

PROTECTING EVERY CHILD



A GUIDE TO END CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT
INSTITUTE FOR GENDER AND CULTURE



#DEARSURVIVOR

**WE ARE SORRY
FOR EVERY TIME
YOU WERE
FORCED BACK
INTO SILENCE.**



Special Acknowledgement and Special Thank You.
Special thanks to the Just Beginnings Collaborative and the Frank and Ruth E Caruso
Foundation for making our toolkits possible.
See www.BlackWomensBlueprint.org Resouces

ABOUT BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT

SINCE 2008, BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT (BWB) HAS ORGANIZED AGAINST RACIAL AND GENDER INJUSTICE, WORKING INTER-GENERATIONALLY WITHIN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA TO PROTECT THE CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF BLACK COMMUNITIES; TO BUILD POLITICAL CAPACITY WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES; AND TO FACILITATE CULTURAL PRODUCTION/PRESERVATION AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES. OUT OF ITS HEADQUARTERS IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, BWB ALSO PROVIDES COMPREHENSIVE INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING SERVICES AND HEALING CIRCLES, GROUNDED IN LIBERATORY FRAMEWORKS AND INDIGENOUS PRACTICES, TO SURVIVORS OF STATE AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE.

ITS FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE, THE BLACK WOMEN'S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (BWTRC) ON RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT (2010 TO 2016), WAS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND TO IGNITE CIVIL SOCIETY IN EXAMINING THE HISTORY, CONTEXT, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON BLACK WOMEN, GIRLS, AND GENDER-FLUID PEOPLE. OVER THE LAST NINE YEARS, BWB HAS ESTABLISHED A MEANINGFUL TRACK RECORD OF WORKING IN COALITION TO PUSH FEDERAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY AGENDAS THAT SEEK TO ERADICATE THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN UNDER-RESOURCED COMMUNITIES WHILE ALSO SHIFTING THE HEARTS, MINDS, AND BEHAVIORS OF IMPACTED POPULATIONS.

BLACK WOMENS BLUEPRINT ENVISIONS A WORLD WHERE WOMEN AND GIRLS OF AFRICAN DESCENT ARE FULLY EMPOWERED AND WHERE GENDER, RACE AND OTHER DISPARITIES ARE ERASED. WE ARE COMMITTED TO MOBILIZING AND EMPOWERING LGBTQ+ FOLX AND CHILDREN TO CHALLENGE AND SHIFT THE NARRATIVES ABOUT THEIR LIVES IN THEIR OWN WORDS AND IN THEIR OWN VOICES, TO COUNTERING THE INCREASINGLY HOSTILE AND FEARFUL CLIMATE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL THROUGH STORYTELLING AND TESTIMONIAL AND TO SHIFTING THE PUBLIC WILL TOWARDS PROTECTING THE INTERESTS, RIGHTS, LIVELIHOODS, AND FULL HUMANITY OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE - SPECIFICALLY TRANSGENDER WOMEN OF COLOR - IN THE UNITED STATES

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INSTITUTE FOR GENDER & CULTURE

The Training Institute delivers prevention education and intervention curricula based on an understanding of the complex interplay between the individual, relational, social, cultural, environmental, historical and persistent systemic factors that influence the spectrum of discrimination, oppression and violence that impact people's lives. Using proven effective pedagogy and methodologies, the Institute works to equip organizations and institutions with a framework for the development of strategies that directly address civil and human rights measures, offers anti-oppression analysis and key points for intervention.

Our primary audience for this project is the caretakers of young children of African descent and more broadly, caretakers of any children, including parents, caregivers, daycare providers, school counselors, after school program directors, pediatricians, educators, childcare providers, and nursery aides. The initial target group for this project would draw upon our own membership in addition to tapping existing communities of Black caretakers around the country, including online.

The project is designed especially for culturally-specific media outlets and blogs aimed at Black parents and caretakers as a way of encouraging dialogue and participation about child sexual abuse prevention within that community.

The staff at Black Women's Blueprint focused on designing a youth program that would tackle child sexual abuse prevention through a reproductive justice framework. We designed a hands-on, Black feminist/womanist curriculum that combined our bystander intervention practices with our gender justice analysis through a culturally specific approach. To date, the Center for Disease Control has no mandated culturally specific primary prevention curriculum that challenges the structural and historical experiences that continue to disrupt the lives of Black women and girls with regard to child sexual abuse. Black Women's Blueprint's Child Sexual Abuse program was established in 2013 to shift attitudes and behaviors that enable sexual violence against minors in African-American and Black immigrant communities in New York City. The program provides a framework for addressing child sexual abuse prevention and intervention at the micro- and macro-level contexts of individual, relational, communal, and societal as sexual abuse occurs at home, at school, at church, the streets and elsewhere in communities.

BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT'S STANCE

Our prevention program has had current and past success in creating a safe space for disclosure, supportive services, children's services and advocacy, as well as fighting against the culture of silence that accompanies sexual abuse. Seven years ago, a study by the Black Women's Health Imperative found that 40% of Black girls in this country have experienced sexual abuse at the hands of black men before reaching the age of 18. In a truth and reconciliation survey conducted by BWB, we learned that in numbers closer to 60%, Black girls in this country have experienced some form of sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18, yet the vast majority of incidents go unreported.

According to the Child Molestation Prevention Institute, 1 in 5 little girls and at least 1 in 10 little boys are victims of a sexual abuser. Far more men than women are abusers. In fact, approximately one out of 20 men, and approximately one out of 3,300 women are sexual abusers of children. We also know that approximately 40% of Black and African American women nationally report coercive contact of a sexual nature before they even reach the age of 18. The lack of attention and awareness to these staggering statistics is indicative of the culture of silence about sexual violence in Black and African American communities. Such silence is intended to protect Black men against further discrimination and vilification in light of police violence against Black communities and historical disenfranchisement and marginalization. Young Black survivors often face having to negotiate seeking justice and healing for their experiences at the intersection of race, sexuality, class and gender while striving to adhere to codes of loyalty and protection of familial and community relationships.

Within African American and Black immigrant families, limited conversations with children about human sexuality can also send a more general message that sexuality is taboo, making it virtually impossible for victims of sexual abuse to feel comfortable disclosing their abuse, especially if the abuser is a member of the child's social network. There is also a tendency in these communities to point to systemic failures experienced by the harm-doer that immobilize communities and families from taking even the most basic steps to preventing child sexual abuse at the familial or communal levels.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and an adult – or another child – in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer.



Family members, friend circles, and communities often take advantage of their access to children.

No matter how a child's body is shaped or what their stage of physical development, it is not okay to sexualize children.



GROOMING

Grooming is the process in which an predator/abuser gains the trust of the child and their family with the intention to harm them sexually. This is a process that defuses 'suspicion' for the child and their family because (creating an emotional attachment with both entities that informs a trusted relationship) an emotionally and 'trusted' relationship is formed. Simply put it is an intentional attachment that is formed to gain the families trust to later violate that trust and violate the child.

Grooming is based in the establishing an emotional connection with the child and families to lower the child and families inhibitions and gains their trust.

The first time an predator/abuser touches a child most likely won't be sexual, touch is introduced in phases.

Befriending parents to have access to the child is particularly important because, once a relationship is developed with the parents/guardians/ adults in child life, it makes accusations down the line harder to 'believe' or 'defend', which works in the favor of the abuser.

Other grooming tactics include, suggesting ways to spend time alone with the child, suggesting to babysit, take out for the day, take to dinner and even sleepovers/spending the night.

GROOMING CAN VARY BUT VERY OFTEN INVOLVES:

Buying the target gifts, food, and other material things

Telling your child how special they are/ learning what they like and dislike really well

Touching your child in front of you in a non-sexual way, to usher the child into thinking touching is okay.

In some cases, pornography may be shown, starting conversation about sexual acts or telling dirty jokes with the intention to normalize the topic and behaviors with the child.

If someone is more interested in speaking to your child than speaking to you, then there is a problem.

PAY ATTENTION, BE OBSERVANT

Child Sexual Abuse prevention is stopping the abuse from happening before it happens or taking appropriate action to stop it from happening again. Prevention of child sexual abuse also means fighting against child sexual abuse across the range of violence in both at home and in public spaces. Prevention works best when parents and caretakers learn how to spot the signs, have all the facts, communicate with their children, and hold other people in the community accountable for their actions.

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS.

Children, depending on their developmental stage, may not have the ability to communicate to their parents what is happening to them but will often exhibit behavioral and physical signs instead. Knowing these signs can help stop sexual abuse from continuing.



THE SIGNS

BEHAVIORS YOU MAY SEE IN A CHILD OR ADOLESCENT

Nightmares or problems sleeping without explanation

Difficulty concentrating/spacing out (e.g. going away in their mind, daydreaming)

Change in eating (e.g. refuses to eat, drastically increases or decreases appetite, trouble swallowing)

Change in mood when around a certain person or in general (e.g. going from talkative and cheerful to quiet and withdrawn).

