

Of Myths and Men: Suppressing Disclosures of Childhood Sexual Abuse

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and
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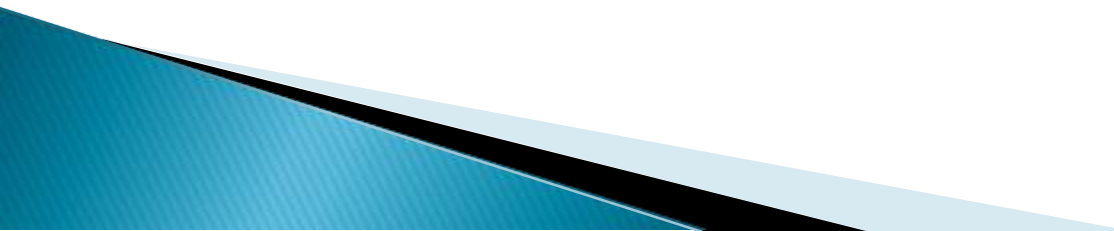


Of Myths and Men:

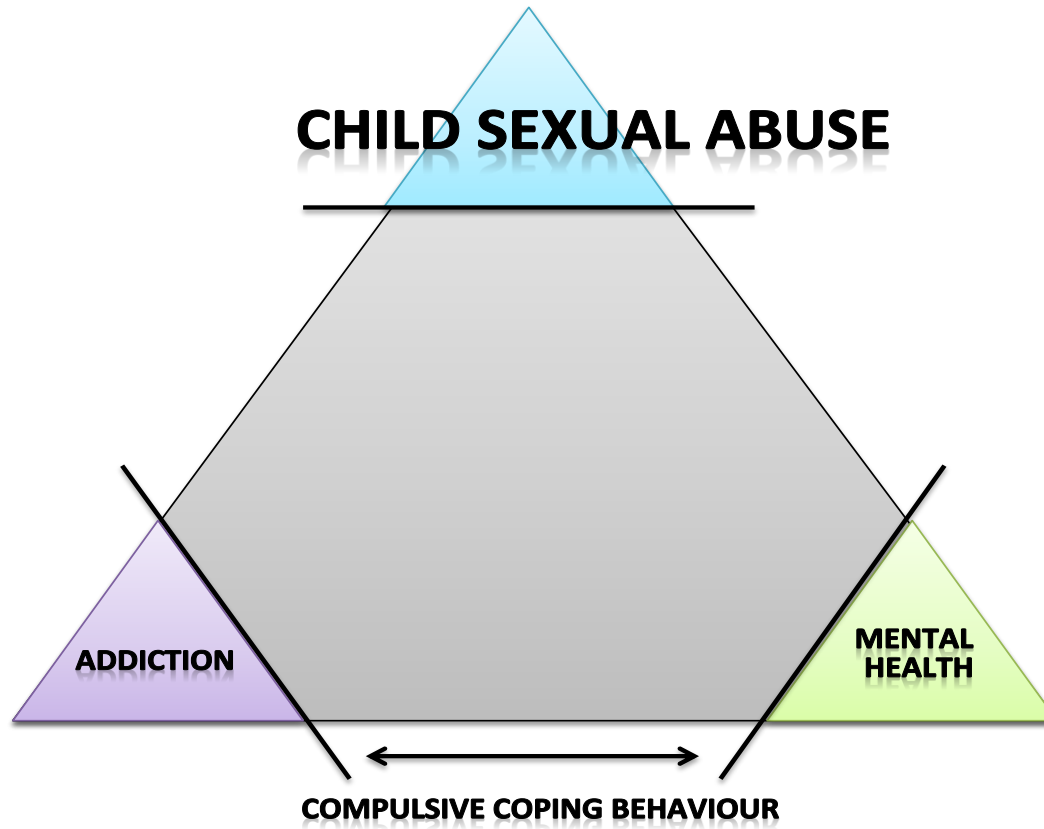
Despite research and public awareness efforts related to childhood sexual abuse, disclosures of abuse are still more prevalent in women than in men.

There are several myths about childhood sexual abuse experienced by males that present barriers to disclosure.

