

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Because the task of describing the negative impact of severe childhood sexual abuse is so enormously complicated, the easiest and quickest way to describe all those levels of impact is to just list them out. I have tried to organize them into separate categories, but they definitely overlap each other in all reality.

You may think that since this is such a long list, I might be over-exaggerating the problems. Let me assure you, after working with victims of pornography and extreme sexual abuse for almost 20 years, most of the people I know have genuinely had most of the following issues at some point in time or another. Some of these issues exist for years at a time. Others exist for shorter periods of time. Of course, the degree of each issue will vary from person to person, but struggling with the majority of these issues is very, very common and to be expected.

The bottom-line is this: severe abuse leads to severe responses. Society can never ever under-estimate the price children continue to pay for the rest of their lives after being victims of crimes like pedophilia, child pornography and prostitution.

What I am presenting is not a list of symptoms. This is a list that describes the daily existence of these children and adults. These are the facts of what their lives are like after being so severely abused. Put yourself in their shoes and imagine your life with a small handful of these complications everyday for a week..... If only it was that easy for victims of severe sexual abuse. These issues are constant – daily, yearly, seemingly eternal -- struggles for them.

Severe childhood sexual abuse literally steals a lifetime of productivity, happiness, fulfillment, and peace from its victims.

Children that have been severely sexually abused and sold into the sex slave industry experience the following negative impacts:

FEAR

- Constant fear and no sense of safety or security anywhere or anytime
 - Constant fear about something, anything, always
 - No peace, no ability to relax, constant hypervigilance
 - Inappropriate or extreme responses to problems
 - Always waiting and anticipating the next bad thing that will happen
 - Very fatalistic thinking, preparing for doomsday – because bad stuff did happen so frequently, repeatedly, it was the one constant that could be expected -- so it's best to always be prepared for and expecting the worst
- Fear of public places, i.e.:
 - Grocery stores – makes shopping for food extremely difficult, or simply more expensive at the smaller corner stores
 - Shopping malls- way too stimulating and overwhelming
 - Churches-fears of judgment or demonization, or frankly, fears of being abused in the church or by a church member or church official
 - Schools
- Fear can make a person housebound for extended periods of time – this clearly creates enormous difficulties in living daily life

MISTRUST

- Not believing that anybody or anything can be trusted
- Severely damaged, or no sense of trust in God
- Severely damaged, or no sense of trust in people
- A belief that people are dispensable possessions
- A mentality that people are to be used or manipulated or controlled
- Extreme difficulty in forming and keeping interpersonal relationships due this intolerable level of mistrust
- Often a belief that animals and nature are the only living things that can be trusted for comfort and companionship

ONGOING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- Inability to keep themselves safe from violent behavior
- Inability to recognize violent behavior, since it has become “normal” to them
- Having no skills or resources available for helping them leave violent situations
- If they have been abused so much that they have developed amnesia for their own emotional “protection”, they are left with no awareness of how they are being abused in reality, thus allowing it to continue on a long-term basis
- Enslavement and “ownership” by pimps, pornography groups, powerful underground societies, etc. for years and years of their lives, with no

option of gaining freedom from such organizations, as their very lives are controlled and threatened by these organized groups. The death threats seem very, very real.

- Totally expected to donate their children from infancy on as the next generation available for pornographic crime
- Totally expected to recruit other children and teenagers to participate in pornography and prostitution
- Totally forced to actively participate and be guilty of committing sexual crimes upon other children, so as to ensure they won't tell proper authorities about the crimes committed upon them
- Having to leave and abandon their children with other caretakers in order to gain some distance from the perpetrators and to give their children a chance at safety

