

The more people are informed, the fewer victims there will be.



A guide for **Parents**

**Protect your child
from sexual abuse**



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ON PEDOPHILIA

What is pedophilia and who is a pedophile?

Pedophiles are adolescent boys or girls or adult men or women who feel sexually attracted to prepubescent children (i.e. those who have not yet reached puberty).

Some pedophiles are attracted only to girls, others only to boys. Some are attracted to both, and some are equally attracted to children and teenagers or adults.

Pedophilia exists everywhere, all around the world and in all environments regardless of wealth, education or religion. Just because nobody talks about it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist!

No one chooses to be a pedophile, and the vast majority of pedophiles will never abuse a child.

No one is responsible for their fantasies, but everyone is responsible for their actions and their deeds. Also, any sexual act involving a child is forbidden: it is forbidden to tell children that you are in love with them, to make remarks of a suggestive nature to them, to show them a pornographic image or to show them your own sexual organs or ask to see theirs, to watch them undress, caress them, touch their private parts (pubic area, buttocks, chest), to put them on your knees when you have an erection, thereby imposing upon them your own sexual desire ...

Why is pedophilia so frightening?

Pedophilia is often wrongly defined as the act of sexually abusing children. In fact, pedophilia is not an act but a sexual attraction.

Pedophiles are neither monsters, nor sex offenders, nor child-murderers. They are people in pain who need help to overcome their fantasies or to live with their fantasies without actually assaulting a child.

Why does someone become a pedophile?

There is a wide variety of reasons, and it depends on the personal history of each individual. Some pedophiles have experienced violence in their childhood, which may or may not have been of a sexual nature. Others were profoundly disturbed during the time that they were exploring their own sexuality, and others might have grown up in families in which the boundaries of intimacy and sex were not clearly established (we define these as an incestuous environment or family).

Once a pedophile, always a pedophile?

Having desire for children is a great affliction, but it is not a life sentence. Many people no longer feel attracted to children after receiving therapy or support from a specialist. Others learn to live with such fantasies without feeling that these fantasies are encroaching upon their day-to-day life.

Is that true an adult can fall in love with a child?

A teenager or adult may experience feelings of love for a child but this should never lead to a sexual relationship, because it is impossible to share love and sexual desire with children. This is because children are not yet mature enough to understand this kind of thing, and a sexual relationship is always damaging to a child even when there is tenderness, love and gentleness. When a pubescent person experiences sexual desire towards a much younger prepubescent person, they should always distance themselves and seek help, because it is a sign of a serious problem.

Is our society pedophile when it eroticizes children?

Our society should neither eroticize children (such as Mini Miss contest, sexy clothes or makeup for little girls ...) nor infantilize adults (prepubescent body shapes, absence of body hair ...)

Our society prevents children from being children and adults from being adults when it erases the differences between the generations, and this causes serious confusion that can sometimes lead to the sexual assault of a child.

A little girl dressed as a sexy woman (in tight clothing, miniskirts, short shorts, bikini ...) can make us feel deeply uneasy; but if it arouses sexual excitement then you should take notice of this, and you should be aware that she is only playing at pretending to be an adult and that she is still a child. Her clothing or behavior is never an invitation or an expression of sexual intent.

What to do if you think someone you know well is a pedophile?

You can calmly talk to that person without judging them. Tell them what you saw and felt, and encourage them to go seek help from a competent specialist.

Feel free to talk about the PedoHelp® project (<http://pedo.help>).

ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

What is sexual abuse?

The moment one person imposes their sexual desire on another person, it is abuse. In every instance of abuse, there is always an abuse of power and often a breach of trust, since the abuser often targets a person more vulnerable than themselves.

Children are unable to consent to sex because they do not yet know what it is, and they don't have to know about it. They are too young and too immature to know and to experience sexuality.

To make a child have a sexual experience, even when this is done as part of a game, is to transform this child into an object of satisfaction for your own adult or adolescent desire, and that is unacceptable.

Sexual abuse is a sexual activity in which a victim is encouraged or coerced by an attacker, to carry out the sexual activity either on themselves or on another person, with or without physical violence. It is possible to abuse someone without there being any physical contact (harassment, grooming, exposure ...) as well as with physical contact taking place (kissing, caressing, fondling, penetration ...) It is always sexual abuse.

Who are the perpetrators?

Child sexual abusers are men and women who are wired up wrong and who often feel overwhelmed by their sexual urges. Usually, they feel more comfortable with children than with people their own age (adults and adolescents).

