

What to do if you or someone you know has been sexually abused?

If you have been abused in the past and have never talked about it, tell someone you trust, preferably a parent, teacher, counselor or youth minister. You may need professional help to cope with the abuse, to put it in perspective, and to move on to a healthier way of relating to the world.

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To report any suspected child abuse contact:

Archdiocese of Mobile
Office of Child Protection
251-434-1559

The state of Alabama has a mandatory reporting law. This means that people in certain professions must report child abuse. Mandatory reporters are:

1. Police Officer
2. Physician
3. Surgeon
4. Physical Therapist
5. Dentist
6. Resident
7. Intern
8. Hospital Staff Member
9. Podiatrist
10. Chiropractor
11. Licensed Nurse
12. Nursing Aides
13. Dental Hygienist
14. Emergency Med. Tech
15. Paramedic
16. Optometrist
17. Medical Examiner
18. Coroner
19. Psychiatrist
20. Psychologist
21. Marriage/Family Counselor
22. Social Worker/Aide
23. Commercial Film Processor
24. Priests and other Clergy
25. Teacher
26. School Counselor
27. School Administrator

Archdiocese of Mobile Children and Adolescents Protection Program

Sexual Abuse Prevention Statement to High School Adolescents

The overwhelming majority of adults working with youth today are positive and faithful individuals, dedicated to helping our youth grow in the Catholic faith. Unfortunately, there have been cases where adults have behaved inappropriately and have even abused young people entrusted to their care.

The Church believes in the dignity of the human person and recognizes abusive behavior as sinful and in some cases criminal. One victim of abuse is one too many. The Church seeks to restore any broken relationship. This is sometimes difficult.

The Archdiocese of Mobile is sincerely committed to the spiritual and emotional well-being of all by providing morally good, healthy, and informed leaders, thereby making the Church a place of safety and trust. The Archdiocese needs you to share in this responsibility of awareness and to seek help for yourself or your friends if you are aware of any prior or present sexual abuse.

All children have the right to be protected from harm in any and all environments – home, school, religious institutions, neighborhoods and communities. The Archdiocese of Mobile embraces this right to safety and is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all children. The Archdiocese will do all in its power to create safe environments for minors, to prevent their physical or sexual abuse and to bring the healing ministry of the Archdiocese to bear wherever possible.

When developing new relationships ask yourself:

1. How long have you known the person?
2. Is your knowledge of this person face-to-face?
3. How much do you know about this person?
4. How have you verified what this person has told you about themselves?
5. What do your feelings (instincts) tell you about this person or situation?
6. How many things do you have in common with this person?
7. Is the relationship respectful of your boundaries and the other person's?
8. Are you able to say, "No," to this person?
9. Does this person's age or status influence your behavior in the relationship?
10. Does this person ever ask you to keep secrets?

Guidelines for protecting personal boundaries:

- Do not reveal personal information on the Internet. That includes full names, school, grade, address, phone number, sports teams, church groups, etc. Those who want to exploit young people will try to identify potential victims by learning about their activities and schedule patterns.
- Let a trusted adult know anytime you feel bullied. Know how to respond to bullies, whether in an Internet chat room, at school, or in another setting.
- Understand that comments which devalue or criticize others for their physical attributes, race, religion, economic status, etc., are not appropriate.
- Avoid situations which involve alcohol, drugs, smoking, or other risk taking behaviors.
- Be cautious about situations in which you are alone with an adult.

Ways to protect yourself:

Take precautions to limit the possibility that you might be sexually abused. Keep the following points in mind:

1. Your body is your sacred domain. You have a right to decide how it will be touched and by whom. No one is ever free to force, pressure, or tease you into having sexual contact of any kind. (Good Touch/Bad Touch)
2. Trust your own feelings. If someone's conduct or attitude seems suspicious, or if you are confused, afraid or uncomfortable, there may be a good reason. (Good Secrets/Bad Secrets)
3. Have a clear idea of your own sexual values, goals, and ideals. Be assertive in saying no if you feel you are being pushed or pressured.
4. Don't weaken your defenses with alcohol or any other substance.
5. Don't walk alone at night. Don't hitchhike or accept rides from strangers.
6. Immediately leave a room if someone is there you can't trust.
7. Don't be alone with a date in a potentially dangerous place like an empty house or a parked car.
8. Refuse single dates with someone you don't know well and never go on a date with someone who has the reputation of being sexually abusive or immoral.
9. Never accept a drink you have not poured and never set your drink down or leave it unattended. (Rapists today are using powerful drugs like Rohypnol and GHB-commonly called ruffies, roofies, and many other street names to disable females. These drugs are slipped into a person's drink. As one teen said, "The last thing I remember about the party was this guy giving me a drink. I woke up seven hours later in his bed. I can't remember anything in between.")
10. Avoid any situation you deem to be dangerous.

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