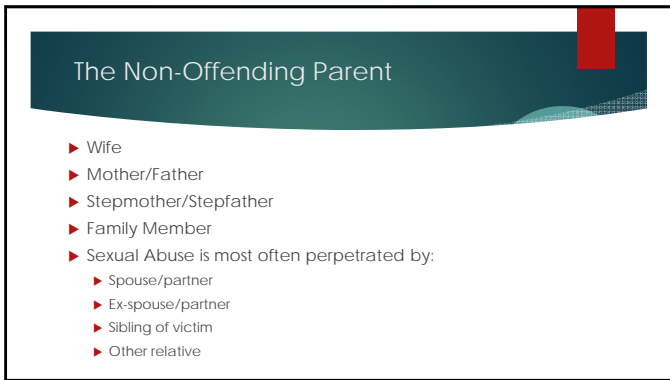


The Invisible Victim – The Non-Offending Parent Resources

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

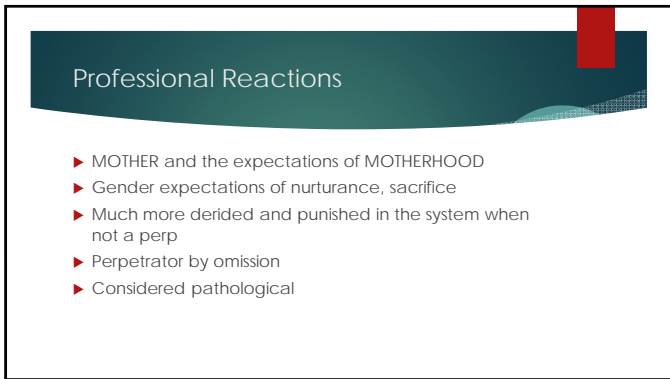
11:15 AM – 12:30 PM





The Non-Offending Parent

- ▶ Wife
- ▶ Mother/Father
- ▶ Stepmother/Stepfather
- ▶ Family Member
- ▶ Sexual Abuse is most often perpetrated by:
 - ▶ Spouse/partner
 - ▶ Ex-spouse/partner
 - ▶ Sibling of victim
 - ▶ Other relative



Professional Reactions

- ▶ MOTHER and the expectations of MOTHERHOOD
- ▶ Gender expectations of nurturance, sacrifice
- ▶ Much more derided and punished in the system when not a perp
- ▶ Perpetrator by omission
- ▶ Considered pathological

Myths

- ▶ "She had to know – how could you not know?"
- ▶ "Her child would have told her if she was a good mom"
- ▶ Colluded with the abuse
- ▶ Benefitted from the abuse
- ▶ Raised the children wrong
- ▶ Something wrong with her to be with a perp
- ▶ Caused the sexual abuse – didn't give enough sex

Parents believe myths too!

- ▶ I would be able to tell if someone was hurting my child.
- ▶ My child would tell me, we are close.
- ▶ I taught them always to tell about sexual abuse.
- ▶ She loves her brother! If he was hurting her, she would hate/fear him.
- ▶ They get along so well! He loves being with him.
- ▶ We have plenty of sex. He doesn't like children.
- ▶ I could tell if he was pervert. He is not like that.
- ▶ I (or the victim) is responsible – dress, behavior, sex, attention
- ▶ Something else is responsible – drinking, stress, childhood abuse, curiosity
- ▶ It was an accident/mistake/misunderstanding

Inaccurate information about offenders and victims

- ▶ Misinformation about sexual assault, sexual offenders, and victims persist
 - ▶ You can tell who a sex offender is
 - ▶ Sexually preoccupied
 - ▶ Weird, acts strange, is obvious, is mean
 - ▶ "He's really good with the kids – get along great!"
 - ▶ Sexual assault is about sex
 - ▶ Amount of sex
 - ▶ Interest in adults
 - ▶ You can tell when a child is being abused
 - ▶ Symptoms
 - ▶ Victim behavior – can't act normal, will tell, will hate the perp

