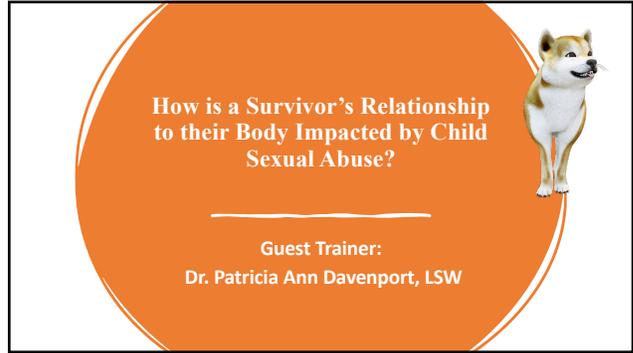




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2

Objectives

1. To share health related impacts that survivors may have as the result of the violence
2. Reviewing the definition of child abuse
3. Different ways an advocate can assist victims prior to their doctor's visits
4. To give an overview of health concerns survivors may have as a result of their victimization
5. To assist advocates with the understanding that medical care can be traumatizing for a survivor

3

The impact of child sexual abuse is devastating for survivors, but also affects those close to them, as well as the surrounding community. It is the root cause of many social and health issues and touches all of us in one way or another.

4

Definitions of childhood sexual abuse

- Childhood sexual abuse can be defined as any exposure to sexual acts imposed on children who inherently lack the emotional, maturational, and cognitive development to understand or to consent to such acts. These acts do not always involve sexual intercourse or physical force; rather, they involve manipulation and trickery. Authority and power enable the perpetrator to coerce the child into compliance. Characteristics and motivations of perpetrators of childhood sexual abuse vary: some may act out sexually to exert dominance over another individual; others may initiate the abuse for their own sexual gratification.
- Although specific legal definitions may vary among states, there is widespread agreement that abusive sexual contact can include breast and genital fondling, oral and anal sex, and vaginal intercourse. Definitions have been expanded to include noncontact events such as coercion to watch sexual acts or posing in child pornography.

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The Cost for Health Impact include:

- Emotional and mental health problems are often the first consequence and sign of child sexual abuse.
- Substance abuse problems are common, often beginning in childhood or adolescence and lasting into adulthood.
- Obesity and eating disorders are more common in women who have a history of child sexual abuse. The resulting health issues as a result of obesity includes diabetes and heart disease.

For statistics on the impact of child sexual abuse, visit our [statistics page](#).

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Child sex abuse survivors are five times more likely to be the victims of sexual assault later in life

Published: July 22, 2020 1.05am EDT

7

Break out discussion on Romantic Relationships for survivors



8

Breakout Discussions



- List 5 ways that Survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) often struggle with the immediate damage resulting from the abuse (in childhood) as well as the latent consequence of the abuse (in adulthood).
- List five ways that childhood abuse may affect an adult survivor in a relationship.

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Romantic Relationships Following Childhood Sexual Abuse

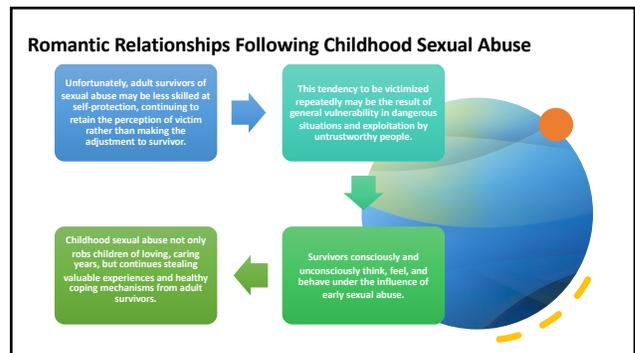
Survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) often struggle with the immediate damage resulting from the abuse (in childhood) as well as the latent consequence of the abuse (in adulthood). Survivors of childhood sexual abuse are faced with many emotional and psychological challenges as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Research suggests that the worldviews of adult survivors are often shaped by the sexual trauma enduring during childhood. The trauma of sexual abuse is multifaceted as it not only involves the sexual abuse but betrayal (if perpetrator was known to survivor prior to the abuse), the feeling of powerlessness (inability to protect oneself against the abuse), stigmatization (being a victim), and sexual trauma (overly sexualized or sexual dysfunctions).