Asking not to be left alone with a certain adult, child, or caretaker

Leaves clues like notes or drawings or frightening images

A sudden reduce in self-confidence

SIGNS MORE TYPICAL IN YOUNGER CHILDREN

Has new words for private body parts that were not learned at home

Bathroom accidents unrelated to toilet training

Starts acting younger than their age (e.g. bed wetting, thumb sucking)

Resists removing cloths at bath time, bedtime, or toileting

Mimic adults like sexual behaviors

SIGNS MORE TYPICAL IN ADOLESCENTS

Inadequate personal hygiene (e.g. not showering/bathing, not brushing teeth)

Engaging in self-harming behavior (e.g. cutting, burning, self-mutilation)

Drug or alcohol abuse

Compulsive eating or dieting

Fear of intimacy

Depression/ anxiety

Running away from home

Engaging in sexual acts with anyone who gives them attention

Withdraw from family, friends, classmates, and activities they usually

ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BEING BLAMED FOR THEIR VULNERABILITY

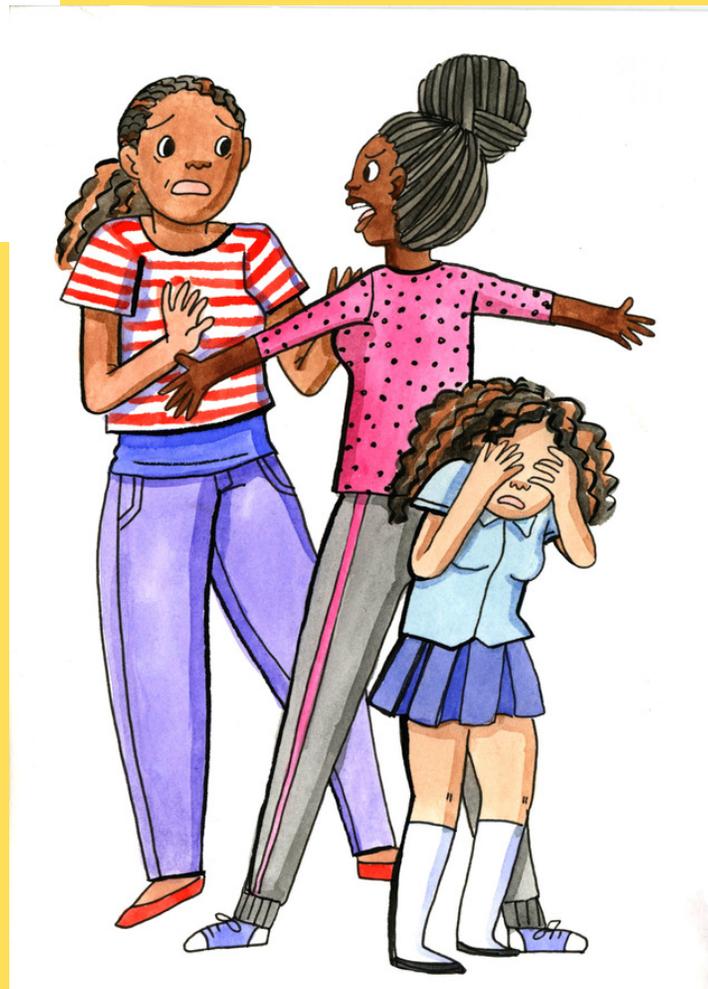


If you witness someone blaming a young person for the ways older individuals look at or interact with them...

You must step in and stand up for the child.

It is never okay to blame a child for an aggressor's inappropriate behavior.

We must protect children instead of blaming them.



IT'S MORE THAN JUST STREET HARASSMENT, THESE ARE CHILDREN.



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NO MATTER WHAT THEY'RE WEARING



It is never okay to sexualize children's bodies.

Unwanted staring, remarks, and touching are never okay. In order to protect our youth, older individuals must call-out inappropriate behavior by other members of the community.

Educate your friends about respect as well as boundaries.



BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS, DAYCARE, AND OTHER PUBLIC SPACES



It's good practice to establish a trusting relationship with your child so they will feel comfortable telling you if anything happens to them, and they won't feel alone.

- Ask them how their day was
- Be genuinely interested in what they have to say
- Genuinely listen to your children, what they have to say matters.



