

## **Sexual Abuse Information Series II**

### **Credits**

VISAC Directors

**Naomi Ehren-Lis**

**Teri Nicholas**

Project Coordinator

**Leonard Terhoch**

Writers

**Louise Doyle**

**John Napier-Hemy**

Editors

**Joanne Broatch, English**

**Johanne Raynault, French**

Proofreader

**Merrill Fearon**

Design and layout

**Jager Design Inc.**

Printing

**Broadway Printers Limited**

Photographs

**Leaping Lizard Productions**

**First Light Associated**

**Photographers**

Image Manipulation

**Harry Bardal**

Special thanks to the staff at VISAC and Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada and the many others who gave their ideas and support.

The views expressed in this booklet do not necessarily reflect those of Health Canada.

The booklets are published by Vancouver-Richmond Incest and Sexual Abuse Centre (VISAC), a program of Family Services of Greater Vancouver. VISAC offers a wide range of services including treatment for sexually abused children and their families, one-to-one and group treatment for adult survivors and a victim support program.

Contents may not be commercially reproduced but any other reproduction, with acknowledgements, is encouraged.

All other rights are reserved.

© Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 1994

1616 West 7th Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1S5

ISBN 0-662-61002-4

Funding provided by

**Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada**

**This booklet answers these questions:**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Why this booklet?  | 2  |
| What is child sexual abuse?                                  | 3  |
| What does it mean to be a survivor of child sexual abuse?    | 4  |
| Can my partner recover from sexual abuse?                    | 4  |
| Do other partners react the way I am reacting?               | 6  |
| As the survivor's partner, what can I do to help?            | 8  |
| What about me? How can I look after my own needs?            | 10 |
| What if I am a survivor myself?                              | 12 |
| What is a partners' support group?                           | 13 |
| How can a partners' support group help me?                   | 13 |
| What if my partner and I are a same-sex couple?              | 14 |
| How will recovery affect our relationship?                   | 14 |
| How will recovery affect our family?                         | 15 |
| Is there life after recovery?                                | 16 |
| How do I order the Sexual Abuse Information Series booklets? | 18 |

## **Why this booklet?**

If you're in an intimate relationship with a person who was sexually abused as a child or teen, this booklet is for you. The information can help you whether you're male or female; whether you're in a gay, lesbian, or heterosexual relationship.

You and your partner are not alone. At least one in four women and one in six men were sexually abused as children. As adult survivors talk more openly about abuse and how it has affected them, their partners will come to understand how the abuse has affected the relationship.

Sexual abuse has affected your partner's entire emotional development. As a result, these aspects of a relationship can be particularly difficult for both of you:

**Trust.** A child experiences abuse as a betrayal of trust, especially if the abuser was a person she cared about. As a result, your partner might have difficulty in allowing herself to trust or in knowing who to trust .

**Power.** A child who is sexually abused feels powerless. As an adult, your partner might feel powerless at times and unable to assert herself. At other times she might try to control even the smallest detail so she'll feel safe and more powerful.

**Intimacy.** An abused child is too afraid to let anyone know her secret and too ashamed to let anyone get close. She learns how to behave as though everything is fine, while keeping her true thoughts and feelings hidden, even from herself. As an adult, that makes intimacy difficult.

**Sexuality.** Sexual abuse interferes with normal sexual development. Instead of growing up to experience her body as a source of pleasure, your partner probably experienced it as a source of pain. She may think of sex as a form of control rather than an expression of love. As a result, she might withdraw from sex. Or she might use sex as a way to get power or affection.

**Note: In this booklet we use the pronouns "she" and "her" to refer to the survivor, and "he" and "him" to refer to the abuser. We have done this for two reasons: first, for ease of reading; and second, because statistics show that more often women are the abused and men are the abusers. However, the information applies to partners and survivors of both sexes.**

Although we offer a brief definition, this booklet is not meant to explain child sexual abuse. Instead it focuses on the **effects of abuse** on your partner and on your relationship. We strongly encourage you to learn as much as you can about how people recover from sexual abuse. On page 17 in the Suggested Reading list we've listed other books you might find helpful.