We often imagine abusers to be sadistic, perverse, manipulative and calculating. While these people do exist, they actually very rare. The vast majority of child sexual abusers are sweet and caring people who truly love children. Moreover, they are often very popular with children and their parents, because they inspire confidence.

Various scientific research conducted around the world shows that:

- One in four attackers is a teenager under the age of 18.
- One in two attackers is a member of the child's family.
- 90% of the perpetrators are part of the child's inner circle (school, extracurricular activity, neighbor, family friend, childcare ...)
- At least one third of child sexual abusers have themselves been victims of sexual abuse during their childhood; they were never able to speak about it or they never received adequate support.
- Recurring child sexual offenders usually committed their first assault during adolescence and it never led to any criminal penalty or therapeutic treatment. However, research shows that only convictions accompanied by appropriate care significantly reduced the risk of recurrence.

The vast majority of child sexual abusers never dared to speak about their haunting pedophile fantasies before they took action.

Who are the victims?

Any child can be a victim of a child sex abuser. However, those who have understood what is and is not allowed - and understand the rules of intimacy - are better able to identify an assailant. They are more likely to dare to say no, and more likely to quickly talk about a sustained or attempted assault.

Lonely children that are left to themselves, and those who lack guidance in their relationships with others or who have not understood the rules of intimacy (incestuous families) are the main targets of child sexual abusers.

What are the consequences of sexual abuse on a child?

Sexual assault always has serious consequences, whatever the age of the victim. The effects vary depending on the child, the type of assault, how often the assault occurs, the relationship with the abuser and the therapeutic and legal support following the assault.

Aftereffects always occur, in various ways, at different times of life.

As well as the possibility of physical damage and personal injury arising from a rape, a child may suffer from multiple psychological consequences such as guilt and shame, fear, anxiety, anger, loss of self-confidence, depression, anxiety attacks, chronic pain, social isolation, distrust of all adolescents and/or adults, difficulties in having healthy sexual relationships, impaired memory, concentration, sleep, incontinence or eating disorders ...

Assaults can also lead to destructive behavior: suicide attempts, self-mutilation, anorexia/bulimia, prostitution, delinquency, risk-taking behavior, addiction to alcohol, narcotics, drugs, pornography ...

Sexual abuse may also lead a victim going on to become a perpetrator.

Silence is not inevitable. Suffering is not inevitable. It is possible to overcome the horror of sexual assault by calling upon the services of a specialist.

ON CHILD SEX TOURISM

Which children are victims of sex tourism?

The victims of child prostitution are both girls and boys. They often come from disadvantaged social backgrounds. Sex tourism involving children is a growing phenomenon.

If you witness a case of sex tourism involving a minor in your country or abroad, report it immediately on :

www.reportchildsextourism.eu

What are the risks?

Sex tourists come from all backgrounds. They can be married or single, male or female, rich or poor, young or old. Sex tourists who abuse children can be prosecuted in their country of origin if they have not been prosecuted in the country where the offense was committed.

The risks are enormous: a prison sentence of several years and very heavy fines - even many years after the abuse. Convictions may result from the prostitution of minors and also from sexual assault, rape, sexual images of children, and other offenses or attempted offenses against the integrity of children.

Does sex tourism contribute to the economic development of a country?

Tourists who visit a country in order to use people for their sexual pleasure are only encouraging corruption in this country, and the exploitation and debasement of its population.

Is it a tradition to have sex with children in Asia?

In some countries, extreme poverty triggers parents into pushing their children into prostitution. Trafficking networks use children in vulnerable situations to enrich themselves, and other people take advantage of this misery to turn these children into sex slaves.

In some parts of the world it is believed that having sex with a child can cure certain diseases. Actually, the opposite is true: it is in fact sexual relations with children that are most likely to cause infection and transmit diseases such as AIDS. Very often, minors who are involved in prostitution are not aware of the means of prevention and protection from sexually transmitted diseases.

Whatever the country, cultures, traditions or religious beliefs, a child is never asking for sex.

ON CHILDREN

Can one can kiss a child on the mouth?

It is better to avoid kissing a child on the mouth, as the kiss on the mouth is restricted to lovers. Children need to understand that teenagers and adults (including their parents) are not their lovers.

What is an incestual family?

In an incestuous family the differences between the generations are blurred, encroaching upon the spaces and roles of each other, and there is not much respect for privacy. Consequently, it is difficult for children to properly understand the differences between young and old. In these families, there is an incestuous atmosphere without incest necessarily occurring.