THE SAFETY OF ALL OUR CHILDREN IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY



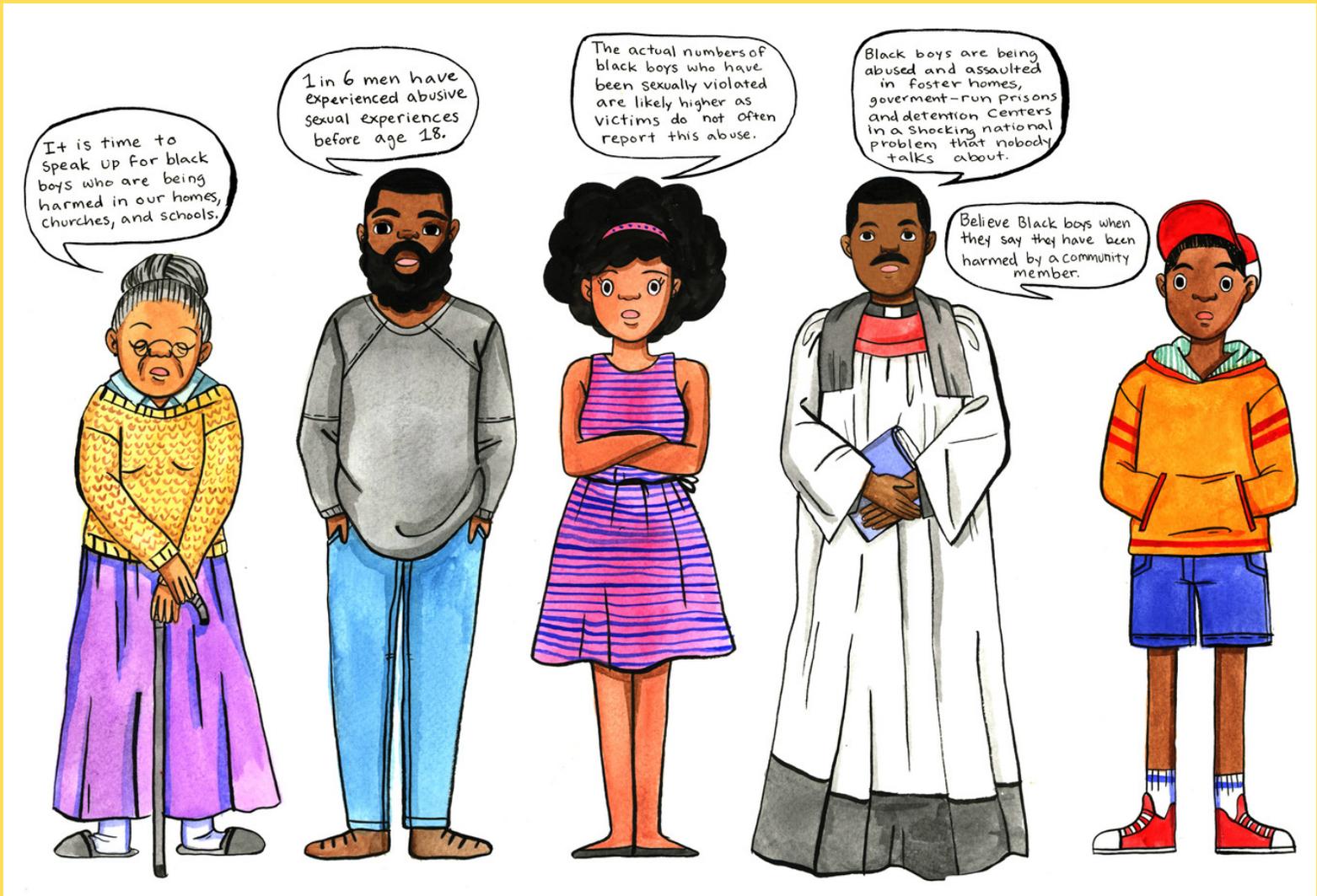
Prevent harm at school and public spaces by always believing children and comforting them when they are afraid or show signs of anxiety and discomfort.

Have open conversations with your child about what goes on at school, at sports practice, at their afterschool program, or anywhere they spend their time.

Children are impacted on a regular basis, and we are responsible for ensuring their safety.



WE CAN ALL BE INFORMED, WE CAN ALL DO OUR PART



Family members, Close Friends, Teacher, Pastors,
Preachers, Coaches, Celebrities, Women

**ANYONE CAN BE AN ABUSER.
ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM.**



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULTS

Model respect for your child's personal space and physical boundaries by asking permission or declaring what you are going to do before touching them. For example, before helping your child use the bathroom, tell them you are going to help them pull down their pants and/or help them wipe before immediately doing it without saying anything.

Establish a "Trusted Triangle" – a list of three adults that your child can go to whenever they need help or feel uncomfortable about a situation.

Clarify to children that strangers are not the only people who can harm them, even family members and people they know and like can be inappropriate and not follow the "rules" about touching children. Teach them to decide if a person is safe or unsafe based on the way someone makes them feel and not how they look or not how well they know the person.

In early childhood, parents can teach their children the name of the genitals, just as they teach their child names of other body parts. This teaches that the genitals, while private, are not so private that you can't talk about them.