In this booklet we also talk about how **you** might react during your partner's recovery. Sometimes it's hard not to get caught up in your partner's issues. Try to find support for yourself outside the relationship through a friend, counsellor, or support group. This will give you a chance to focus on your own feelings and thoughts.

*Try to find some support for yourself outside the relationship through a friend, counsellor or partner's support group - or all three.*

### **What is child sexual abuse?**

Child sexual abuse is the deliberate misuse of power over a child by an adult or an adolescent to gain sexual gratification. The abuser's power may come from being older, bigger or more sophisticated, or from being in a position of trust or authority over the child. The abuse may include inappropriate sexual remarks, fondling, and more violent assaults. Whether your partner's experience involved belittling remarks, uncomfortable sexualized interaction, one-time sexual touching, or long-term abuse, the important aspect is the way in which your partner experienced and reacted to it.

As a sexual abuse survivor, your partner has probably grown up assuming these things:

- ❶ You can't trust people who are supposed to love you.
- ❷ Attention and affection are almost always followed by sexual demands.
- ❸ You don't have control over your body.
- ❹ Other people's needs come ahead of your own.
- ❺ You're in danger if you're not in complete control.

These are the basic legacies of a sexual abuse experience and they can profoundly affect your partner's adult relationships.

## **What does it mean to be a survivor of child sexual abuse?**

Many people who were sexually victimized as children want to be referred to as “survivors” rather than victims. It reminds them that the abuse is over and they’ve survived the experience.

Often you’re unaware at the beginning of the relationship that your partner is a survivor of sexual abuse. Your partner might not have told you because she was afraid you would reject or not believe her. She might have felt too guilty and ashamed to talk about the abuse. She might have been telling herself the

abuse hadn’t affected her and wasn’t worth talking about. Or it could be that she had repressed her memories when she was a child and hadn’t begun to recover them. Whatever the reason, it’s something that happened in her life that she didn’t choose, but which now profoundly affects both of you.



### **Can my partner recover from sexual abuse?**

**YES!** Your partner can recover from sexual abuse although it can take a long time. Her recovery depends on the kind of abuse she experienced, as well as the kind of support she has. There’s no “right” length of time or “right” way to recover, but most survivors go through these stages:

#### **The Crisis Stage**

**“The beginning of this whole thing was really hard. Annie didn’t sleep well any more and she was having nightmares. After a while she seemed to resist going to bed so I went to bed alone. She’d stay up and read. Sometimes I’d wake up in the middle of the night alone and she’d be in the living room with all the lights on, wrapped up in a blanket.”**

Your partner might be thrown into a crisis when she starts to remember the abuse. Memories of the events might come in bits and pieces that won’t make sense to her. As she struggles with these new memories she might doubt the abuse happened

and worry that she's going crazy. But she isn't. Her mind is letting the new information in little by little so she won't be overwhelmed.

If your partner has always known about the abuse but has no feelings about it, she could experience a crisis when she starts to feel the emotional pain connected to the abuse. She might find herself crying without knowing why. She might suddenly be afraid to be alone.

The crisis stage is easier to go through if you understand what's happening. One way to find out is to call a sexual assault centre and talk to a counsellor. Another is to read one or more of the books we've listed on page 17 in the Suggested Reading list. They can explain more about what your partner's going through and will give you some ideas on how to handle it.

YES! YOUR PARTNER CAN RECOVER  
FROM SEXUAL ABUSE ALTHOUGH  
IT CAN TAKE A LONG TIME.

### The Middle Stage

"She kept digging into her past. I thought it would never stop. It was as if she had to go back to all the important times and people in her life and look at them again and again. She had to see what her childhood was really like; what her family was really like."

When your partner decides to deal with the abuse, she'll enter a stage of hard emotional work. She'll struggle to remember details of the abuse, to express her feelings about it, and to integrate the memories. This means she has to acknowledge how deeply she's been affected by the abuse. She'll experience tremendous emotional upheaval which will include grief and anger. However, she'll probably be relieved, too, when some of her feelings and behaviours start to make sense to her.

