

Sexual Abuse Awareness Test Answers

The correct answer for all the test items is *False*. All of the statements on the test are myths, commonly held beliefs about sexual abuse that are not true. Read on to learn the facts.

Myth 1: *Sexual abuse is rare.* **Fact: According to best estimates one in three girls and one in six boys are sexually abused in America by the age of eighteen.** If a youth group has 60 members (30 female and 30 male) ten of the girls and five of the guys will have been abused by the time they reach eighteen. Sexual abuse is much more common than you think.

Myth 2: *Sexual abuse does not usually affect youth groups and churches that are middle-class, upper-class, conservative, well-educated, or rural.* **Fact: Sexual abuse statistics follow no economic, geographical, educational, religious, racial, or social boundaries.** Just as the sexualization and perversion of our culture is widespread, the problem of abuse is rampant.

Myth 3: *The public schools deal effectively with sexual abuse by teaching about good touch/bad touch. And if my kids were approached by a sexual predator, I am sure they would tell an adult and get some help.* **Fact: Telling our kids about good touch and bad touch is appropriate, but it's not enough. The responsibility to prevent and detect abuse must remain with the supervising adults.** Once any touch is identified as "bad", the abuse has already happened! Before it gets to that point, the perpetrator has used a process called grooming to gain the victim's trust. Then he systematically moves the boundaries of his behavior. Abuse that happens via pornographic, internet, verbal or emotional manipulations is equally damaging, extremely hard to uncover, and it's not dependent on physical contact. We have failed to understand the psychological methods used by abusers. Kids and adolescents are programmed not to tell, and a high percentage don't.

Myth 4: *Our church security is good, and we would catch any strangers who tried to come in our building and hurt the kids. There is so much community help available for victims of abuse that the church does not really need to get involved in this issue.* **Fact: Abusers are usually not strangers, but rather relatives (30%) or non-family authority figures (60%) such as neighbors, family friends, babysitters, clergy members, teachers or coaches.** We like to think that if one of our church members was a child molester, we would have the common sense to identify him. Recognizing abusers' suspicious behaviors is possible, but not easy. Experts warn us that perpetrators groom adults into trusting them before they go after kids. We must study to prepare our defense systems. **Many community services exist to help, but victims often do not seek out help.** Even more importantly, we know that no true healing of damaged emotions can come apart from the mercy and grace of the Father. No truth exists apart from His word. We, in the body of Christ, have the answers to these complex issues. We have the hope!

Myth 5: *Adolescents are too old to be abused. They know better!* **Fact: Teens and preteens are one of the greatest at-risk populations for abuse.** They are the largest group of reported victims. It is a common belief that adolescents have the ability to protect themselves or escape potentially abusive situations,

but it is simply not true. Just as they are greatly vulnerable to the dangers of pornography, they are greatly damaged by abusive behaviors that violate God's design for sexuality.

Myth 6: *The effects of sexual abuse are easily recognized so we would know if one of our kids had a problem.* **Fact: The list for warning signs and side effects of sexual abuse are long and varied, and some of them are not what you would expect.** I provided a detailed list in my book, *Kalyn's Secret*. When the soul wounds of sexual abuse are not healed they do not disappear. They are like a cancer silently destroying its victims. They often explode in adolescence as promiscuity, substance abuse, depression, rebellion, cutting, eating disorders, thoughts of suicide, etc. These problems can wreak havoc in the victims' lives and set them up for a disastrous future.

Myth 7: *Sexual abuse is often caused by the sexual sin of the victim.* **Fact: Abuse is always the fault of the abuser even if our children are weak or foolish.** When we first learned of Kalyn's abuse, we thought it was her fault. Tragically, we further damaged her by our response and confirmed her worst fears when we placed the blame on her.

Myth 8: *The damage of sexual abuse, once brought to the light, can be quickly and easily dealt with by prayer and a "forgive and forget" strategy.* **Fact: Victims will need time in God's word to renew their minds and work through issues of forgiveness.** Jesus offers His healing through prayer, but quick fixes or denial do not work. In fact, they are dangerous.

Myth 9: *The best strategy for keeping sexual abuse out of our church is to minimize the talk about it. And we have already had a weekend sexual purity campaign at church.* **Fact: Openness, clear education, and screenings are some of the best deterrents to abuse.** Not talking about sexual abuse does not make it go away. It often allows the problem to hide in the silence. Creating a safe environment for children, teen, and adults to seek help means we must be willing to talk about the issue. We must break the silence and leave no places for abusers to hide their actions and their victims. **The continuous onslaught of sexual perversion and temptation cannot be countered by a one-time meeting.** The ongoing teaching and empowering our children and teens to maintain their purity is vital in today's sexualized culture. However a child who has been exposed to the damaging effects of abuse feels "dirty." Therefore many self-identify and act out impurity instead of purity.

Myth 10: *Parents should handle the problem of sexual abuse at home.* **Fact: Parents today need to be spiritually empowered and equipped to fight this tough battle to bring their children to Christ-like maturity.** Our job in the church is to come along side parents to bring them support and assistance. Will we respond to the cries of disintegrating households, the stress of single parents, and generational abuses? Jesus is calling us to greater ministry effectiveness.