Enroll your child in daycare and other programs that have a parent "open door" policy. Monitor and participate in activities whenever possible.

As children age, create an environment at home in which sexual topics can be discussed comfortably. Use the news or publicized reports of child sexual abuse to start discussions of safety, and reiterate that children should always tell their parent about anyone who is taking advantage of them sexually.

Teach children early and often that there are no secrets between children and their parents, and that they should feel comfortable talking with their parent about anything -- good or bad, fun or sad, easy or difficult. Reinforce that you will always believe them and that they can tell you anything. Reinforce that you will not punish them if they tell you that a stranger or someone you know touched them in a way that made them feel uncomfortable, scared, embarrassed, or sad.

Advocates recommend using concrete concepts like "red flag" and "green flag" to help children understand touch that is okay or "green" versus touch that is not okay or "red." Teach children that touches cause a range of feelings and ask them to give examples of different types of touches and the feelings it causes (i.e. sad touches, happy touches, embarrassing touches, scary touches).

PROTECTING EVERY CHILD

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

EVERY CHILD HAS RIGHTS. Share your child's way of communicating "no" with their care team; ask them to respect your child's autonomy. Children have the right to refuse hugs, kisses, or being placed on the laps of family friends or relatives. Cultural norms of obeying your elders or greetings that involve hugs or kisses make it harder for children to disclose abuse or set boundaries.

Learn what the expected sexual behaviors are in your child's age group. This knowledge will help you prepare for what your child needs to know as well as tell the difference between expected behaviors and behaviors that may be cause for concern.

Tell your child stories real or fiction of occurrences of sexual abuse with kid friendly language. This is an easy way to provide your child with sex education that comes from you.

Play "what if" games with children. For example, ask them "If you are outside playing and a neighbor says they want you to go to their house for cookies, what would you do?" You can use role-play scenarios to teach such lessons. If you are role-playing with your children, it is important to develop "what if" situations which are pertinent to your family. One of the purposes of "what if" games is to stress to children the importance of always getting a parent/caregiver's permission before going anywhere.

It is every child's right to grow up without becoming toxic. The notion that "boys will be boys" or "men will be men" is unacceptable. Teach our boys about rights. Teach all children about rights.



WHAT YOU CAN DO



Learning that your child has been sexually abused can be absolutely devastating.

Prevent further harm by seeking counseling and support and by talking to your children and the children in your communities.





You can also seek help as a preventative measure rather than a reaction to harm done.

YOU CAN ENSURE SAFETY AND PROTECTION



Some harm-doers visit target areas where children can be found, such as playgrounds, daycares, and school yards. Have you been paying attention to who shows up in child-friendly spaces? Be aware, and if you see something, say or do something.

Many harm-doers make a habit of visiting those places and return to them repeatedly. Be empowered to speak up or do something if you notice patterns in these spaces.



THERE ARE WAYS OF ENSURING SAFETY AND PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN



If you or someone you know has ever considered harming a child, or even witnessed a harm-doer repeatedly visit a place where children play and learn, say or do something.

- Reach out to them or call for help
- Use appropriate authorities when needed
- Refer the harm-doer to a progressive and anti-abuse clergy member or a mentor in the community
- Guide them to treatment centers where they can talk to someone
- Point them in the direction of resources that will stop the harm
- Prevent child sexual abuse before it happens

ELIMINATE THE HARM OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND PAST TRAUMA IN OUR LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