Although you might wish your partner would hurry and get on with her recovery, she can do it only when she's ready. If she's worried about whether she can do it, encourage her to talk to other survivors, or to read about them. If your partner is anxious about how it will affect your relationship, you could talk to a counsellor together about her concerns and about what you might do to help her.

Don't pressure your partner. The decisions along the way aren't easy and your partner must make them for her own reasons, not to please you. If you feel impatient or frustrated, talk to a counsellor or find a support group.

### **Resolution**

"We've had quite a time, but it's easier now. The abuse still comes up but it's not the centre of her life or mine. And what a relief that is!"

After much hard work, your partner will resolve many of the major issues. This doesn't mean she'll never think about the abuse again. It doesn't mean everything is sorted out. However, it does mean she'll be free to concentrate on what's happening in her life now. When problems related to the abuse do come up, she'll feel more confident about handling them.

"The abuse is no longer the centre of our life. And what a relief that is!"

As a partner you'll be involved and affected by every stage of the recovery process. Knowing how recovery works can help you support your partner without feeling overwhelmed.

### **Do other partners react the way I am reacting?**

"I just can't believe her big brother did all those things to her. I've played football with him. I've drunk beer with him, and we've swapped jokes. To me he just seems like a regular guy. Maybe somebody else did it, and she just imagines it was her brother."

**Disbelief** is a common reaction to a sexual abuse disclosure. If you're having a hard time believing your partner, the statistics on sexual abuse should convince you. The most recent studies show that one out of four women and one out of six men are survivors of sexual abuse. Because of the shame attached to sexual abuse, false allegations are extremely rare.

You may feel repelled by the thought that your partner has been sexually abused, and you may want to deny it. However, your partner has probably struggled to remember what she feels are shameful events in her life. Your belief will support her first step towards healing. Your denial, on the other hand, could increase her sense of shame.

“Okay, I believe it, but enough’s enough. If she would just put it aside, and get on with her life, we’d both be better off. You can’t undo the past, and crying over spilled milk only makes things worse. We can both go ahead from here and have a wonderful life together.”

**Minimizing** the abuse and its impact is tempting, but it doesn’t help. Remembering the abuse and telling you about it is only the first step towards recovery for your partner. Now she needs to re-experience her buried emotions and make sense of her conflicting feelings. To do this she’ll probably need help from a trained sexual abuse counsellor. She’ll need patience, understanding and love from you.

“Patience and understanding are one thing, but let’s get at the source of the problem and do something. Her brother has wrecked her life, and now he’s wrecking mine. It’s time for him to face a little reality, preferably in a dark alley.”

Your **anger at the offender** is understandable, but violence won’t help your partner. She needs to decide on her own course of action. While she was being abused she was powerless, and if you try to call the shots, you’re taking her power away again. However, there are constructive ways for you to channel your anger. One way is to support your partner in making her own decisions; another is to support her in preparing for a court case against the offender.

“Everything was going fine until she watched that TV show. She wasn’t even thinking about sexual abuse until she saw all those other women talking about it. Now she won’t leave the subject alone.”

You might feel **angry at your partner** for talking about the abuse, and then guilty for feeling angry. However, try to direct your anger where it belongs — towards the abuser.

Knowing  
how recovery  
works  
can help  
you support  
your partner  
without feeling  
overwhelmed.



"I knew something was wrong in our relationship, but I just couldn't figure it out. Sometimes she didn't want sex, and sometimes she wanted it all the time. It seems like we couldn't just relax and enjoy it. Then she started accusing me of having affairs if I even talked to another woman. And then she kept telling me I'd probably walk out on her. It was driving me crazy. Thank god she finally remembered the abuse. All that weird behaviour is starting to make sense to me now."

You might feel **relief** after your partner starts talking about her sexual abuse. It helps you understand behaviours that may have baffled you for years. Problems with sexuality, intimacy, and trust are often the result of childhood sexual abuse.



"I'm glad she's talking about it, and I'm glad I understand her behaviour a little better, but where does that leave me now? I don't have a degree in psychology, and I'm afraid something I do or say could make things worse for her. And what if I do something in bed that really upsets her?"

