. If you go to a SARC you can receive medical care and you can report to the police if you want to. Staff at the SARC can offer you help with things like emergency contraception and they can also refer you for counselling if you would like. Whatever you decide to do about reporting, remember that you can get help and support from SERICC.

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- 🌐 Visit the website:
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