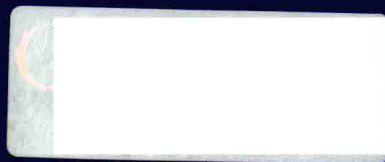
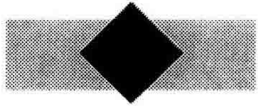


Treating Sexually Abused Boys

A Practical Guide
for Therapists
& Counselors

Lisa





TREATING SEXUALLY ABUSED BOYS

A Practical Guide for
Therapists and Counselors

Lisa Camino



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TREATING SEXUALLY ABUSED BOYS

This book is dedicated with much love and many thanks to

My parents, Vella and Carroll Berryman, who gave the unconditional love, nurturing, and encouragement that made it possible for me to work with abused children.

My husband, J. Bruce Camino, who never let me forget my purpose in writing this book and the importance of completing it.

My sons, Kevin and Brandon, whose births clarified all my reasons for writing this book. May every child in your generation enjoy life free from abuse and full of liberty.

PREFACE

It is my belief that every person who reads this book shares my goal of stopping child abuse. I hope you also share my conviction that providing early and effective intervention for molested boys is an essential step in meeting that goal. Ten years ago, two coworkers and I were asked to expand a sexual abuse treatment program to include boys. At that time we were able to find only one book on the subject. Also, when we looked for detailed, structured activities to use in therapy with boys, we found none.

We did manage to find and consult with some professionals who had worked with molested children of both sexes, but what they said about therapy with boys gave us pause. We were warned to expect problems with sexual talk and behavior during sessions. We were cautioned that abused boys would exhibit rage and, therefore, that we needed to be prepared to use verbal and physical techniques for managing aggression. It was suggested that we not use play therapy except as a reward for good behavior. We were even advised not to offer refreshments (although these same professionals offered refreshments to girls) because boys might make a mess or behave inappropriately with the food.

At that point we took a long, hard look at our options: we could wait until other professionals published information on the "right" way to provide therapy for boys, or we could proceed on our own by taking risks, making mistakes, and applying what we learned. We decided to proceed. After carefully considering the available information we had on the subject, we developed our own approach.

We started with group therapy but soon discovered that the group setting is not the best alternative for all boys. We added individual therapy and discovered that the same treatment approach that we used in groups was also effective in individual work.

We based our work in both individual and group settings on the theme of *empowerment*. This theme is explained in detail in Chapter One, and it is woven into the subsequent chapters in Part One as well as the structured activities in Part Two. When a boy begins therapy, he generally feels helpless, fearful, and vulnerable; sexual abuse has robbed him of his personal power.

During therapy, we consciously avoid the word *victim* in describing a client. When a boy hears himself described in this way, he begins to perceive himself as a victim. That self-image then reinforces dependent and helpless behaviors on his part.

The goal in therapy is to help every abused boy break free of the image of himself as a victim and to regain his personal power in positive ways. This process involves separating the trauma he has experienced from who he is as a person. It also involves equipping each boy with the knowledge and skills he needs in order to choose how he will respond to circumstances and other people. It is my hope that helping boys make the transition from victimization to personal empowerment will be as rewarding for you as it is for me.

Acknowledgments

First I want to thank my clients—all the boys who accepted the challenge of therapy and persisted with it. I am grateful to them for their hard work in therapy and for educating me about the issues they face as a result of sexual abuse.

I also want to thank Kathy Schurkman and Tim Bynum, MFCC, who were my coleaders when I began doing group therapy for sexually abused boys, and Andrew Brett, MFCC, who joined our team a little further into the process. We learned together and enjoyed every step of our learning process. Their encouragement and support of this book are very much appreciated.

Many thanks also go to Debra Holland, Ph.D., MFCC, for her willingness to read this manuscript and offer constructive feedback.

August 1999
Buena Park, California

Lisa Camino

TREATING SEXUALLY ABUSED BOYS

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PART ONE

A THERAPEUTIC APPROACH BASED ON EMPOWERMENT



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One acquaints you with this book, its format, and its contents. It also gives you the basic and essential information you will need in order to fulfill your role as a therapist working with sexually abused boys.

This Book and Its Intended Audience

Treating Sexually Abused Boys offers options for both individual and group therapy for sexually abused boys ages seven through eighteen. It presents an overview of clinical information, a specific clinical approach that has been used successfully with this challenging population, and fifty group activities based on that approach (many of which can be adapted for use with an individual child).

