

Resources for Survivors

Dealing with anger



In this factsheet we set out feelings, thoughts and questions you might have when someone close to you tells you what happened to them when they were a child.

Some initial response



Shock

- This might not have been something you thought was a possibility.
- Take a moment to accept that this can be a significant shock to you.

Confusion

- You may have lots of questions, try and hold off asking those questions, just now.
- Concentrate on being present with him, focus on him.

Disbelief

- Disbelief is different from not believing.
- Initially you might not be able to make sense of what you are hearing.

Numbness

- You don't know what to feel or think.
- It can often be too much and you freeze.

Anger

- The closer your relationship with the man, the more intense your anger is likely to be.
- Sometimes it might be difficult to manage your anger; try not to let your angry feelings sweep you away.

Sadness, grief and loss

- You may feel intense sadness for the hurt that has happened.
- You both might feel grief and loss for a life and relationship that might have been but for the abuse.

Loneliness and isolation

- You might feel a sense of loneliness and isolation after you have listened to what happened.
- Often men will insist their partners and family members not tell anyone else. That can mean you feel cut off from your usual supports and friends.

Frustration and resentment

- After hearing that someone you care about was sexually abused you may feel helpless; you may not know what to do.
- You might feel he is shutting you out or shutting you down.
- You may feel resentful that your relationship has been affected.
- You might feel frustrated that he is not 'getting over it'.

Empathy and compassion

- Showing empathy and compassion can help a man see his pain has been seen and he has been heard.

Take time to look after yourself

During and after the disclosure conversation, you might have lots of questions. It is often helpful to put the questions on hold and focus your energy on checking in with yourself and with him – are you both ok?

How you can help

A supportive friend, partner or family member can play a significant role in helping someone struggling with the impacts of trauma and abuse. What you can do:

- Listen
- Believe
- Be fully present
- Offer reassurance
- Prioritise wellbeing and support
- Remain hopeful
- Take care when asking 'Why' questions
- Remember the importance of empathy, compassion and vulnerability

We all benefit from encouragement and support

'Breaking the silence' and letting someone know about a traumatic experience can be a major step towards change. For some supporters, hearing of the abuse can come as a shock but for others it can be an important missing piece of a puzzle.

Remember trauma and its ripple effects can at times be overwhelming and isolating. To be able to support men who have experienced trauma, you need to stay connected and prioritise your own wellbeing.