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Romantic Relationships Following Childhood Sexual Abuse

- In addition to a distorted worldview, many adult survivors struggle with issues related to trust (trust of others as well as themselves) that can prevent or significantly impact their ability to engage in a healthy committed relationship.
- Even as adults, survivors of childhood sexual abuse are more likely to view relationships and lifes more difficult moments as insurmountable obstacles.
- Trauma experienced in early childhood can make survivors more vulnerable to cycles of self-defeating talk and actions. Personal perceptions about self-worth and authenticity of others is typically distorted in a negative way, leading to a dysfunctional cycle that becomes reinforced if left unchanged.

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**Survivor Support:
Healthcare Guide
for Adult
Survivors of Child
Sexual Abuse**

This is a resource created to give directly to adult survivors of child sexual abuse in your community. This resource offers information related to the following questions:

- Why is going to the doctor or nurse so hard for me?
- What can I do to make my nurse/doctor visits easier?
- How can I take care of myself after a medical appointment?

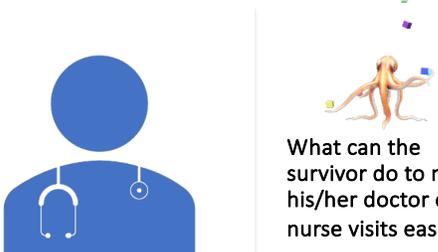
This information will be available at the end of the training.

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Why is going to my doctor or nurse so hard for me?

14



What can the survivor do to make his/her doctor or nurse visits easier?

15



Talk to them about being a survivor

Take charge of the visit

Ask someone to come with you

After your medical appointment

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Advocacy Skills: Helping Adult Survivors Address Health Issues

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Advocacy Skills: Helping Adult Survivors Address Health Issues

This resource addresses the ways that trauma in childhood can impact a survivor's lifelong experiences with physical health. You will learn:

- About the mind body connection
- The ways that trauma in childhood is connected to physical health
- What you as an advocate can do to help survivors



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How can trauma affect a survivor's health?

19

Healing Adult Survivors of Child Abuse

Fire-Brown | TEDxGreenville

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Four Key Ways

1. The abusive acts can result in physical injuries or delayed illnesses for the survivor. For example, the survivor might suffer broken bones, tissue tears or sexually transmitted infections as a result of the incidents. The circumstances surrounding the abuse often determines whether the survivor's injuries are cared for. Some adult survivors will be addressing the ramifications of those injuries and illnesses for the first time

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Four Key Ways

2. Traumatic events can lead a survivor to cope with the stress of the trauma in ways that take a toll on them physically. Oftentimes, overdoing fairly harmless behaviors that can then become a problem for the survivor. For example, over exercising to the point of causing injuries, overeating and in particular eating too many processed foods, drinking too much alcohol, or having risky sex are some of the ways survivors may cope that can give them a short-term relief. While these coping strategies help survivors deal with negative emotions in the moment, using these types of coping mechanisms long-term can cause negative health effects. For example, survivors can become dependent on these coping strategies and lose control of them. Then drinking alcohol to alleviate negative emotions can become a habit that is hard to break and leads to health issues. Over the course of years and decades these habits of coping with past trauma can cause chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, lung and breathing problems, diabetes and heart disease

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How Triggers affect rape survivors

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_uOQRqER8

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Four Key Ways

3. Trauma influences health because it can change a survivor's brain function. Over time, these changes can lead to biological changes due to chronic stress. Certain symptoms of PTSD actually cause changes in a survivor's brain and body. For the example, the act of constantly being on high alert and assessing for safety has been found to be connected to high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease. Flashbacks have also been found to be associated with heart disease. Survivors have also been found to have higher levels of cortisol, a hormone related to stress, which over the long term can lead to chronic health problems

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Four Key Ways

4. Adult survivors of child sexual abuse often find medical appointments and procedures invasive and triggering. As a result, they may avoid routine healthcare even though the abuse they suffered can result in lifelong impact on their health. Missing preventive care can increase the likelihood that the adult survivor will experience health issues and complications otherwise avoided through prevention. This can also extend to ignoring their bodies. This might mean that a survivor doesn't perform preventive monthly breast exams or blood pressure checks, or doesn't notice gastrointestinal problems

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What can Advocates do to help?