POOR COPING SKILLS

- Dysfunctional problem solving skills
- No awareness of what is or isn't normal
- Limp, lifeless, self-defeatist responses
- This sets up enormous, ongoing difficulties in resolving even the most simplest of tasks, yet they have already learned helplessness. Once they learn that they cannot do anything to get away from, stop, or change the abuse, they believe that they cannot do anything about anything.
- Hundreds of cognitive distortions – or incorrect cognitive belief systems – are present due to having been intensely taught by the sexual predators about how to think, i.e.:
 - “You are my possession and you can never ever leave or I'll kill you”
 - “You must cut or burn yourself excessively (or die) if you disobey me”
 - “You can never ever be “normal” because that is a despicable way of life”
 - “You are bad, evil, disgusting, and dirty so people can do whatever sexual acts that they want to you because you deserve that.”
 - “You like having sex for money – it's good for you.”
- Confronting and changing these ingrained belief systems is such a long, arduous process. It is literally an undoing of mind-control.

SELF DESTRUCTION

- Self harm – of all kinds, i.e.:
 - Cutting – wrists, arms, legs, stomachs, breasts, genitalia, face, absolutely anywhere
 - Burning – by cigarettes, fire,
 - Stabbing – legs, stomachs, vagina, abdomen
 - Hitting head, fists, breaking bones, kicking walls or bricks

- Slapping face, legs, private areas, anything anywhere
 - Mutilation of any sort in any place by any means
 - Scraping layers of skin off their entire face or genitalia
 - Strangulation, hangings
 - Over doses of drugs and alcohol
 - Jumping off of bridges, or throwing themselves in front of traffic
- When the body and mind has become numb from the excessive amount of trauma, the person gets a literal sense of release via chemical endorphins from the brain which serves to reinforce their training that self-harm is a good and necessary thing.

SUICIDE

- Suicidal ideation on a near daily basis
- Suicide attempts, starting early in childhood repeated through adulthood
- Suicides – loss of life, total loss of that human potential
- Life loses all value and meaning when you are a tortured sex slave

ADDICTIONS

- Addictions – of all kinds, i.e.:
 - Drugs
 - Alcohol
 - Eating disorders
 - Anorexia
 - Bulimia
 - Obesity
 - Extreme up's and down's in weight loss/gains
 - Sugar addiction – leading to very poor nutrition and mood swings
 - Cutting (and other forms of self harm)
 - Sexual addictions and sexual compulsive behaviors
- Being specifically enticed into addictions and becoming physically addicted totally sets the stage and is purposefully done by the sex slave owners. Once the child/teenager has been caught in the addictive cycle, they are very easily manipulated and controlled, and can be kept entangled in the sex business because they “need” their drugs

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Depression
 - Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year of inability to move or function, of inability to get out of bed or work, of inability to live
 - Inability to have interest or pleasure in activities – a life with no joy
 - Feelings of excessive guilt

- Loss of energy
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Bipolar (manic-depression)
 - (I have theories about how this disorder relates directly to childhood trauma, but they need to be further researched at this point in time.)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Flashbacks of distressing memories
 - Intense distress and physical reactions when exposed to events that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the trauma
 - Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
 - Loss of acquired developmental skills
 - Feeling detachment or estrangement from others
 - Irritability or outbursts of anger
 - Crying outbursts
 - Exaggerated startle response
- Paranoia
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Obsessive – Compulsive Disorder
- Extreme anxiety and panic
 - Frequent panic attacks
 - Feeling contaminated
 - Breathing difficulties, shortness of breath, smothering sensations
 - Trembling, twitching, and shaky feelings
 - Dizziness and lightheadedness
 - Incontinence or frequent urination
 - Diarrhea, loss of bowel control, bowel disorders
- Dissociative Identity Disorder
 - A literal shattering of the personality, self and self-image
 - Amnesia, which causes enormous dysfunction in daily life
 - Hours, days, weeks of “missing time” from their life, leaving the confused person with a very distorted view of reality, with gaps of time, and no basic sense of continuity about anything
 - Excessive time distortion – experiences continuing overlaps of different time periods and different ages at the same time
 - Going into trance states and fugue states
 - Amnesia allows for ongoing participation in violent sexual groups, illicit organizations, prostitution, recruiting, organized crime, underground organizations, etc. without their conscious awareness
- An endless list of other mental health disorders are possible

