



## Can Family Affection Go Too Far?

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The greatest gift a child can receive is to have a family who shows them unconditional love by nurturing them. A child is nurtured by their parents or family members to help them grow in a positive environment, so they can flourish in adulthood. When a child is growing up, parents and family members demonstrate their affection through hugs and kisses, providing the resources that they need and caring for them whether it be for their safety or school. A parents' or family members affection means everything to a child since they know they are loved and cared for. But what if the affection is taken too far?

In the United States, there are family households that child sexual abuse is taken place by a child's own family member. Incest mainly occurs between an older male relative and a young female child of any race or background. Incidents of incest amongst young male children have been reported as well. According to "The National Center for Victims of Crime", "1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse. Self-report studies show that 20% of adult females and 5-10% of adult males recall a childhood sexual assault or sexual abuse incident" ("The National Center for Victims of Crime", 2018). When a child is a victim of sexual abuse with a family member, it's often harder for them to get out of since they believe that person has power over them. There are instances when a child assumes that type of "affection" is how family members normally demonstrate it to their children. This family member takes advantage of the child's trust and love to ensure the sexual abuse proceeds for a long period of time.

Children who are victims of incest often keep it a secret for months or even years. They think it is difficult to tell someone about the abuse since they feel helpless or scared on what's going to happen. Some of the reasons on why the victim keeps the abuse a secret is they are scared on what will happen to the abuser if they tell someone. They will fear on how their family members will react such as not believing their story or a family conflict about to arise.

They feel ignored about the abuse since they already told someone, but that person didn't do anything about it. Finally, the most common reason is the abuser will tell the victim that this is how family members demonstrate their affection so it's normal. The victims won't have an idea that they are actually being sexually abused. Whether the victim was sexually abused once, twice or even multiple times by their family member, this will lead to prolonged consequences as they get older.

Childhood incest can lead to prolonged consequences. The scars placed on a child will be marked physically and emotionally as they grow older until these scars unravel. Victims of childhood incest are prone to develop negative habits and addiction due to a loss of self-esteem. According to "Survivors of Incest Anonymous", "Some of the social maladjustments arising from incest are: alcoholism, drug addiction, self-injury, prostitution, promiscuity, sexual dysfunction and suicide. Eating or sleeping disorders, migraines, back or stomach pains are just a few of the serious physical consequences that we may suffer. Food, sex, alcohol and/or drugs deaden painful memories of the abuse and obscure reality temporarily" ("Survivors of Incest Anonymous", 2007). Adult survivors of childhood incest will develop these issues to cope with the pain or feel accepted by society since that's the only type of "affection" they received as a child.

## References

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