



Sexual Abuse Among Incest

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Incest is usually referred to as sexual contact among family members. If you want me to use an appropriate, more sophisticated definition then it can be described as “sexual behaviour between family members: siblings, parents, close relatives that is not age appropriate, not transitory and not motivated by developmentally mutually appropriate curiosity. It is not limited to sexual intercourse, but the abuse can take place in different forms like: sexually suggestive language, prolonged kissing or oral sex. Studies have shown that one in four girls and one in ten boys experience sexual abuse among incest. People have recalled episodes of sexual abuse during therapy sessions. Incest particularly damages the primary support system of the young victims. It messes up their psyche and causes trust issues and intimacy problems.

Impacts of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse affects their sexuality, social functioning, and interpersonal relating. In DeYoung’s (1982) sample, it has been shown that 79% of incest victims had predominantly hostile feelings towards their mothers, whereas 52% were hostile toward their abuser. It is also noted that the rage of incest victims in her sample was often directed toward the mother and observed that they seemed to regard all women, including themselves, with contempt. Moreover, victims have reported difficulty trusting others that includes reactions of fear, hostility and a sense of betrayal. Adult women victimised as children are more likely to manifest depression, self-destructive behaviour, anxiety, feelings of isolation and stigma, poor self-esteem, a tendency toward revictimization and substance abuse.

Signs of person going through or been through Incest

- Isolation- wanting to be alone, social anxiety, hiding inside the closets.
- Aggressive behaviour towards others, throwing tantrums, a feeling of indifference towards everyone.
- Sleeping problems like insomnia, bed wetting, nightmares and fear to be left alone.
- Low self-esteem and feeling of worthlessness, depression or constant feelings of sadness without really knowing the reason.
- Early age masturbation- compulsive masturbating or masturbating publicly.

- Self destructive behaviour like cutting themselves and reliance on alcohol and other harmful substances.
- Desire to change name-indicates an inner compulsion to rid oneself of the name that has been tarnished by incest and the pain associated with it
- Body memories-even if the mind has repressed/blocked the memory of incest...the body does remember the discomfort, unexpected urges and body aches can be signs of what happened
- Inability to swallow pills, if the person is not able to take pills orally then it shows resistance to oral activity tied in the fear of forced oral activity during incest.
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviour.

These symptoms may appear different according to individual and their severity is also different.

How to comfort someone who has been through this trauma?

Victims feel ashamed talking about sexual abuse among incest due to societal pressure and the stigma around it. The least one can do is deal with the situation with compassion, patience and love. In other words, victim does not need to be felt like a victim but a survivor.

RAINN (The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network) has a protocol in terms of who a victim can feel safe reporting an incest situation to:

- A parent
- A teacher
- A school counselor
- A friend's parent
- A doctor
- A minister (or pastor, priest, rabbi, imam, etc.)

There are various resources available globally that can be used to help the fighters. To name a few

1. Incest Resource , Inc
<http://www.incestresourcesinc.org/>

This website is run solely by survivors and volunteers. It provides educational resources to survivors and professionals by mail at a minimal charge.

2. STIGMA, INC.
<http://www.stigmatized.org/>

Stigma, Inc. provides support group for individuals conceived by rape or incest and for women who have been pregnant by assault or are raising rape or incest conceived children. The website offers an email support list, a chat room, optional contacts to obtain support, and information and general support

In conclusion, people who have been through this trauma need love, affection, compassion, and a sense of acceptance from the society and the people who matter to them. The problem needs to be addressed with at most professional help and care. With proper help and support, victims can fight through this and come out as winners.

References

- DeYoung, M. (1982). *The sexual victimization of children*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
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