NO SELF ESTEEM

- Absolutely no self worth
- Absolutely no sense of ability or achievement or purpose
- An ever-present sense of being bad, worthless, useless, good for nothing, trash
- An absolute unawareness or disbelief that they can be normal, healthy, worthwhile, productive, valued, or loved
- Sense of having a short future – death is eminent
- Overwhelming belief they have nothing of value to offer, so they should die
- No expectation of having a career, marriage, children, or a long life

LESS EDUCATION

- Loss of schooling
 - Inability to attend school after sexual torture and injuries
 - Inability to concentrate or learn when their mind is so traumatized
 - Failing grades at school, not completing high school, not going to college
- Loss of formal education and career training
 - Too much mental distraction and dysfunction to be able to complete higher levels of education
- Loss of normal activities, like sports, girl scouts, piano lessons, science club

DESTROYED CAREERS

- Loss of career on a long-term basis
 - If fortunate enough to develop a career, most end up losing that career for years at a time due to some level of dysfunction or illness
- Loss of years and years of income and income potential
 - Forced into long-term poverty or underground employment
 - Thousands and thousands of dollars are lost from their income
- Years of disability and dysfunction
 - Financial costs to our countries and citizens to fund disability incomes

POOR MEDICAL AND THERAPEUTIC ASSISTANCE

- Excessive monies spent on medical bills, treatments, therapies, etc.
- Years of misdiagnosis, poor medical treatment, inappropriate therapies
- Hospitalizations after hospitalizations after hospitalizations – It's not uncommon at all for these people to have over psychiatric 30 hospitalizations in their lives.
- Costs to insurance, government medical funds, unpaid medical facilities, etc.

- Finding appropriate therapeutic help is extremely difficult, and too often non-existent, leaving the victim to suffer even longer
- Maintaining appropriate therapeutic help for the years it takes to overcome the depth of the damage is complicated and expensive. The treatment is heart-wrenching and grueling work. Treatment and therapy are required to improve their devastated quality of life, yet the treatment is very intense, and becomes, in essence, a full-time job.
- Medications are often needed for years to assist with stability
- Psychiatric medications, though helpful in many ways, have many disturbing side effects that are difficult to live with
- Psychiatric medications are not prescribed in an exact science type of way. The person will go through years of trial and error to find what works for them and when. Different doctors prescribe medications differently.

DAMAGED RELATIONSHIPS

- Extreme difficulties in maintaining personal relationships
- Repeatedly involved in dysfunctional or abusive relationships – relationships mirroring and repeating the dynamics of the original trauma bonds
- Fear of healthy relationships – feeling more comfortable and familiar with abusive relationships
- Involvement in gangs, or violent organizations, or sexual deviational groups just to have a place to “fit in”
- Years of painful isolation and loneliness
- Enormous difficulty in finding a partner that can or will stay with them on a long-term basis – therefore, many broken and short-term relationships only
- Excessive conflict in relationships and acquaintances
- No sense of family or ever being able to belong to a family
- “Family” becomes the street, the gang, the violent organization, etc.

SEXUAL PROBLEMS

- Sexual dysfunction
- Sexual indiscretions and promiscuity
- Continuing to prostitute themselves for years into adulthood
- Sexual deviations
- Combining sexual activity with near death experiences
- Continuing sexual perversion and sexual crimes on the next generation
- Teenage pregnancies
- Repeated unwanted pregnancies
- Abortions
- Inability to have a healthy or fulfilling sexual relationship with anybody
- Sets up long-term significant problems in marital relationships

LACK OF PARENTING SKILLS

- Very poor and highly dysfunctional parenting skills
- Passing on dysfunctional, troubling behavior to their children
- Blindness to knowing or recognizing when their own children are being abused
- Excessive fear can prevent them from adequately protecting their children from ongoing abuse, making the next generation also vulnerable to severe sexual abuse
- Inability to stay functional to provide adequate support for their abused children
- Raising children in poverty
- Traumatizing their children with their own self-harm, suicidal behavior, dysfunction, anger, sexual misconduct, etc.