In an incestuous family, the child's privacy is violated: one person kisses them on the mouth, another takes a bath or shower with them, another lets them sleep in bed with parents or older people ... the doors of toilets, bathrooms and rooms do not lock, or anyone can enter the bathroom while someone is washing. The clothes and properties are rarely personal: everyone uses everyone else's things.

This confusion may make children witness scenes that they cannot handle: adult nudity, the sexuality of their parents, encountering pornography ... Their status as children is not respected, and they do not learn appropriate behavior in their relationships with others. Consequently, they may not be able to identify the sexual approaches of an adult, and may not be able to protect themselves from such episodes or be able to discuss them afterwards.

It is always vital that everyone has their own individual space, without confusing it with someone else's. These boundaries offer protection and encourage respect for one another's privacy and differences (of age, culture, desire ...)

Children who grow up in an incestuous family may have difficulty building their own identity and their own desires, and they may also find it difficult to perceive themselves as being different from those around them. This deficiency can cause them to become aggressors in spite of themselves, by imposing their choices or desires without understanding that others do not share them.

Can a child feel desire and sexual pleasure?

The sexuality of children is very different from the sexuality of adults, and it is vital these these are not confused and intertwined.

As they develop, children discover sex and their body and they take pleasure in exploring and touching it. This natural process should only occur in an intimate space. A child should never be encouraged, coerced, guided or observed in this act, even with tenderness and sweetness. The adult or adolescent who does so commits a very serious sexual abuse - one that is extremely damaging to the child's development.

Can a child want to have sex?

A child never wants a sexual relationship. This is because they do not yet possess the psychological or physiological capacity to consciously and knowingly have a sexual experience. They can say to a teenager or an adult that they feel like they want to, or they might not dare say no because they want to make them happy, but the child never desires it.

When a teenager or an adult suggests a sexual act to a child, the child does not know what it is, or whether it is good or bad for them. They are too young to know about it and they cannot say yes or no to something they know nothing about. They may be curious, but this never means that they are consenting. Everything has its time: a child will discover sex with someone their own age when they are older.

How to react when a child is sexually explicit with someone older?

A child may have been troubled by something they have experienced or seen or heard, and they may approach an adolescent or an adult to ask them questions, to touch them or to ask them if they will touch their private parts. This is never a request for sex, it is simply the expression of a need to know or to check what is allowed and what is not allowed. The adolescent or adult must always set limits, must always remember what is forbidden, and must protect children from what will hurt them.

Can one sexuality initiate a child?

The discovery of their own body and the body of others is a sign of a healthy curiosity that children have: it is a pleasant game only if it is shared between children of the same age who have the same level of maturity. It is not acceptable when one child abuses his or her power over another. If this happens then an adult must intervene.

While it is important to try to answer children's curiosity and questions about sexuality with - if necessary - the help of age-appropriate books, this should always be limited to their questions and capacity to understand. It would be highly inappropriate to show them what sexual pleasure is by touching them, by asking them to touch you or by showing them your sexual organ or sexual images: no sexual act can be considered informative.

Appropriate educational explanations are reassuring, actions are destructive sexual abuse.

What to do when a child sees a pornographic image?

Depending on their age and sexual knowledge, you can explain that pornography has nothing to do with the reality of sex. Just as in the movies, where actors pretend to kill or pretend to feel emotions, professional actors pretend to have pleasure in pornographic images. Their movements are abrupt, and their poses are designed to allow the camera to show close-ups of certain body parts. Actors and actresses consume drugs to be more effective, and often undergo plastic surgery to change their bodies. Sometimes their body hair is shaved, and make-up and lighting are used to erase pimples, scars or natural skin colors. Pornography shows sex, not a loving sexual relationship.

In real life, it's just the opposite: "making love" is tender, nice and soft. People talk, exchange hugs and kisses that bring both partners pleasure and well-being.

Is a girl ready to have sex when she has her first period?

Girls, like boys, need time after the onset of puberty before they are ready to have sex, because sexuality is both physical and psychological.

To impose a marriage or sexual relationship upon teenagers simply because they are biologically capable of reproduction is abusive and harmful to their development and future life.

How to raise children's awareness of the risk of sexual abuse?

Children must be able to name the different parts of the body, including their sexual areas: the penis, vagina, buttocks ... with words that they are not afraid to say in front of adults. These words should not be considered dirty, lewd or impertinent. Children must learn to identify private and intimate areas in order to respect those areas on their own bodies and on those of others.