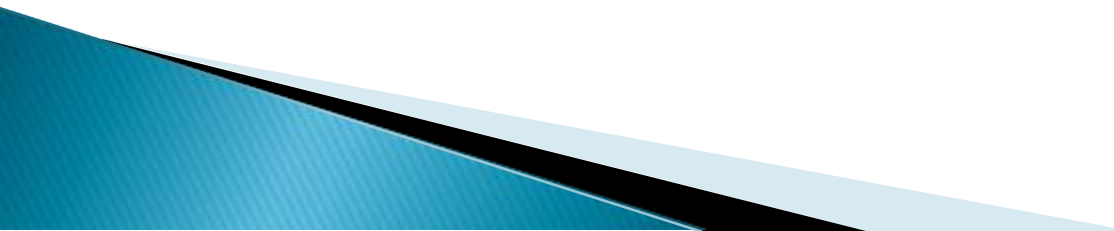
Nondisclosure of abuse has numerous repercussions for men and for the social system



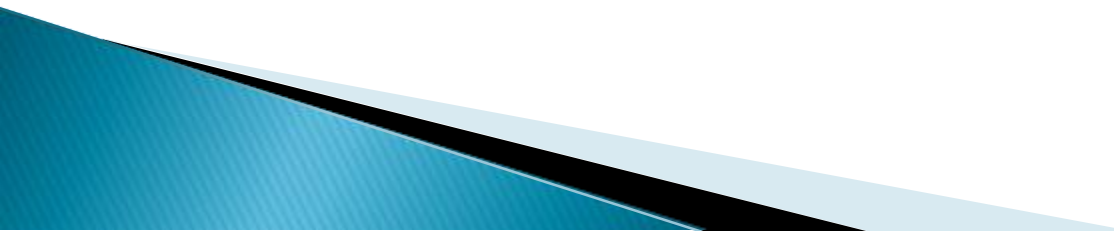
The Laurel Centre Mandate



The Research

- ▶ The Men's Resource Centre a program of The Laurel Centre partnered with RESOLVE to conduct a study of childhood sexual abuse in males.
 - ▶ We reviewed the literature on male childhood sexual abuse
 - ▶ Did focus groups and interviews with:
 - ▶ a. men who had been sexually abused in childhood
 - ▶ b. service providers working with men and with issues of sexual abuse.
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Interesting Findings

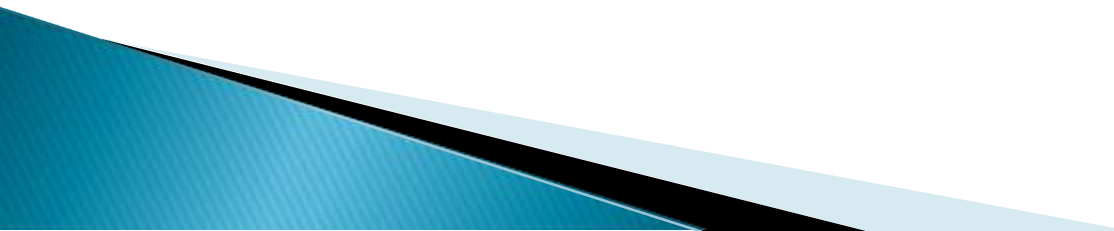
- ▶ Men frequently do not disclose their abuse
 - ▶ Men who participated in the focus groups and interviews were in their 40s and 50s
 - ▶ Most men reveal their experiences of childhood sexual abuse at 40s and 50s
 - ▶ The literature identified 10 myths of male childhood sexual abuse that create barriers to disclosure for men
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Our Focus

