

**Understanding Sex Offender Motivation
Helping Children and Families Heal**

SCAO-CWS Conference
Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

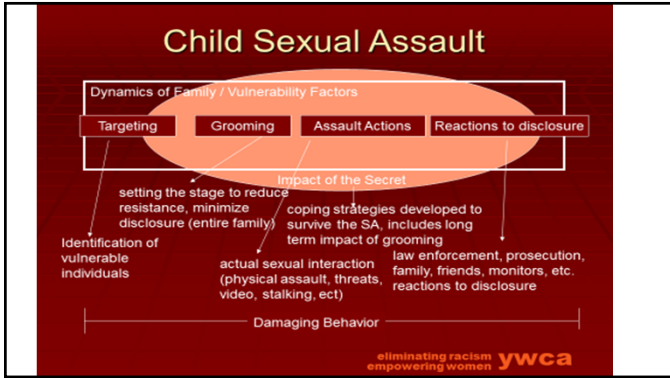
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Beginning Caveats

- A bit of history and perspective.
- Exploring how and why does not excuse behavior.
- Self care----what is your orientation?

Why Do We Care?

- The motivation of the sex offender impacts the experience of the victim
- Incest offenders may play an ongoing role in their child's life
- Safety plans are better designed when we know the whole picture
- Prevention in your work with victims, and in your lives



Definitions of abuse

Most definitions that involve gradations of severity of assault are for legal or research purposes. The impact of an assault is not measured by the nature of the act, but by the consequences experienced by the victim.

No act of sexual assault should ever be minimized based on where it falls within the *legal* continuum of severity, nor should the impact be exaggerated by our own beliefs.

Grooming

- Over 84% of **all** sexual assaults occur in the context of a relationship.
- Over 90% of CSA is perpetrated by a known offender.
- Grooming reduces resistance, inhibits disclosure, attributes responsibility to the victim. It can be "institutionalized"
- Some societal beliefs support grooming behaviors.

Grooming

- Grooming is often more damaging than the assault itself, as it creates constructs of vulnerability and self-blame for the victims.
- Offenders groom the family, the victim, and *themselves*.
- Offenders find environments that support their belief systems, providing them validation for the choices they make
- Potential victims and family members may be exposed to these environments as well

Sexual Assault Offender Dynamic Grooming Self

- Most sexual assaults (not all) meet some emotional need of the offender, but only temporarily----sex offenders typically commit multiple assaults (60-70%), or similar (need gratifying) crimes.
- Most sex offenders do not envision themselves to be criminals, *at the time of the assault*, nor do they consider their tactics to be abusive.

Assailant Typologies

- There are a variety of typologies for the sexual assault perpetrator----most are based on the tactics used by the offender, but give us very little that we can do preventatively or educationally.
- We like to categorize horrific acts, or people who commit them----it gives us a sense of control, when we feel powerlessness.
- Reality----each offense is different, as is each offender.

Offender Motivational Typologies

- The following dynamics offer insights into the motivation of offenders.
- Explanations are not excuses.
- Acts of violence are typically based on meeting some other need.
- Categories will overlap

Intimacy/Affection/Nurturance

- Fantasy response – Belief that they are valued because sexual contact is occurring, or because someone is acquiescing to their sexual wants.
- Completely self-absorbed--no connection to the victim. Usually high levels of cognitive distortion and rationalization. More typical in incest and may co-occur with a domestic violence dynamic.

Intimacy/Affection/Nurturance
what it can look like:

- Recreating scenarios of a fantasy “romantic” relationship
- “Threats” to harm self, sadness, to gain proximity or engage in some behavior.
- Sabotage victim’s relationships with others
- Foster care-taking by victim (usually through guilt)
- Engage in play as a partner, not a parent

Rage

- Intention to harm, to cause damage, not necessarily focused on the individual or the immediate circumstances, per se, but is looking for reactions to reinforce that offender's rage is validated. Is focused on the specific *suffering* of the victim. May involve mental illness and childhood trauma. Less common in incest.