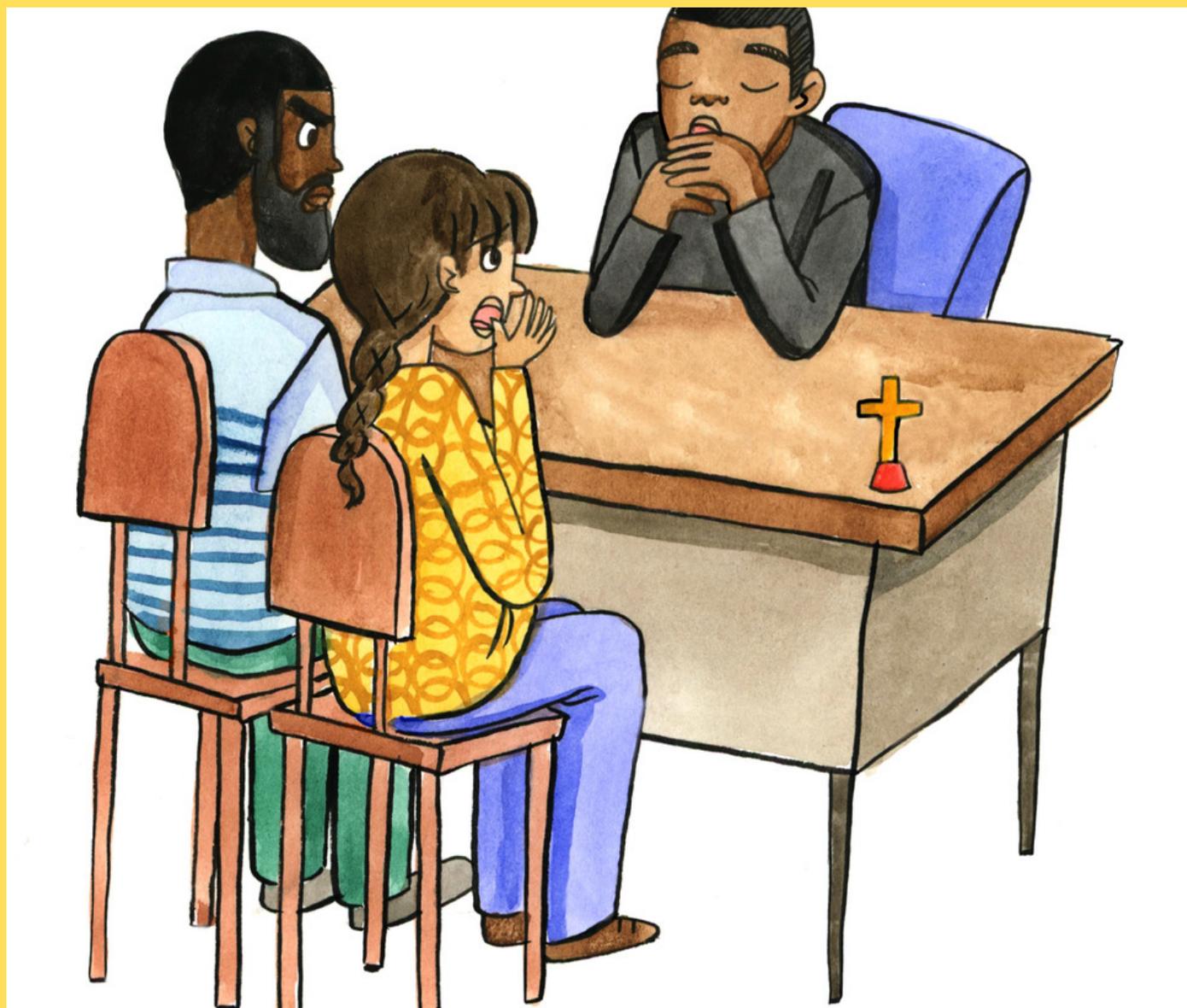


If someone tells you about sexual abuse, you can begin by believing and listening.



COMBATTING VICTIM-BLAMING

Even some of the most trusted members in our communities are not properly trained or equipped to handle action steps for child sexual assault and can say harmful and inappropriate comments.



WHAT A PARENT SHOULD NEVER HEAR: “Mr. and Mrs. Smith I hate to tell you this, but if your child was molested, it is no one’s fault but yours. You know that she is too sexually mature for her age, and you fail to discipline her time and time again.”

COMBATTING VICTIM-BLAMING



“I am sorry to hear this Mr. and Mrs. Smith... What Pastor said was absolutely inappropriate. We let the pastor know how this has made you feel so that it does not happen again.

Disciplining a child will not prevent them from being harmed. It is not okay to blame the child for any harm done. What we can do is educate and empower ourselves. We can also turn the light of truth on sexual abuse, do not allow it and hold harm-doers accountable.



TAKE A STAND AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE



ELIMINATING PAST HARM & TRAUMA



Any intervention should be survivor centered. Ask survivors what THEY need to heal or feel there has been justice. Be prepared for survivor responses that include contacting the police. Know that in many instances adults are mandated to report sexual abuse or assault to the appropriate authorities. children and youth have rights and children should be protected. BE INFORMED. Contact a culturally competent prevention group.



Harm-doers often never seek help for their wrong-doings and the trauma that they create. Speaking up can break the cycle and provide healing if we approach this on our own terms and in our own time.

ELIMINATING PAST HARM & TRAUMA



Harm-doers have multiple options in seeking help and guidance. It is important that as a community we hold space for the multitude of methods and acknowledge that one is not better than the other, but rather an opportunity for accountability or healing and repair. In destigmatizing therapy, whether individual or group, we as a community are providing a resource that aids the ending of child sexual abuse and working with an ethic of care.