- ▶ Myths of Male Childhood Sexual Abuse and Their Impact on Disclosure

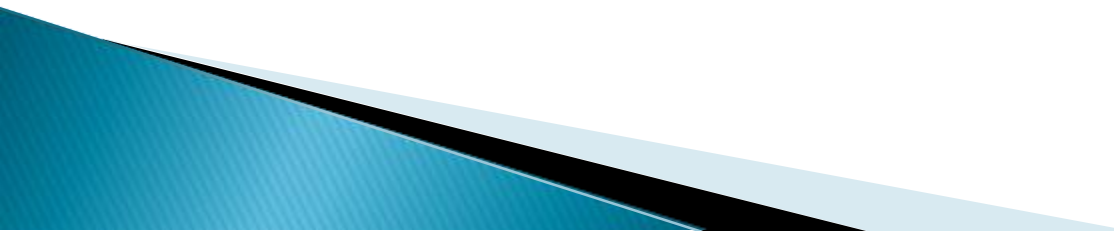
Myths

1. Men cannot be sexually abused.

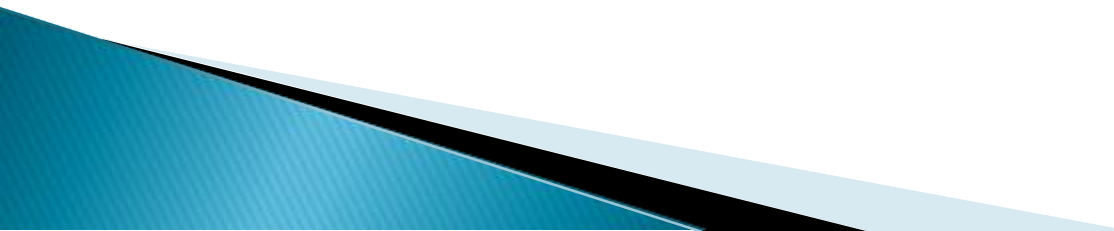
- ▶ The evidence clearly shows that boys can and are sexually abused;
 - ▶ Estimates being one in six or 16%.
 - ▶ Incidences are higher among gay/bisexual men, Aboriginal men, sex trade workers, homeless men, runaways, disabled/challenged men, addicts, psychiatric and incarcerated populations
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Myths

2. Women do not sexually abuse others.


- 12.23% of incarcerated males who were abused were abused by their fathers and 9.2% were abused by their mothers
 - The term perpetrator was always made in reference to a male and the term victim to a female.
 - the perception was never challenged.
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Myths

- ▶ Social and systemic attitudes that male victims of female abusers actually enjoyed the encounter, initiated the encounter or that they were lucky to have received this female attention male victims'
 - ▶ Disclosures will be less likely to be believed and more likely to be ridiculed or minimized
 - ▶ Fears of not being believed if the if the perpetrator was a female rather than a male
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Myths

3. Abuse is always overt.

- ▶ This myth ignores nonphysical sexual behaviour such as inappropriate seductiveness, flirtations and sexualized talk as forms of abuse.
 - ▶ It is more difficult for boys and later men to identify the behaviour as abusive
 - ▶ Others may misinterpret this behaviour as non-abusive and thus be less likely to believe or act upon disclosures.
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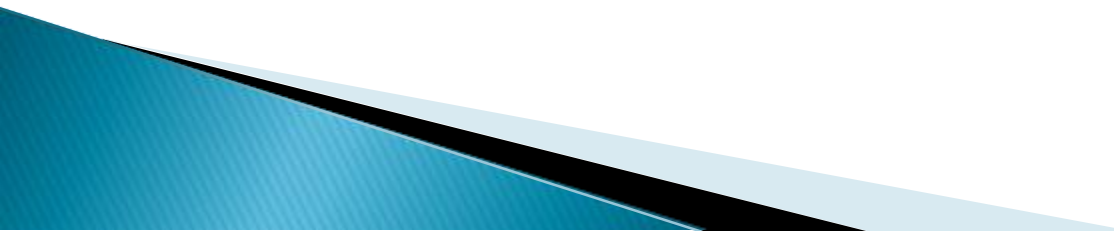
Myths

4. Abusers are always aware of when their behaviour is abusive.

- ▶ If even the abusers are unsure that their behaviour is abusive (showing pornography picture, seductive without touching), then boys and eventually men may be unsure as well and this leads to reduced disclosure.

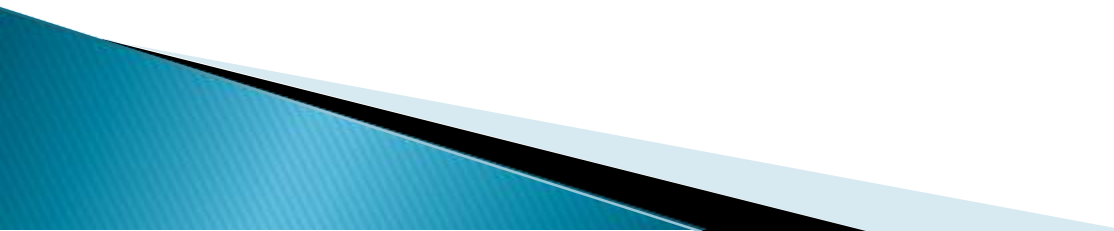
Myths

5. Sexual abuse turns a boy gay.

- ▶ Homosexuality is relatively unrelated to male child sexual abuse
 - ▶ Child Sexual Abuse does not change their sexual orientation
 - ▶ Some victims often believe he was selected by his abuser because he was homosexual or feminine in some way
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Myths