Rage

what it might look like:

- Can involve DV in home as well
- Conversation that is designed to elicit fear, threats to hurt, monster imagery.
- CSA may also include other injuries
- More likely the dynamic in stranger assaults
- Rage-based abuse may be episodic, incorporating a purposefully terrorizing dynamic
- Fear-inducing behavior may not be unique to assailant-child interaction (animals, other relationships)

Anger

- In the context of a relationship. Usually connected to *perceived* loss or disempowerment. Can be equated with panic on part of offender as losses are sudden and have significant meaning to offender. Often associated with domestic violence.
- "Anger" is catch-all emotion; likely the offender experiences something else as well or first.
- Assumes anger must be acted on, and is *entitled* to act

Anger

what it might look like:

- Other acts of child abuse or DV
- Attempts to get child to align with offender's "anger" against other parent
- Limited capacity to attune to needs of child
- Minimal frustration tolerance and blaming of child
- Often tied to other dynamics/motivation.
- Threats of repercussions (isolation, social)
- Family cautious around explosiveness and see this as ongoing consequence for "misbehavior"

Esteem

- —conquest—sexual activity and/or violence is associated with value or self-definition as a "competent man." No empathy for victim, no connection to her/his reaction. No fantasy of closeness. Associated with (pre)-adolescent morality structure. (value is determined by "admiration" by others or demonstrative power or "accomplishment")
- Interactions a predicated on a victor and a defeated individual

Esteem

what it might look like:

- Supported by cohort with same belief system (esteem tied to success.
- Less common with incest, unless victim is a non-bio teen (abuse of young child → esteem)
- May be element of assault by teens
- Attempts to establish "status" with self or others
- When in families, agenda of "bolstering" assailant may be present

Power/control

- Intention to disempower another to achieve a sense of balance in with own sense of powerlessness. Perpetrating assaults maintains equilibrium for the assailant. Usually has minimal alternate coping skills.
- Can be associated with domestic violence and sexual assault as well as child sexual abuse.
- Is the foundation of sexual reactivity in *some* victims.
- Esteem issues present often

Power/control

what it might look like:

- Can be part of a DV relationship, another form of dominance with adults and children.
- Dominance is usually part of other aspects of relationship with children (parenting style)
- Surveillance facilitates powerlessness of victim
- Child may be very sensitive to control prompts from parent (specific look, expectations)
- Consider cumulative trauma from power/control family dynamics

Erotic exchange

- Pedophiles, sexual addiction: World is organized around meeting sexual desires. Nature of these desires are typically rooted in significant cognitive distortions---not necessarily mental illness.
- All sex offenders of children are not pedophiles.
- Consider this dynamic in some child on child assault (sex for the sake of sex without inhibitors in place)

Erotic exchange

what it might look like:

- When in families or ongoing relationships--child is sexualized in many ways (language, clothing, compliments, photography, etc.)
- Other sexualized dynamics in the home (pornography, dress, boundaries)

- Consider normal sexual focus of teens in combination with poor regulatory capacity.

Pedophiles

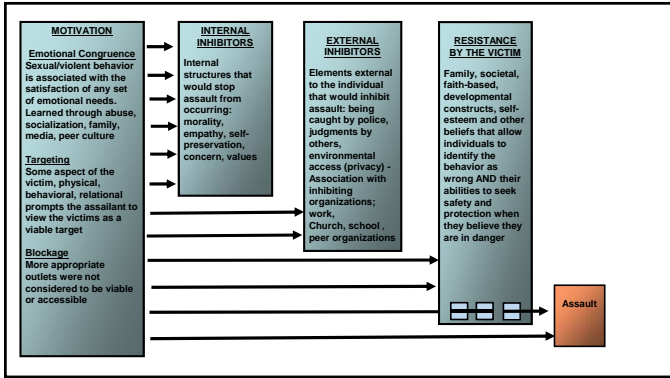
- Arousal *and* sexual activity directed a pre-pubescent children.
- May be exclusive or non-exclusive to children
- Incestuous abuse of children does not necessarily involve sexual fantasies or arousal toward children.
- Pedophilia is a particular form of paraphilia involving deviant arousal patterns, with DSM V diagnostic criteria—use the term carefully

