

Compiled by Janet Nestor, MA LPC DCEP
janetnestor@gmail.com 910.899.0820

Symptoms of Childhood Sexual Abuse – Adult Survivors

1. **Nightmares:** Direct images, almost recollections that are repetitious and terrifying dreams that make you feel helpless and trapped
2. **Flashbacks:** Sensory images that vividly bring back sights, sounds, and the physical sensations and feelings of the abuse
3. **Distrust:** Distrust of the opposite sex, authority figures and self
4. **Sexual Hang-ups:** Inhibitions and fears about sexual activity – ranging in severity to physical illness
5. **Depression:** Feelings of worthlessness, apathy, self-loathing
6. **Guilt:** Self-blame for the incestuous sexual activity, feeling guilty about hating the abuser, horror at enjoying the sexual encounters, and the absorption of some of the abuser's guilt feelings
7. **Anger:** Often directed inward. When directed toward the appropriate targets it is liberating
8. **Confusion:** The overwhelming confusion of the child as to why the incest is happening, why they are being betrayed overwhelms the child and the feelings are carried over into adulthood
9. **Self-mutilation:** Happens to avoid blaming the perpetrator
10. **Relationship Difficulties:** A distrustful, confused and angry survivor often has difficulties relating to other people
11. **Self-doubt:** Sexual abuse is often accompanied by verbal abuse and name calling. These make a deep impression on the helpless child. The feeling of powerlessness that grows in the helpless child is carried into adulthood
12. **Voices:** Frequent thoughts of being bad, stupid, unwanted and unlovable are repeated often. Sometimes the thoughts are "heard" as voices that seem real