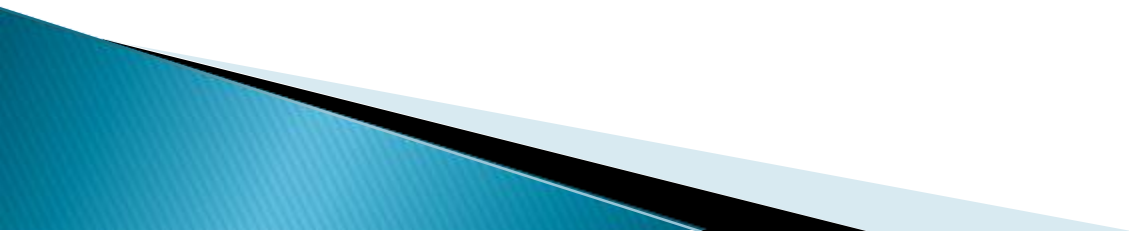
6. Almost all sexually abused boys become abusers.

- ▶ Most sexually abused men do not become offenders and in fact fear becoming offenders, however, adult male child sex offenders are more likely to have experienced CSA
 - ▶ Men who were abused in childhood fear that others will think of them as abusers
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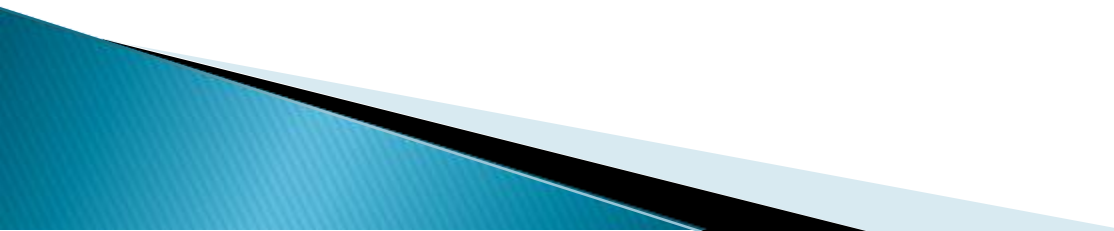
Myths

7. Most abusers are homosexual.

- ▶ In fact most abusers identify as heterosexual and have a heterosexual orientation for their intimate relationships




Myths

- 8. Abused boys are weak and feminine.
 - 9. If boys don't say "no" to the abuse or fight back then they must have wanted the abuse to occur.
 - 10. If a boy is sexually aroused then he is an equal participant in the abuse.
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Myths

These last three myths are also believed by some survivors and they then result in:

- ▶ Feelings of shame
 - ▶ Perceptions that they were equal participants in the abuse
 - ▶ Minimization of its severity or its effects
 - ▶ If abused by a woman, other see them as lucky or manly
 - ▶ Their sexual arousal being taken as willingness rather than a physiological response by the victim and by others.
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Lack of Disclosures

- ▶ Lack of disclosures about male childhood sexual abuse often leads to the misperception that it does not occur with any significant frequency and thus is not an issue requiring attention.

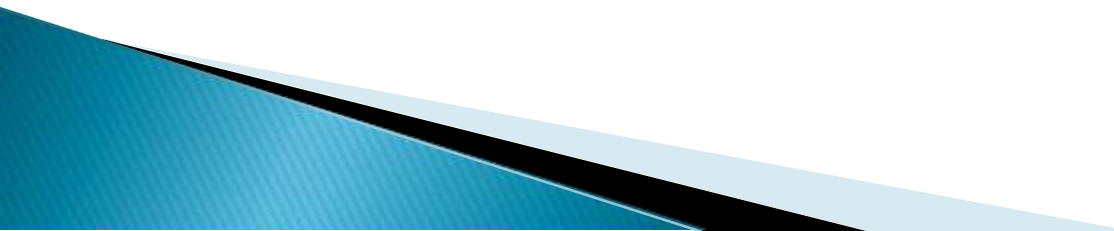
Lack of Disclosures Leads to

- ▶ Lack of resources and services to address this issue and because of the lack of services or apparent social concern, men are even more reluctant to disclose their experiences of sexual abuse.