You might feel **inadequate** as the partner of a sexual abuse survivor. Once your partner is on the road to recovery, you could see changes in her personality and in her sexual response. Remind yourself you're not the cause of these changes, and you shouldn't take them personally.

"Why am I in so much pain? She looks like the same person, and I'm still in love with her, but she seems so different. It's like living with a stranger, and I really miss the old person. I know she's getting better, but where does that leave me?"

You might experience **grief** as you see your partner change. Remind yourself that her core personality is still the same. Experiencing her personal changes can be as exciting for you as it is for her. You have to trust and be patient with her healing process.

### **As the survivor's partner, what can I do to help?**

Any loving relationship needs the ongoing support and understanding of both partners. However, to be the partner of a survivor takes extra understanding and patience.

Here's what you can do to help:

**1 Believe** your partner and resist the temptation to minimize the abuse when the reality is ugly. Survivors of sexual abuse feel ashamed and confused when their perceptions are challenged.

**2 Listen** to your partner, and don't make moral judgments. If the abuser was a close relative, the survivor may have loving feelings for him as well as angry feelings. She needs to be able to form her own opinions without your attempts to influence them.

*To be the partner of a survivor takes extra understanding + patience.*

**3 Support** your partner's plans to deal with the abuse, but don't try to control what she does. Your partner has to decide such things as whether to go into counselling, whether to join a support group, and whether to take some kind of action against the abuser. Your task is to support these important decisions whatever they might be. If you try to interfere, she'll feel that once again someone is trying to control her life. If her family tries to influence what she does, you can help by supporting *her* decisions.

**4 Maintain a separate identity.** You'll help your partner if you focus on your own needs as well as hers. In any healthy relationship both partners make sure that their own needs are not sacrificed to the other's. Whether one or both partners are sexual abuse survivors, this basic principle still applies.

**5 Be a trusted friend.** This means being there for your partner when she wants to talk, providing company when she wants it, and respecting her privacy when she wants it. It means being patient, especially when she wants to repeat the story of her abuse. Survivors often need to re-tell their story several times before they feel free of it.

**6 Cooperate with your partner's requests around sexual activity.** She may want to avoid sexual activity or even ask for temporary sexual abstinence. If she makes this request, it's probably because sexual activity is triggering painful memories of sexual abuse. Temporary abstinence may seem difficult, but you can treat it as an opportunity to express your loving feelings with affectionate touching and non-sexual intimacy.

## **What about me? How can I look after my own needs?**

Being the partner of a sexual abuse survivor can be both an ordeal and a rewarding experience. Greg's story illustrates some of the things that can happen to you as your partner recovers:

### **Greg's story**

When Greg met his wife, Linda, she was in counselling because of sexual abuse by her grandfather. When they began a sexual relationship, Greg noticed that she resisted intimacy. She would always wear pyjamas to bed



and never let him see her naked. Greg thought this meant that she was modest. Linda owned a successful computer software business and Greg worked as a journeyman welder. He was flattered that a "professional" woman was interested in a "working-class" man like himself, and was even more flattered when she agreed to marry him.

Linda told Greg about her grandfather after they were married. Greg supported her counselling and made a lot of aggressive comments about her grandfather. He saw himself as a "white knight" who had rescued her from an evil family.

As Linda's counselling progressed, the relationship deteriorated. Instead of becoming more comfortable with her body, she still wore pyjamas to bed, and frequently resisted Greg's sexual overtures. When he persisted, she told him that he was "a sex fiend".

Then Linda accused Greg of attempting to control her, of being a chauvinist, and of flirting other women. Finally Greg lost patience. He told her to get on with her counselling so they could have a normal sex life. She accused him of emotional violence. In desperation Greg made an appointment to see a counsellor himself.

The counsellor asked Greg to look at some of the assumptions he had made about Linda. Greg found that Linda's "modesty" was, in fact, a reaction to being sexually abused by her grandfather. The counsellor also helped Greg separate what was true about Linda's accusations, from her perceptions of him that were distorted by the abuse. He had to acknowledge, for example,

that his aggressive “white knight” approach was chauvinistic and controlling, but that Linda’s perception of him as a “sex fiend” wasn’t valid.