Most non-offending parents believe . . . eventually

- ▶ Immediate shock and trauma
- ▶ Crisis in the family
- ▶ Disbelief and denial
- ▶ Anger and blame
- ▶ Grief and loss
- ▶ Depression, helplessness
- ▶ Real consequences

Disbelief and Denial

- ▶ Not only about the perp, but about the self
 - ▶ How could he do that?
 - ▶ How could I have married someone like that?
 - ▶ How did I not see it?
 - ▶ How could this be true?
 - ▶ How could I be such a bad judge of character?
 - ▶ Why didn't she tell me?
- ▶ What is wrong with me?
- ▶ Wasn't I attractive?
- ▶ Didn't he love me?
- ▶ What did I do wrong?
- ▶ But I never left them alone?

Confusion

- ▶ The experience of confusion drives "undesirable" behavior
 - ▶ Contact with the perpetrator
 - ▶ Explanations/answers
 - ▶ Reassurance
 - ▶ Perp solicits to control information
 - ▶ Questioning or doubting the victim
 - ▶ Interrogating/investigating
 - ▶ Disbelief or blame
 - ▶ Search for alternative explanations
 - ▶ Reliance on inappropriate information
 - ▶ Sex
 - ▶ Abuse

Grief and Loss

- ▶ Tremendous loss of
 - ▶ Love
 - ▶ Faith
 - ▶ Hope
 - ▶ Belief in self/judgment
 - ▶ Family
 - ▶ Idea of sexuality
 - ▶ Trust in self/perp/victim
 - ▶ Future
- ▶ May have to choose between children if one is a perp
- ▶ Income
- ▶ Security
- ▶ Home, caretaker
- ▶ Family integrity

Guilt/Shame/Embarrassment

- ▶ Failure to protect
- ▶ Failure to mother
- ▶ Admission of sexual abuse in family
- ▶ Questioned, investigated by professionals
- ▶ Blaming from family, society, professionals
- ▶ Mother responsible for family happiness, integrity
- ▶ May have to address own past or family history of abuse
- ▶ Domestic violence might be exposed

Offender Behavior

- ▶ Deny, deny, deny
- ▶ Isolate
- ▶ Offer alternative and acceptable explanations
- ▶ Rely on common experience – lying, retaliation, confusion
- ▶ Reiterate myths
 - ▶ When would I have time?
 - ▶ We have plenty of sex!
 - ▶ Why doesn't she hate me then?
 - ▶ I haven't touched other kids.
 - ▶ She wants her dad back.
 - ▶ I am not like that! You know me. I'm a nice guy.
 - ▶ I can't believe you would accuse me of something like that! That's sick!

Impact on Victim

- ▶ Not being believed can be more traumatic than the sexual abuse itself.
- ▶ Recantation is related to lack of support of non-offending parent.
- ▶ Victim can be scapegoated/blamed for consequences
- ▶ Non-offending parent can act as an agent for the perpetrator
- ▶ Perp may have offered more love/attention than non-offending parent

Tips

- ▶ Patience
- ▶ Check your biases
- ▶ Assess attitude about the perp –
 - ▶ Imagine your spouse doing something – would you go ask?
 - ▶ What happens when he admits?
 - ▶ Is the perp overvalued/more valuable than the victim?
 - ▶ Is the perp being perceived as a victim?
 - ▶ Is the victim being blamed?
 - ▶ Is the victim being disbelieved?
- ▶ Negative impact on the victim should result in no contact until therapy



www.vallierecounseling.com

Veronique N. Valliere, Psy.D.
nlvexpert@pta.net

PO Box 864
 Fogelsville, PA. 18051
 (610) 530-8392

Understanding, Investigating, and Intervening in
 Violence Against Women and Children
 Valliere & Counseling Associates, Inc.
 Bear Creek Ski Resort, Macungie, PA
 (610) 530-8392 or