Concretely, this ethic of care looks like creating more spaces, convening and community organizations that focus on Black sexual violence within the community; Black people across the gender spectrum partnering in community conversations to discuss the repercussions of rape and heal from harm-doing; openly discussing sexual violence in Church meetings and delivering preventative messages from the pulpit; providing holistic consent education and sex education within the church for Black children and Black youth so that they can articulate their experiences and hardships; training clergy on bystander intervention and modalities for addressing sexual violence within Black spaces; providing materials to the community and making resources adequately accessible.

We must also look into our own lives and see the harm-doers there. We should all seek to understand the ways we've actively perpetuated violence, or willfully remain complicit in the harm of others. Our silence is where the hurt is, and we must speak up and confess our truths to ourselves. This truth-telling requires no public shaming, but necessitates the inner-work of healing cyphers, accountability, writing circles, community holding community, truth supporting truth.



MYTHS AND FACTS AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Myth #1. My child will tell me if abuse has occurred.

In many cases there are barriers that get in the way of your child reporting their abuse. These barriers may be fear, shame, self-blame, trauma, their age, or the relationship of the harm-doer to the child. Children also need time to process the abuse, which means that many children who do speak up will only do so after some time has passed. It is estimated that 73% of children will not tell anyone about the abuse for one year and 45% will not tell for at least 5 years. <https://www.raccfm.com/files/child%20sexual%20abuse.pdf>

Myth #2. Children who have experienced sexual abuse will show physical signs.

Physical warning signs of sexual abuse are extremely rare. Be sure to look for behavioral and emotional signs listed in the "Signs" section above. At the extreme end of the spectrum, sexual abuse includes sexual intercourse or its deviations. Yet all offenses that involve sexually touching a child, as well as non-touching offenses (making a child watch pornography or live sexual acts) and sexual exploitation, are just as harmful and devastating to a child's well-being and still counts as sexual violence against children.

Myth #3. Sexual abuse only happens to girls.

Child sexual abuse can happen to anyone including boys. 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). Even though it happens to boys, it is not often talked about. About 22% to 29% of all child sexual abuse victims are male (Putnam, 2003 p.270). Outside of these statistics, there are even more male survivors of sexual abuse. Black boys are less likely to report abuse because of masculine stereotypes that demand that boys be fearless and dominant. Believing these stereotypes can lead to victim blaming Black boys when sexual abuse does happen, making Black boys feel even more shame and self blame, which makes it harder for them to report their abuse. <http://www.apa.org/pi/about/newsletter/2014/11/child-sexual-abuse.aspx>



MYTHS AND FACTS AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Myth #4. Harm-doers are only strangers

The majority of harm-doers are people who the child knows including, parents, teachers, ministers, coaches, and relatives. Harm-doers are typically someone close to the child. This is one reason why reporting rates are so low; children are afraid of getting the person in trouble or the child may be stuck within the "grooming process". The "grooming process" is a commonly used term to describe when a harm-doer engages in deliberate and purposeful actions to build trust and an emotional connection with a survivor. It is a way of bringing down their guard by befriending them and preying upon their vulnerabilities. It includes subtle, gradual and escalating actions such as giving compliments, buying gifts, buying food, offering shelter, promising a better life or fulfilling any unmet emotional /physical needs.

Myth #5. Children can provoke sexual abuse through displaying seductive behaviors.

Children are NEVER to blame and are NEVER deserving of sexual abuse. No matter how the child acts or what clothes they wear, no one has the right to violate them. ALL responsibility for the abuse lies with the harm-doer; it is never a child's fault. Sexual abuse can exploit children who may not be developmentally capable of understanding or resisting the abuse.

<https://www.raccfm.com/files/child%20sexual%20abuse.pdf>

Myth #6. Harm-doers are only men and gay men are more likely to sexually abuse children than heterosexual men.

Although the majority of harm-doers are men, women and other children/teens can sexually abuse children. Despite a common myth, gay men are not more likely to sexually abuse children than heterosexual men are. About 95% of all men who have sexually abused boys reported they were heterosexual.

Myth #7. My Son is now gay because he was sexually abused.

Child sexual abuse does not determine whether a child is gay or straight. A boy who was sexually abused by a man is not necessarily gay now, nor was he sexually abused because he was gay. Just because a boy may get aroused during sexual abuse that does not mean he liked it or wanted it. That's just how the male body sometimes works. It is important to remember that the sexual abuse happened because of the harm-doer's failure to develop healthy sexual relationships and it has nothing to do with the sexual orientation of a child.

