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Indicators of Sexual Abuse
in Artwork



Summary

- Definition of Sexual Abuse
- Place of Art in Assessment of Sexual Abuse
- Continuum of Sexual Abuse/Trauma Model
- Phases of Child Sexual Abuse
- Indicators of Sexual Abuse in Drawings
- Case Studies
- Where to go for More Information



History

- ❑ Over 100 years ago, Freud wrote about patient reports of sexual abuse by their families called *Seduction Theory*
- ❑ 1970s-Sexual Abuse began to be discussed
- ❑ 1974-Child Abuse and Treatment Act
- ❑ 1981-Prevention Programs for children began
- ❑ 1988-The Courage to Heal was published, Bass and Davis



COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

- Anger
- Helplessness
- Sexual Overstimulation
- Resistance and Induced Retraumatization
- Occupational Hazards
 - Burn Out
 - Secondary Trauma



Mandatory Reporting

In NJ, the report is made to the Division of Child and Families

Who is a Mandated Reporter?

When, What, How?

When becoming aware of a case

- Report to colleagues and supervisors
- Talk to an agency liaison
- Call DYFS or your state organization
- Keep the child safe at all times

What Happens Next?

Impacts on Clinical Care

NJ: 1-877-NJ ABUSE



FACTS — University of New Hampshire

<http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/factsheet/pdf/CSA-FS20.pdf>

- • One U.S. governmental source counts 78,188 child victims of sexual abuse in 2003. That's a rate of 1.2 per 1,000 American children.
- • The 2001 National Crime Victimization Survey, which only covers youth 12-17, estimates that 1.9 per 1,000 children are raped or sexually assaulted.
- • National surveys of adults find that 9-28% of women say they experienced some type of sexual abuse or assault in childhood.



What about Men and Boys?

- Prevalence estimates varied widely (by definition used and population studied), ranging from 4% to 76%.
- common, underreported, underrecognized, and undertreated

Holmes, WC, Slap, GB. (1998). Sexual abuse of boys: definition, prevalence, correlates, sequelae, and management. [JAMA](#). 2;280(21):1855-62.



FACTS II

- ❑ Sexual Abuse is not a diagnosis
- ❑ Results in a range of individualized responses
- ❑ Trauma results from the intrapsychic impact
- ❑ Can impact development as energies used towards developmental tasks are redirected
- ❑ Interviewing Skills are essential-see Handbook for Childhood Sexual Abuse-Sgroi

RESULTING TRAUMA

T=Time,

T-1

T

T+1

Before

During

After

Resulting Defenses:

Dissociation, Identification with the Aggressor,
Repetition Compulsion, Turning Against the
Self, Psychosis, Dissociative Identity Disorder,
Somatization, Eating Disorders, Denial



Continuum of Sexual Abuse

What is the Definition?

Premature Viewing of Sexual Acts

Sexual Name Calling

False Sexual Accusations

Exposure to Nudity, Disrobing, Genital Exposure,
Masturbation

Voyerism

Unwanted Touching

Forced Sex

Hurtful Sex

Rape



SEXUAL ABUSE PHASES

Engagement-STAGE ONE

- Usually the abuser is someone who is known (maybe a relative or a caretaker)
- A Trusting Relationship is Formed
- Extra Attention or Presents may be Given
- The Needs of the Child are Well Known



SEXUAL INTERACTION

STAGE TWO

- ❑ Introduction of Sex as a Game
- ❑ Rewards or Bribes may be Implemented
- ❑ No Threats are usually necessary due to implied Power of Authority
- ❑ Threats may be used when the abuser lacks social skills
- ❑ Progresses from Least Intrusive to Most Intrusive



SECRECY-STAGE THREE

- ❑ Ambivalence within the child
(overwhelmed emotionally but enjoyment of the sexual experience or special role)
- ❑ Threats of implied abandonment, jail or sending away may occur
- ❑ Open Threats of Physical Violence against the Victim, Family Members or Abuser
- ❑ Punishment for Unavailability
- ❑ This Stage could last from a short time to Years (even into Adulthood)