The counsellor also helped Greg see that he had idealized Linda as a middle-class achiever who had done him a favour by marrying him, and that this was quite unrealistic. This in turn led Greg to see how his self-esteem had been stunted by his own upbringing. Eventually he was able to be more supportive of Linda because he had a better sense of his own self-worth.

He learned not to assume that he was automatically wrong when Linda attacked him. As Greg became more realistic about her, he gave up playing the “white knight”. When Linda felt more in control of her recovery, she stopped her verbal attacks. Greg also learned how to build greater non-sexual intimacy into their relationship. They both benefitted in many ways from Greg’s counselling.

*Respect your own boundaries  
and set limits if your partner's  
behaviour becomes abusive.*

Greg’s story contains several important principles for the partner of a survivor to learn and practise. They are:

**① Recognize and assert your own needs.** Respect your own boundaries and set limits if your partner’s behaviour becomes abusive. Placing what you see as your partner’s needs ahead of your own is called *co-dependency*. This stands in the way of her recovery and your own emotional well-being.

**② Look at the role you played in your own family.** If you were the one who “took care of everything” in your family, you run the risk of carrying that role into your relationship. It may feel good but it isn’t healthy.

**③ Make sure that you have support outside your relationship.** This support may be a counsellor, a friend, a support group, or all three.

**④ Try not to make assumptions** about your partner and yourself, and don’t make assumptions based on stereotypes. Ask questions to see whether your assumptions are true.

**⑤ Enjoy your relationship for what it really is,** and try not to make it conform to some idealized model. Your own family may have created a false picture of what family life is, and TV sitcoms are notorious for creating unrealistic expectations of what family life should be.

## What if I am a survivor myself?

### Jill's story

Both my parents drank a lot. As the oldest kid I took care of everyone in my family. I did what I was supposed to and never asked for anything. I felt invisible. After I finished school, I fell madly in love with Jack. No one had ever wanted me like he did. After a wonderful year together Jack began to remember being sexually abused as a child. I tried to help but I was angry. It seemed unfair that I'd finally found someone who loved me and now we had to deal with this big issue.

His family tried to be supportive but I was the only one he talked to about the abuse. Listening to him exhausted me and after six months, I was completely drained. Then my own sexual abuse memories started to surface.

I was frightened, knowing how much support Jack had needed. I wondered who was going to take care of me the way I was taking care of him. Certainly not my family! I felt like Humpty Dumpty, about to fall apart with no one to put me together again. I couldn't tell anyone: I kept it all inside. I was sick all the time. Finally I had to tell my doctor and she was great! She helped me get the support and counselling I needed, and I started feeling better right away.

I began to see how hard the last year had been. I had managed without asking for help, because that's what I had to do as a kid. No one ever cared about how I was doing and I thought that's how it always had to be. Now I know it isn't. I've had help from my doctor, my counsellor, my friends and my partner. It was a relief to tell Jack about it and he was shocked to realize I had the same needs he had. I guess we'd been going along almost like a parent and a child. Now I've learned how to ask for support and he's learned he has something to give me.

If your partner's recovery process has triggered memories of your own sexual abuse, you might have these reactions: *anger* that your partner's experience has triggered your memories; *fear* that you can't continue to support your partner in the same way; and *panic* at the thought of going through what your partner has gone through.

If you tell yourself your abuse was less serious and your needs can wait, you'll create a major problem in your relationship. Your partner's recovery could take a long time and you'll become angry and resentful if you put your own needs on hold. Remember, your first responsibility is to yourself. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't support your partner or the relationship.

Since each of you is both a survivor and the partner of a survivor, you'll have to take turns giving and receiving support. Also you'll both need support outside the relationship, from friends, a counsellor, or a support group.

### **What is a partners' support group?**

A partners' support group is made up of partners of adult survivors. Some partners' groups are led by professionals and others, called "self-help groups", are led by the participants themselves. Some are for male or female partners only, others are "co-ed". Most groups meet once a week and the purpose is to help each other through difficult times.

