

## What can I do to help my child now?

There are many things you can do to help your child to deal with the effects of the sexual abuse. Some important ones are:

- believe the child and praise them for telling
- understand the barriers that stop children telling
- allow them to have as much control as possible over the decisions that are made about them
- allow them to feel and express the whole range of feelings that they may be experiencing
- help them to feel safe and protect them from further abuse
- help them to find someone they can trust, someone they can talk to about what has happened

**Sexual Assault does affect children and families but with good support and counselling these effects can be lessened.**

### If you need someone to talk to call us.

We can offer:

- support information and referral
- separate counsellors for you and your child
- group programs
- community education



The Sexual Assault Support Service provides three main services to our community.

These are:

**Galileo House** provides counselling and support for children and young people who have been subjected to sexual abuse. We provide counselling and support to family members and other support people. This service also provides counselling and support to children under 13 years and their families for problem sexualised behaviour issues. 73 Federal St., North Hobart.

Open Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm.  
Please phone (03) 6231 0044 for appointments.

**The Sexual Assault Crisis Service** provides crisis counselling for all survivors as well as parents and carers. The crisis service also offers support with police statements, and coordinates medical and/or forensic examinations if required by victims of recent sexual assault.

24 hours 7 days a week (03) 6231 1817

**The Adult Counselling and Support Service** provides individual counselling and group programs for any survivors of sexual assault 18 years and older, also family members and support people.

The service is located at 95-97 Campbell St. Hobart and is open Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm. Please phone (03) 6231 1811 to make an appointment.

Email: [admin@sass.org.au](mailto:admin@sass.org.au)

Website: [www.sass.org.au](http://www.sass.org.au)

SASS is a free service funded through the Department of Health and Human Services and SAAP.



**I never thought  
this could  
happen to us**

**Information for parents/  
caregivers whose children  
have been sexually abused**

Every day, many parents/caregivers face the shocking reality that their child has been sexually abused. Most sexual abuse takes place within homes and is usually committed by someone who is trusted by the child.

If your child is abused you may experience a mixture of feelings such as:

- shock
- confusion
- disbelief
- numbness
- guilt
- betrayal
- fear
- hurt
- anger at yourself for not knowing, or not being able to stop it
- anger at the abuser
- anger at the child for not telling you
- worried about what other people will think



You may want to know exactly what happened, or you may not want to hear about it at all. You might find it difficult to listen if your child tries to talk about it.

Child sexual abuse can provoke many different reactions and feelings.

Remember:

- Children cannot stop abuse from happening
- Children have less power than abusers

## Why didn't I notice? Why didn't I know about it?

These are some of the questions that may go round and round in your mind after you find out about the abuse.

You might have noticed that things were not quite right at home or that your child has been acting a little differently. You may have noticed nothing at all or it may have been hard to put a name to what you felt. Some people talk about having a 'gut feeling' that something was wrong. At the time they usually found a reasonable explanation for what was happening. Looking back, it may be easy to see what was really going on **but** sexual abuse is the last thing we think will happen to our child.

**It's not your fault that you were not aware of it sooner.**

**It's not your fault that it happened.**

## Why did the abuser do it?

Many perpetrators will use the excuse:

- they were not receiving sexual satisfaction
- no one tried to stop them (blaming others)
- they could not control themselves

## **BUT**

Many people who sexually abuse children are having normal sexual relationships with their partners.

The reason people sexually abuse children is connected to their need to feel powerful and in control. It is not about sex.

They are in control of their behaviour and can choose not to abuse.

## But wasn't I responsible for it happening, too?

You are not responsible for the abuse, even if you were:

- trusting of your partner or the perpetrator
- sick or working long hours
- unhappy, frightened of the perpetrator or preoccupied at the time
- no longer interested in your partner sexually (if the abuser was your partner)

It is up to each individual adult to be responsible for his or her own behaviour. Most abusers take great care to carry out the abuse in secret. Often they arrange the situation so that no-one else will be present and no-one will find out what is happening. They often threaten children to not tell.



## Was it my child's fault?

Your child was not responsible for the sexual abuse, even if:

- they wanted to spend time with the abuser
- they didn't tell you about what was happening

## No-one ever asks to be sexually abused.

It is possible for children to care for the person who is abusing them but this doesn't mean that they want the abuse to happen or that they like it.