Children must know that they can confide in adults, and that adults are available to listen to them; they must know that they have the right to refuse any action, including from you, that hurts or scares them. They must say something when they feel sad or uncomfortable.

Refer to age-appropriate books for your children to help them understand that sexual relations between two consenting adults are enjoyable and fulfilling.

You can also visit our dedicated website to children and preteens: **<http://nonono.help>**

Should we talk to children when someone close has been sexually abused?

If children are in contact with an attacker, they must be warned to protect themselves.

In other cases, you must answer the questions of your children bearing in mind what they want to know, and how old they are. A dark family secret is detrimental to the development of a child, but so is a premature revelation.

Do not hesitate to seek the help of a therapist to guide and accompany you.

How to spot a victim of child sexual abuse?

Children do not have the knowledge, experience, or words to express what they have experienced or suffered, because sexuality is an unknown world to them. So they will express their suffering and unhappiness using their body.

If in doubt, consult a professional.

Here are some signs that should alert you:

- bruising, pain and sores on the genitals, thighs or elsewhere on the body;
- genital and mouth irritation, recurrent urinary tract infections;
- significant weight gain/loss;
- with older children: eating disorders, self-mutilation and bodily marks, use of drugs and alcohol.

These are some behavioral changes that can alert you:

- they isolate themselves, no longer talking about their day, no longer saying what they did, no longer interested in what they previously enjoyed ;
- they are afraid, they refuse to go anywhere alone;
- their grades are deteriorating;
- they refuse hugs, physical proximity;
- they do not want to undress in front of an adult when they wash, go for a medical examination or visit the pool/beach;

- they are anxious, nervous, often cry or get angry, regress, begin to act and speak like a baby, suck their thumb, wet their bed when they were dry before;
- they lose their appetite, suffer from insomnia, are afraid to fall asleep because of recurring nightmares;
- they show an abnormal sexual interest: they address sexual subjects they should not know at their age, mimic sexual behavior, masturbate or mimic sex noises in public, make explicit drawings, increase seductive behavior;
- they are aggressive with those around them.

What to do if a child has been abused?

First of all, remain calm.

Believe the child, help him/her to express him/herself with their own words, without adding anything and without being overwhelmed by your concerns, your imagination and your knowledge of sexuality. Do not ask him/her to repeat themselves or tell you repeatedly what they experienced.

Quickly accompany him/her to the relevant departments (Police...) to be supported by trained professionals who will gather his/her testimony.

Let the legal professionals question the alleged abuser and conduct their investigations.

Be concerned about the welfare of the child and his/her protection without ever trying to bring about justice yourself.

If you have doubts or if the child's words are not clear, you could take him/her to consult a child therapist.

In any case, tell the child that he/she was right to talk to you, praise him/her for his/her courage and thank him/her for having trusted you.

You can call your country's child helpline to file a report:

www.childhelplineinternational.org/where-we-work/

What if your child or teenager sexually assaulted another child?

If your child has abused another child, it may be that they themselves have experienced, seen or heard things that have disturbed his/her emotional and sexual development. Offer him/her the option to talk to a child therapist and accompany him/her if he/she agrees to it.

It would also be wise to consult –either alone, accompanied by your partner or with the family– a therapist to think about how your family operates and to understand why your child has not learned what is fundamentally prohibited.

LEARN MORE

The PedoHelp® project

PedoHelp® is an international information and prevention project on pedophilia.

This free, international and ecofriendly project aims to raise awareness among many actors in order to reduce the number of sexual abuses committed on children.

The more people are informed, the fewer victims there will be.

Main website: www.pedo.help

Awareness website for children: www.nonono.help

Talking to your child about sexual abuse

Read our book, "**No! No! No! I protect myself from sexual abuse**", a short illustrated story to teach essential concepts including love, seduction, intimacy, manipulation ...

This book provides a solid support for parents who wish to discuss sexual abuse awareness with their children.

Appropriate for reading alone from the age of 10. Appropriate for reading accompanied by an adult from the age of 6.

<http://geni.us/nonono>

Awareness kit

Our awareness kit is available as free download on the project's website: www.pedo.help.



This guide was written by Sebastien Brochot, founder of the PedoHelp® project with the invaluable help of its Ethics Committee:

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Association Une Vie®

Association Une Vie® is committed to promoting respect between people, as well as encouraging fulfillment of individuals and their community. This includes providing awareness content to protect children from the risk of sexual abuse.

The project PedoHelp® is conducted by Association Une Vie®.

To find out more, visit www.1vie.org

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