Advocacy programs exist to work in partnership with survivors as they find ways to heal both mind and body. There are a number of ways advocates can help adult survivors address health concerns. Healing the Body: Exploring Comprehensive Medical Advocacy is an in-depth discussion about how advocates, healthcare providers and survivors can partner to address long-term consequences of abuse and trauma. For example, advocates can

Normalize	Normalize a survivor's fear and stress around seeking medical care.
Provide	Provide information about the ways childhood trauma can make it difficult for survivors when seeking medical care.
Work	Work with survivors to consider their options and choices for how to address health concerns.
Help	Help survivors find holistic and supportive healthcare for treatment of health conditions. These would include dental care, gynecological, reproductive and long-term general health needs.

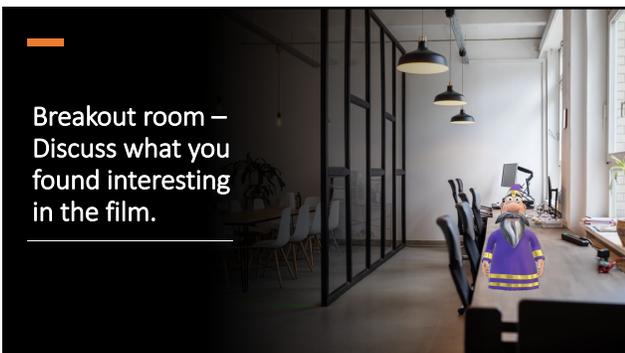
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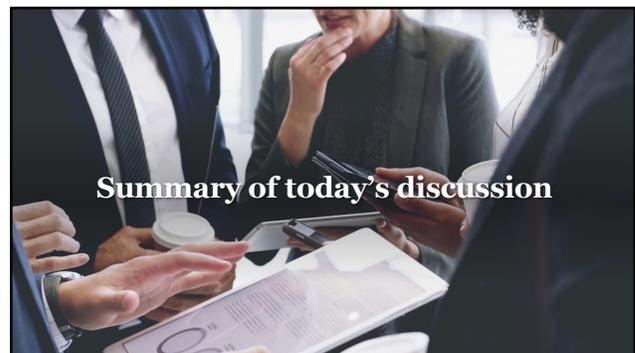
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Physical Symptoms of Childhood Sexual Abuse impact on its adult victims



Chronic pelvic pain	Gastrointestinal symptoms/distress	Musculoskeletal complaints
Obesity, eating disorders	Insomnia, sleep disorders	Pseudocyesis
Sexual dysfunction	Asthma, respiratory ailments	Addictions (alcohol addiction/ drug addiction)
Chronic headache	Chronic back pain	

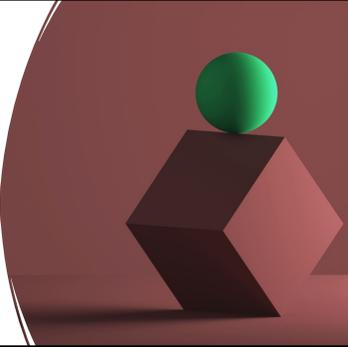
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Psychological and Behavioral Symptoms of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Depression and anxiety
Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms
Dissociative states
Repeated self-injury
Suicide attempts
Lying, stealing, truancy, running away
Poor contraceptive practices
Compulsive sexual behaviors
Sexual dysfunction
Somatizing disorders
Eating disorders
Poor adherence to medical recommendations
Intolerance of or constant search for intimacy
Expectation of early death

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Even without therapeutic intervention, some survivors maintain the outward appearance of being unaffected by their abuse. Most, however, experience pervasive and deleterious consequences.



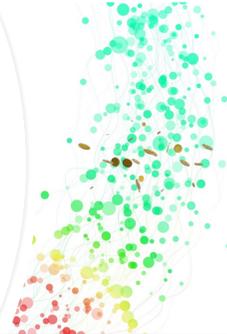
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The primary after-effects of childhood sexual abuse have been divided into seven distinct, but overlapping categories:



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Emotional reactions
Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
Self-perceptions
Physical and biomedical effects
Sexual effects
Interpersonal effects
Social functioning



- Sources for this section:
 - Administration for Children and Families
 - National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information
 - National Institutes of Health-National Library of Medicine
 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect

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Thank You!

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Resources:

- [The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse - Darkness to Light \(d2l.org\)](https://d2l.org/)
- [Child sex abuse survivors are five times more likely to be the victims of sexual assault later in life \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/)
- [Romantic Relationships Following Childhood Sexual Abuse \(psychcentral.com\)](https://psychcentral.com/)
- [Common Symptoms in Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse | HealthyPlace](https://www.healthypace.org/)

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