Contents

Part One, which consists of Chapters One through Six, concentrates on the therapeutic approach that my colleagues and I use in our work with sexually abused boys. This first chapter not only describes your responsibilities as a therapist but also explains the important relationship between a boy's reactions to sexual abuse and the impact of the conditioning messages he receives early in life. Chapter Two explains how to complete a thorough initial assessment of a potential client and how to prepare the boy for entering abuse-specific therapy.

Chapter Three describes how to work with a sexually abused boy in individual therapy and how to determine when individual therapy is the appropriate choice for a child. It offers sample cases (with names and certain details changed to protect confidentiality) to illustrate the complexity and uniqueness of each child's situation. Although this chapter discusses the specific approach that my colleagues and I use, it is neither possible nor appropriate to conduct every session as though you were following a recipe (start with this theme, use this approach, then follow with this intervention). What is addressed in each session and how it is addressed must be determined by your continual assessment of the boy's needs, problems, priorities, and choices.

Chapter Four covers how to conduct therapy in a group setting. It consists of guidelines for developing a therapy group and for determining when a group approach is more appropriate for a child than individual therapy.

Chapter Five presents information on working with parents and other significant adults, such as guardians and teachers. Chapter Six offers ways to handle problems and difficult situations that occur when working with sexually abused boys. These suggestions are intended not only to help you in working through certain situations but also to stimulate your own creativity in developing interventions.

Part Two offers fifty structured activities. The introductory information that precedes them explains why structured activities are an important part of therapy, how the activities are formatted, and how to use them. The activities are designed to target specific therapy goals for sexually abused boys. Although they are written as group designs, most can be adapted for use in individual therapy. The overriding themes of these activities are (1) restoring empowerment to the children, (2) offering them the opportunity to express all of their feelings with regard to the abuse they have experienced, and (3) giving them a chance to explore their concerns about sexuality and to learn from that process.

It is impossible to predict how a particular group will respond to a given activity. Although I have described common participant reactions to each of the activities in Part Two, these reactions are based exclusively on my own experiences and those of my colleagues. You will need to assess both the process of the entire group and the response of each boy on an ongoing basis, and then plan accordingly.

The Appendix describes nine therapeutic interventions that can be used to educate sexually abused boys and to develop their skills in such areas as communicating, exploring and expressing their feelings, and making decisions. These interventions include such techniques as art therapy, games, puppets, and tension busters. The Resources section comprises several lists of books and articles that are highly recommended as sources of background information on abuse-related topics.

Your Background as Therapist

In writing this book, I have assumed that you are either a practicing therapist or a graduate student who currently works with sexually abused boys or is preparing to do so. To use the materials in this book effectively, you need to have a solid background of training in the following areas:

- Child and adolescent development
- Group therapy process and skills
- Child abuse and neglect
- Psychiatric diagnosis
- Play therapy theory and skills
- Crisis intervention, including the management of aggressive behaviors and suicidal symptoms

Meeting a Potential Client

Your first meeting with an abused boy may be similar to the following scenario:

As the boy and his mother enter your office, you greet them and introduce yourself. Your referral sheet indicates that the boy, Danny, is eleven years old and was referred to you by his family doctor because of behavioral problems at home and school.

Danny sits in the chair farthest from you and his mother and looks at the floor. His mother, who appears tired and somewhat anxious, confirms that the family doctor has recommended counseling. You explain that what you will be doing during this first session will later enable you to determine whether therapy is needed and, if so, what the process and treatment plan will be.

When you ask Danny if he understands and if he has any questions, he again looks at the floor and shrugs. Despite your efforts to involve him during this first interview, he responds minimally and demonstrates no observable response to hearing his mother's description of his behavioral problems. She relates that he has been fighting at school, that he is defiant with teachers, and that his grades have dropped drastically. The fighting and defiance are so severe, she says, that he has been suspended several times.

His mother further states that at home Danny stays in his room and that he awakens with nightmares at least three nights a week. He has also been reluctant to participate in activities that he used to enjoy and excel in, especially soccer and karate.

You learn that Danny's family consists of a father who has his own profitable business, a mother who is a homemaker, a teenaged brother, and a younger sister. In answer to your inquiry, Danny's mother tells you that no one in the family has a history