<https://in6.org/family-and-friends/myths/>

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS



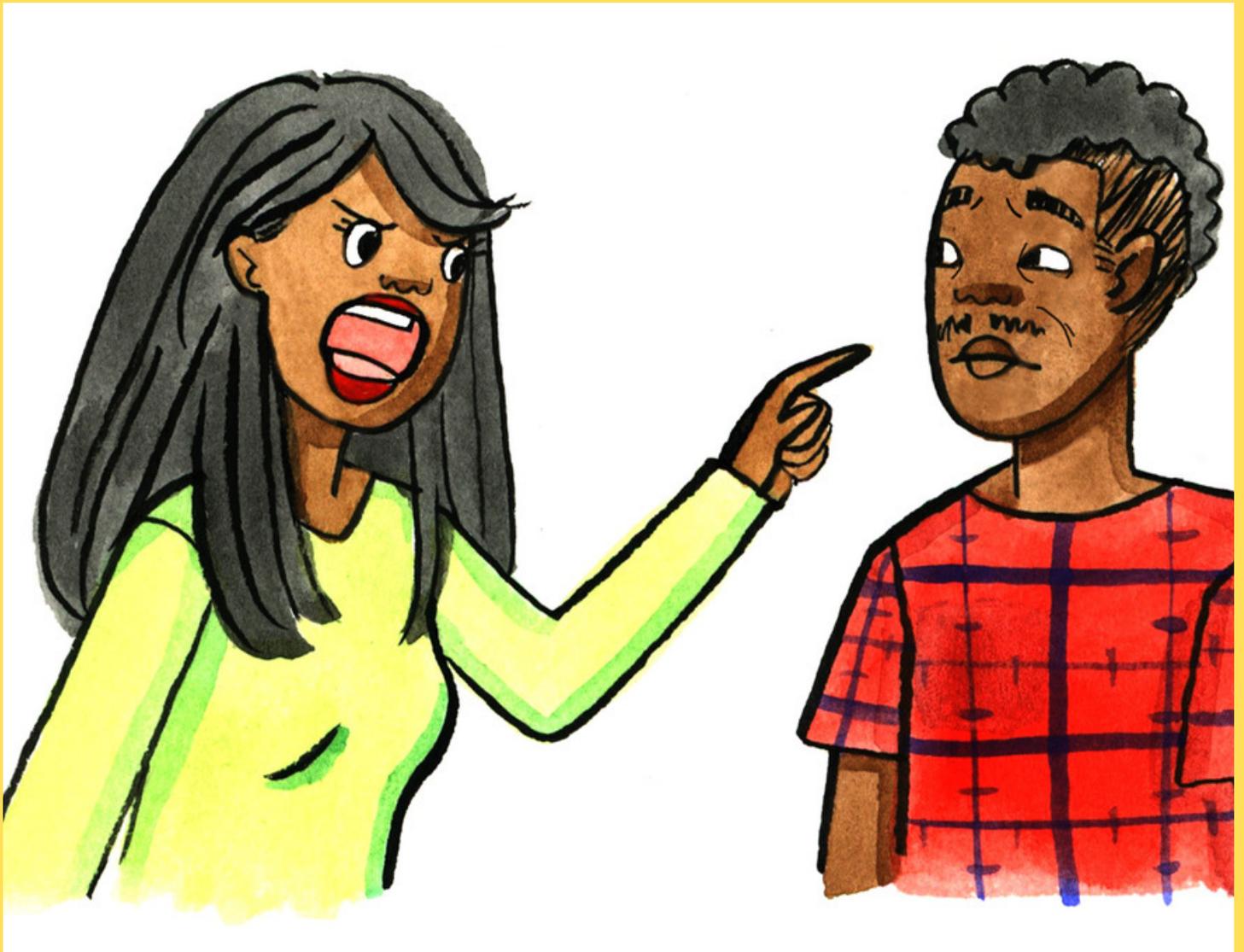
"Sexual abuse only happens to girls"
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DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

"Harm-doers are only strangers"

The majority of harm-doers are people who the child knows including, parents, teachers, ministers, coaches, and relatives. Harm-doers are typically someone close to the child. This is one of many reasons reporting rates are so low; children are afraid of getting the person in trouble.



DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

"Children who are abused will ultimately 'turn gay'" or "Lesbian", etc

FACT: The fact is that children who are perceived to be gay or lesbian or gender non-conforming are targeted by harm-doers who take advantage of society's homophobia/transphobia and that children who don't conform to what society expects will be isolated stigmatized, rejected and/or not believed.



CONNECT

IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN CRISIS, AND IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE HELP, PLEASE REACH OUT USING ONE OF THE NUMBERS LISTED BELOW.

ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE 24/7.

(646) 647-5414 OR (646) 647-5425

JOIN OUR ONLINE FB GROUP FOR PARENTS PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/233393717173361/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/233393717173361/)

Facebook: @blackwomens.BWBNY

Twitter: @blackwomensbp

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