



INFORMATION LEAFLET

PARTNERS OF SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

If your partner has disclosed to you that they were abused s a child you may well be shocked. You may wonder what to do, how to help, what to say etc.

You may also be experiencing an enormous amount of anger against the person who abused your loved one. There may be anger also towards your partner that maybe you felt they should have told you sooner.

At this time your partner will also be feeling very unsure of themselves, unsure how you will react, unsure whether you will believe them (when perhaps others haven't), unsure whether you will blame them, unsure whether it will change the way you see them, change your love for them, change the relationship you have together.

It is important to recognise that your partner has put in you an enormous amount of trust by telling you they have been abused, this is a very difficult thing to do face up to.

A survivor has to be ready to disclose abuse in their own time - do not take this personally and be upset that they may not have told you sooner - survivors cope with life in many cases by blocking off and denying the abuse - that is how they get through each day, how they get on with their lives - by admitting the abuse to another person they are having to face the reality of the abuse and sometimes that can be very difficult for a survivor to do.

Recognise and accept that you cannot take away your partner's pain, you cannot make it all better, you cannot force them to get help, and never force





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them to divulge details of the abuse to you unless they choose to.

Many survivors find it easier to talk about the abuse to someone not known to them like a helpline, counselor, trusted friend - again do not take this personally - your partner needs to talk about this openly with someone and may not be able to do that with someone they are close to and love - they may hold back for fear of upsetting their partner and may find it difficult to talk about explicit details for fear of it affecting their relationship with you.

When a survivor is abused all control is taken from them. It is natural that you may feel you want to take control now of the situation to help them, get them to see a counselor, get them to talk, etc. However, that is the worst thing you can do. Support your partner to work through this in their own time and in their own way. They need to stay in control.

Disclosing abuse to a partner can affect a survivor in many ways - they may pull back from intimacy, they may pull back from affection or they may want more intimacy and/or more affection. Again don't take it personally if your partner has times when they don't want to be touched and cannot cope with intimacy. Always reassure your partner they are safe and you are there for them.

What you can do is to be there for your partner if they want to talk, if they want affection, if they want intimacy. It may help to reassure your partner -

- *I'm here if and when you want to talk*
- *This doesn't change in any way my love for you or how I feel about you*
- *Is there anything I can do to help you deal with this?*
- *What do you need from me?*
- *I'm here if you need me.*





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Try to keep doing things together you enjoy doing.

Survivors can and do heal from the abuse they suffered in their past and will need support from their partners while on their journey to recovery.

If you are a partner of a survivor you may need support and someone to talk to for yourself. Many of the agencies/help lines and websites listed for the victim offer support for the partner.

USEFUL BOOK

[**Allies In Healing: When The Person You Love was Sexually Abused As a Child**](#) by Laura Davies - Publishers Harper Collins: ISBN 0060968834