People will probably talk about what's gone on in the week and about their problems, frustrations and successes. Sometimes you'll share new information about sexual abuse. You don't have to talk if you don't want to, and everything that's said in the group is confidential.

To find out if there are partners' support groups in your community, contact a sexual assault or counselling centre.

### **How can a partners' support group help me?**

You'll have a chance to express your feelings and frustrations and to learn from what other people have to say. You'll be encouraged when you hear from group members who are further along in the process. The best part is that you don't have to worry about your partner's reactions, and you'll be with people who really understand what you're talking about.

To find out whether there are partners' groups in your community, contact a sexual assault centre or counselling centre. If there isn't a group, you could approach a counsellor to see if s/he would be willing to start one. Another option is to start a self-help group yourself. *Ghosts in the Bedroom*, which is included in the Suggested Reading list, includes a chapter on how to start a self-help group.

## **What if my partner and I are a same-sex couple?**

If you and your partner are both male or both female, the issues are similar, the recovery process is similar, and the principles for supporting your partner are the same. The pressures on your relationship are the same, providing your families and friends support your relationship in the first place. The stories in this booklet are about a female survivor with a male partner and a male survivor with a female partner. We've chosen them because these combinations occur more frequently in our society, not because they constitute some kind of "norm".



## **How will recovery affect our relationship?**

The recovery will profoundly affect your relationship. Once your partner remembers the abuse and then tries to remember the surrounding details, she may suffer from "flashbacks"; that is, sudden, unexpected and vivid memories. Flashbacks frequently occur during sexual activity, and may cause her to back away from sexual activities she had previously enjoyed. This happens because sexual activity often resembles some aspect of the abuse.

Your partner might resist your attempts at intimacy as well as your sexual overtures. If the sexual abuse was accompanied by intimacy, your partner could see attempted intimacy as a threat. Your partner might panic and try to leave the relationship, or might even start an affair with someone who will make no demands for intimacy.

Your partner might become irritable, and criticize your behaviour for no reason. If you're a man and the abuser was a man, you could become the object of a "transference"; that is, your partner will unconsciously see you as doing the same thing as the abuser.

Your partner might try to control your relationship to compensate for the lack of control she experienced while the abuse was taking place. The old adage "It has to get worse before it gets better" often applies to recovery from sexual abuse.

Recovery is often most painful in the beginning stages, and that's when your relationship will be most sorely tested. Recovering from sexual abuse can take years; however the human psyche has marvellous self-healing powers, and you could experience some of the rewards from your partner's recovery in a relatively short time.

Some of the potential rewards for the relationship are that you'll both be able to trust more, to experience and express feelings more, to have a renewed interest in sex, and to discover your true self or "inner child".

*All relationships have rocky periods. What makes the difference is whether you work on the problems together.*

### **How will recovery affect our family?**

#### **Parenting**

Your children might suffer at first from your partner's recovery. They will probably sense the stress, and wonder whether they're causing it. You can help your children by explaining to them that their mom/dad is upset by childhood memories that make them sad or angry, and those feelings sometimes make them impatient and cranky. Keep the explanation short and simple, and reassure them that they're not responsible for their parents' feelings.

Your partner could be under additional stress if, when she was abused, she was the same age as one of your children. Be aware of this possible connection, though you may not want to explain it to your children as it may be very confusing to them.

If your partner is putting a lot of effort into recovery, and is sometimes exhausted from it, you can help by taking on extra responsibility for the children. Plan to have fun with them while you give your partner time to rest.



## **Family**

Your partner's recovery will affect the way you relate to her family, especially if the abuser was a family member. If the family failed to protect her in the past, or disbelieves her now, they'll probably want her to keep quiet about it. In that case your task is to support her especially if they pressure her to retract the story.

If your partner was abused by a family member, probably other family members have been abused as well. When your partner discloses her sexual abuse to one family member, there could be a "snow-ball" effect with several family members disclosing their abuse as well. If your partner's grandfather was an abuser, for example, and the family secret is that he had abused several of his own children, your partner's disclosure could set the stage for disclosures by several family members, including her own parent.