Public Awareness

- ▶ Dispelling the myths about male childhood sexual abuse and increasing public awareness will likely result in more disclosures and greater recognition of the need for intervention.

Now and the Future

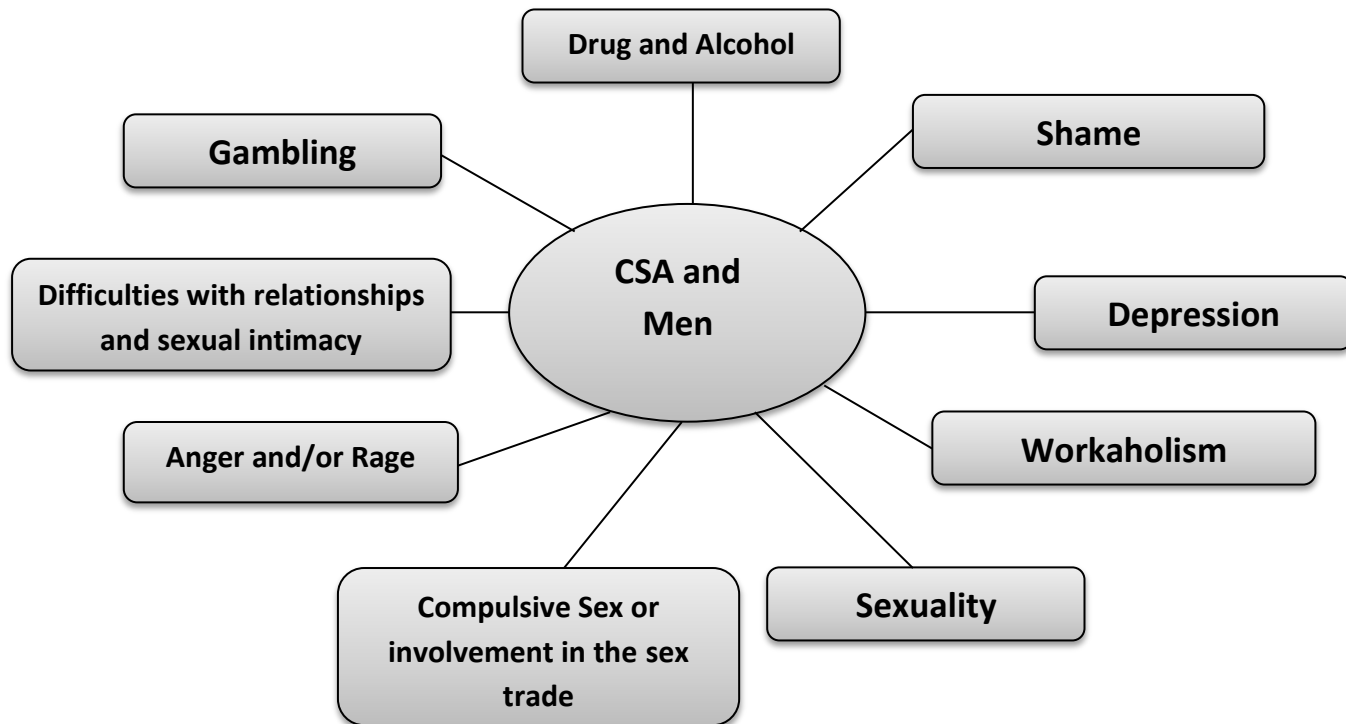
- ▶ As indicated recently the Men's Resource Centre, a program of The Laurel Centre, in Winnipeg has begun the process of developing a programming model for men who have experienced childhood sexual abuse.
 - ▶ The goal is to create a more hospitable environment for men to disclose and deal with their experiences of childhood sexual abuse.
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Hope

Our hope from this research is to bring attention to the myths and the severe effect of child sexual abuse on men and our systems, this includes justice, addictions, mental health, employment, family violence...etc. and the need to provide comprehensive services to address the trauma from their childhood.



Child Sexual Abuse



Thank you

We need to work together to bring awareness to this issue and to end child sexual abuse for both girls and boys.