DISCLOSURE STAGE FOUR

- ❑ Disclosure could happen **Accidentally**
(observed by a third party, physical injury, sexually transmitted disease is found, pregnancy, recognition of sexual knowledge in a child)
- ❑ Disclosure could happen **Purposefully**
(overstimulation, anxiety, need for separation, fear of pregnancy)
- ❑ **INCREASED ANXIETY AND CRISIS**



REPRESSION - STAGE FIVE

- ❑ Disclosure is usually followed by some degree of repression
- ❑ Family members may put pressure on the child to recant the allegation
- ❑ “He or she won’t remember it”
- ❑ Moving towards the future or the past?
- ❑ Flashbacks and symptoms replace talking
- ❑ Vulnerable to residual trauma
- ❑ Treatment compliance may become shakey
- ❑ Repressed Memory Syndrome



INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN
DRAWINGS



Factors Affecting Drawings

- ❑ Circumstances of Abuse
- ❑ Developmental Level
- ❑ Premorbid Functioning
- ❑ Defenses
- ❑ Phase of Crisis
- ❑ Family Dynamics
- ❑ The Images as a Snapshot of a Moment in Time



Use of Indicators

- ❑ Primary Indicators are reportable
- ❑ Secondary Indicators are treatable
- ❑ The patients' ego should be supported if abuse is suspected. You may be aware of the abuse before the patient.
- ❑ The patient must feel safe and integrated enough to reveal the abuse
- ❑ Every drawing is unique and expresses the experience for that patient at that moment in time



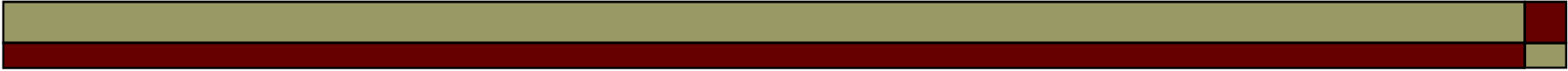
Use of Indicators II

- ❑ Human Beings rely on sex to survive and thrive, be cautious
- ❑ It can be difficult to distinguish reality from fantasy
- ❑ Consider various layers of symbolism
Universal, Cultural and Individual
- ❑ Consult a specialist about the use and interpretation of art



Why Art?

- ❑ Indicators may be seen in art before disclosed
- ❑ Art is safe in protecting the fragile ego
- ❑ One may be threatened not to talk about the abuse but may be able to draw it
- ❑ Very young children can draw what they do not have the vocabulary words to express
- ❑ Art provides choices and mastery
- ❑ Art is often a primary language for children



Normal Sexual Behavior of Young Children

- 0-4 years-exploration of genitals
- 1-4 Becomes aware of male/female differences
- 3-4 touching genitals for pleasure when resting
- 3-4 mutual body exploration in curiosity about similarities and differences
- 3-4 Use of Profanity in Imitation without knowledge of meanings
- 3-4 competition with same sex parent for special relationship with the opposite sex parent
- 5-7 gives up wish for special relationship with the opposite sex parent and identification with the same sex parent



Atypical Sexual Behavior of Children

- ❑ Fear or panic when changing diaper
- ❑ Going Limp
- ❑ Premature Knowledge of genital sexual activity
- ❑ Excessive Masturbation
- ❑ Acting out adult sexual activity in play
- ❑ Fear to be alone with an adult
- ❑ Overt Sexual Behavior towards a parent



Art in Treatment of Sexual Abuse

- ❑ Dairy Writing
- ❑ Ego Supportive Work
- ❑ Family Issues
- ❑ Discharge of Anger and Aggression
- ❑ Safe Directives (Object Oriented, Third Person)
- ❑ Body Image and Body Experiences
- ❑ Re-experiencing trauma will successful outcome
- ❑ Projective Identification



More information

- Annette Vaccaro www.familylife.net,
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- American Art Therapy Association
- Caldwell College, Graduate Art Therapy
- The Academy of Clinical and Applied Psychoanalysis, Part II, Cases & Treatment
- Open House, May 12, 2009 Resistance is Good? Then why do I feel so bad?

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