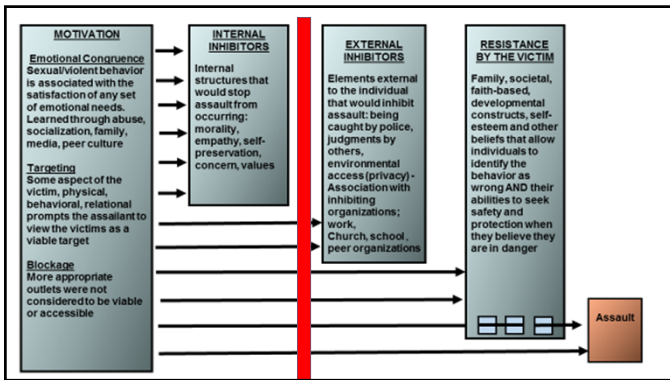
Let's build a sex offender

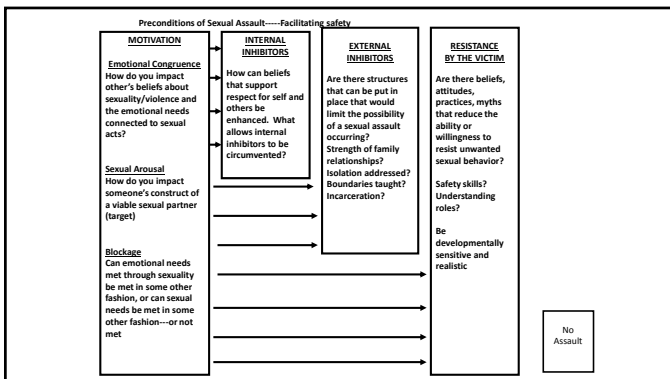
- Most acts of CSA have a long prelude

- Dynamics that contributed to the offense may still be in play in the family, even if the abuse has stopped.

- These should be considered in safety planning and recuperative services







<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Congruence • How do you impact other's beliefs about sexuality/violence and the emotional needs connected to sexual acts? • Sexual Arousal • How do you impact someone's construct of a viable sexual partner (target) • Blockage • Can emotional needs met through sexuality be met in some other fashion, or can sexual needs be met in some other fashion—or not met 	<p>Family's ability to identify and meet emotional needs of members</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">do they have a language to express emotion</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">do they have strategies to address emotions</p> <p>Is there a language and process to address sexual desires, developmental issues, adult sexuality</p> <p>Are there multiple ways to address emotional needs. Is there tolerance to postpone need gratification</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERNAL INHIBITORS • How can beliefs that support respect for self and others be enhanced. What allows internal inhibitors to be circumvented? 	<p>Are dynamics of entitlement, insecurity and power differentials common to CSA and DV effectively addressed.</p> <p>Is effective communication in place to address any avoidance of problem dynamics.</p> <p>Are substance abuse and other disinhibiting tactics addressed</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EXTERNAL INHIBITORS • Are there structures that can be put in place that would limit the possibility of a sexual assault occurring? • Strength of family relationships? • Isolation addressed? Boundaries taught? • Incarceration? 	<p>Has the parent accepted role as the protector of the child? Not only to abuse by known offender, but of possible abuse by others.</p> <p>Is safety evaluated on an ongoing bases---with changing age and venues: school, faith community, neighborhood, extended family, day care.</p> <p>Parent addresses safety of child with others—establishes boundaries, makes aware of vigilance, is a champion for child.</p> <p>Are realistic safeguards in place regarding access of offender to victim (sibling, bio-child, neighbor)</p>
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- RESISTANCE
- BY THE VICTIM
- Are there beliefs, attitudes, practices, myths that reduce the ability or willingness to resist unwanted sexual behavior?
- Safety skills?
- Understanding roles?
- Be developmentally sensitive and realistic

THE SAFETY PLAN DOES NOT RELY ON THE CHILD BEING SELF-PROTECTIVE

Have the "lessons" learned though grooming been retaught? (esteem, role in family, purpose of sexual contact, values re respect for self and others)

There is safety education that is repeated (often) and an adult ally who will listen and rehearse

Expectations for children must be developmentally appropriate.

Thank you