INCREASED MEDICAL COMPLICATIONS

- Numerous medical complications or physical ailments from the years of internalized stress, anger, bodily harm, etc.
- Increased risk of stress related diseases
 - Colitis, high blood pressure, heart disease, gastro-intestinal problems
 - Frequent headaches
- Bizarre illnesses or medical conditions that are difficult to explain or diagnose
- Inability to thrive – failure to grow
- Brain development affected – people who are severely sexually abused in childhood have lifelong changes to their brains, specifically in the left hemisphere. The changes in their brain repeatedly affect their lives, causing increased difficulties in the way they think, react, feel, and behave.

DETACHMENT

- Numb bodies – a total inability to feel their own body
- An inability to feel physical pain – the ability to totally blank out physical sensations, even deep cuts and third degree burns
- An inability to feel emotions, i.e.:
 - unable to cry, be angry, feel love, or recognize fear
- Persistent or recurrent experiences of feeling detached from their own body
- Feeling like the outside world is unreal, or flat

POOR SELF-CARE

- Inability to do proper self-care, i.e.:
 - Inability to shower or bathe
 - Excessive self-cleanliness (to overcome deep feelings of being dirty)
 - Inability to brush their teeth (a fear of putting things in their mouth)
 - Inability to regularly complete daily tasks
 - Lack of proper medical care, dental care, ob/gyn appointments
- Inability to self-soothe and comfort themselves in times of crisis
- Great difficulties in completing daily household tasks resulting in a constant messes, repeated crises, and increased stress
- Repeated self-sabotage in every area of life
- Hatred of their bodies – purposefully repeated acts of self directed violence, self-sabotage, and utter disgust and hatred onto themselves

MENTAL TORMENT

- Extreme sensitivity to over stimulation of lights, noise, sound, activity
- Tormented by mental racing, thought bombardment, no internal peace
- Constant bombardment of abusive and vicious insults to themselves
- Visual or auditory hallucinations
- An inability to truly rest peacefully in their hears, minds, and souls

SLEEP COMPLICATIONS

- Sleep disorders
 - Excessive nightmares and distressing dreams about the trauma
 - Sleep paralysis
 - An inability to sleep – recurrent insomnia, sleep deprivation
 - Hypersomnia
 - Excessive nighttime activity (part of the brain change)
 - Constant fatigue
 - Excessive sleep – hours and hours and hours each day

ANGER ISSUES

- Tremendous anger
 - At self, others, strangers, God, society, “lucky” people, any people
- Homicidal rage
 - Specific plans for homicidal activity
- Threatening, dangerous, or abusive actions toward others
 - Assault charges
- Criminal troubles
- Extreme risk taking behavior
- Difficulties with impulse control
- Rebellious behavior
- Anti-social behavior
- Sociopathic behavior

LOSSES

- Health
- Family
- Education
- Career
- Financial independence
- Peace of mind
- Intellectual capabilities
- Self worth
- Spiritual security
- Emotional growth
- Years of time
- Maximizing their potential
- Fulfilling their dreams
- Personal integrity
- On and on and on it goes.....

There more I sit and think about all the areas of damage, the more I find, but I'll stop here just to get something to you. As you can see, the list is already very extensive, and this is just the outline. Explaining the details of each of these problems areas is a chapter in itself. I think, though, you can get the general idea that childhood sexual abuse, pornography, and prostitution lead to tremendous damage and life long consequences. The losses are immeasurable – the entirety of their human potential is destroyed for years upon years upon years. Recuperating from the losses and gaining healing are enormously slow and devastating processes as well.

I still sit and shake my head with the question you asked of me. How can one ever fully describe the extent of the damage done to their heart, mind, body, and soul?