Whether your partner tells her family about the abuse or not should be entirely her choice. It depends on a number of circumstances, but both of you should be aware of how families could react. Your job is to support your partner, whatever her choices may be, not to play avenging angel or rescuer.

You'll also have to decide whether or not to tell your own family about your partner's abuse. To make that choice, you'll have to ask your partner whether she wants you to talk about it. Then you'll have to think about the effect this will have on your family. If you think they'll support both you and your partner, tell them. If you think they'll respond in a negative way, don't. You don't owe your family or anyone else an explanation.

## **Is there life after recovery?**

YES! All relationships have rocky periods when one or both partners have problems. What makes a difference is whether you work on the problems together. The abuse might affect a relationship right from the start, even when you know nothing about it. When you find out about the abuse, then you know what you're dealing with and have a better chance of solving the problems as they come up.

The communication and support you develop while you do this will establish a sense of trust so that you'll be able to talk safely about even the most sensitive, vulnerable issues. That's a sound foundation for any relationship.

For life after recovery, remind yourself of these guidelines:

- ❶ Continue to communicate your love.
- ❷ Be caring in your actions.
- ❸ Be aware of your own needs and limits .
- ❹ Communicate your needs and limits to your partner.
- ❺ Spend time that's not related to sexual abuse with each other.
- ❻ Have fun and remember why you chose to be together in the first place.

For life after recovery, remind yourself to spend time together that's not related to sexual abuse. Have fun and remember why you chose to be together in the first place.

### **Suggested Reading**

Brodie, Faith. *When the Other Woman Is His Mother*. Tacoma, Wa.: Winged Eagle Press, 1992.

Davis, Laura. *Allies in Healing*. New York, New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

Engel, Beverly. *Partners In Recovery: How Mates, Lovers and Other Prosurvivors Can Learn to Support and Cope with Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse*. Los Angeles, California: Lowell House, 1991.

Gil, Eliana. *Outgrowing the Pain Together*. New York, New York: Dell, 1992.

Graber, Ken. *Ghosts in the Bedroom*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, 1991.

Hansen, Paul. *Survivors and Partners*. Longmont, Colorado: Heron Hill Publishing, 1991.

**This is one of five booklets in the  
Sexual Abuse Information Series II:**

When Girls Have Been Sexually Abused  
A Guide For Young Girls (Cat. # H72-21/101-1994)

When Males Have Been Sexually Abused  
A Guide For Adult Male Survivors (Cat. # H72-21/102-1994)

When Your Partner Has Been Sexually Abused  
A Guide For Partners (Cat. # H72-21/103-1994)

When Teenage Girls Have Been Sexually Abused  
A Guide For Teenagers (Cat. # H72-21/104-1994)

Sibling Sexual Abuse  
A Guide For Parents (Cat. # H72-21/105-1994)

**Sexual Abuse Information Series I  
includes the following booklets:**

Sexual Abuse – What Happens When You Tell  
A Guide For Children (Cat. # H72-21-67-1991)

When Teenage Boys Have Been Sexually Abused  
A Guide For Teenagers (Cat. # H72-21-68-1991)

When Boys Have Been Sexually Abused  
A Guide For Young Boys (Cat. # H72-21-69-1991)

Sexual Abuse Counselling  
A Guide For Children And Parents (Cat. # H72-21-70-1991)

When Children Act Out Sexually  
A Guide For Parents And Teachers (Cat. # H72-21-71-1991)

**The booklets are available from:**

**National Clearinghouse on Family Violence  
Health Canada**

**Health Promotion and Programs Branch  
Health Issues Division**

**Address Locator: 1918C2**

**18th Floor, Jeanne Mance Building, Tunney's Pasture  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4**

**Tel: (613) 957-2938 or 1-800-267-1291**

**Fax: (613) 941-8930**

**FaxLink: (613) 941-7285 or 1-888-267-1233**

**TTY: (613) 952-6396 or 1-800-561-5643**

**18 Internet Homepage: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nc-cn>**