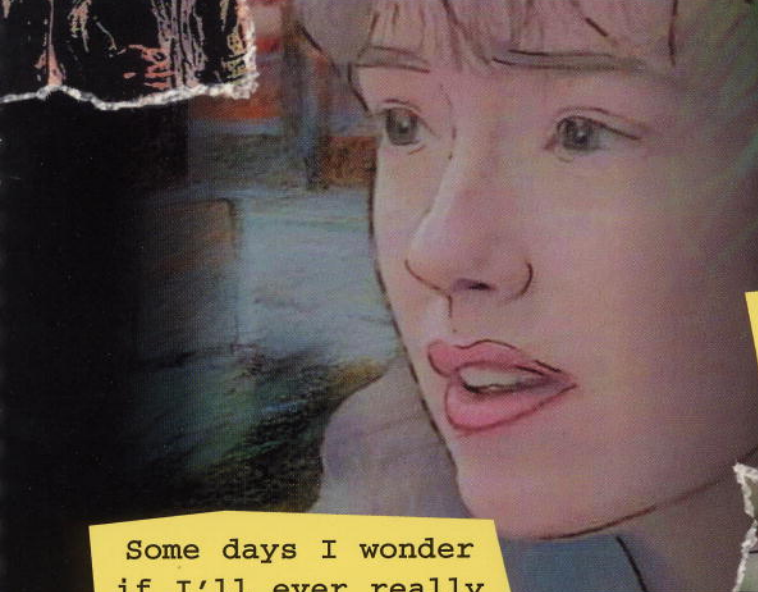


A film about sexual abuse

the user's guide

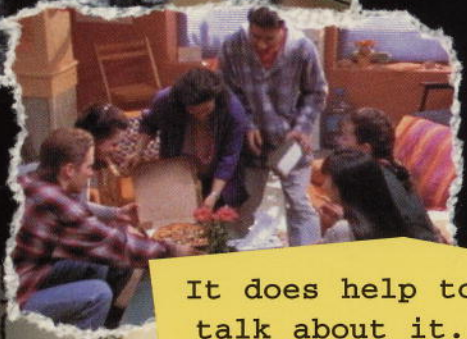
Good Things too



I thought I was
the only one that
felt these things.
Now I know I'm not
the only one.



Some days I wonder
if I'll ever really
feel okay again.



It does help to
talk about it.



Tina



A film about
sexual abuse

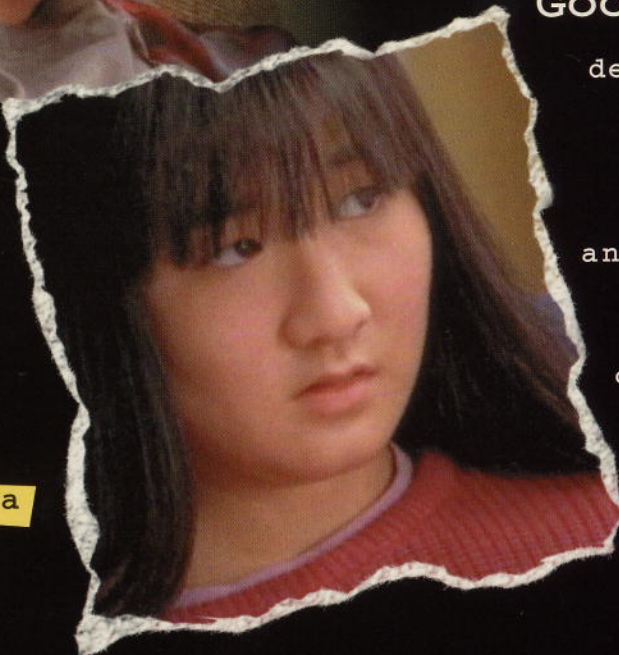
A drama about five teens...

Good Things too is
designed to acknowledge
the feelings and experiences
of **teens**
and **adults** who have been
sexually abused, within a
context of **healing**
and **hope**.

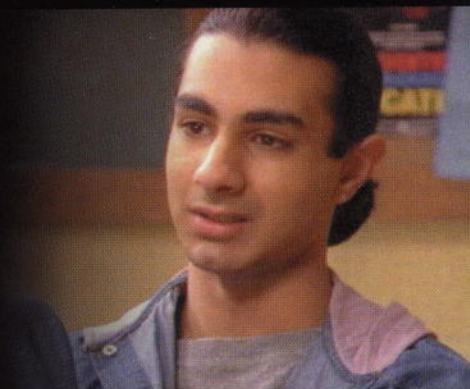
Hank



Melissa



Mike



Janine



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● ● ● Film Outline

At the centre of this guide you will find a visual outline of the film. Accompanying each segment are program notes, discussion, and questions for each of the following purposes:

- Therapy and counselling with **Teen Survivors**
- Therapy and counselling with **Adult Survivors**
- Therapy and counselling with **Families**
- Professional development
- Public education and awareness

First teen-group meeting:

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Good Things too is cleared for classroom use and public performance provided no entry fee is charged.

Purpose of the film and guide



Good Things too is designed to acknowledge and validate the feelings and experiences of teens and adults who have been sexually abused, and to encourage recovery within a context of healing and hope.

The **Film** is a drama about five teens who are working in a teen group to recover from the effects of sexual abuse. Hank, Tina, Janine, Melissa, and Mike talk about their feelings of fear, sadness, anger, depression, guilt and confusion, and the ways in which they have coped with these feelings. The six segments of the drama show us six "moments" in this process of healing, as the teens give each other support over a period of six months. At the last teen-group meeting, we see that each teen is moving towards a safe and healthy life.

The **User's Guide** is designed to help users identify and locate material found in the film, and use the film effectively with a wide range of audiences.

Good Things too is designed for use in the following situations:

in therapy or counselling

- to help teen and adult survivors of sexual abuse, and their families:
- talk about their feelings and experiences
- accept their reactions and ways of coping
- develop a sense of hope about their own future.

for professional development

- to help therapists and counsellors and those working in social, health, and family services; police, legal and correctional services; teachers and school administrators; and people training in all these fields:
- understand that many teen survivors are put at further risk because they are not believed or understood
- support teen and adult survivors of sexual abuse, and their families
- sensitize and train people who will be working with sexually abused teens.

for public education and awareness

- to help educate and sensitize members of the general public about the effects of sexual abuse on the lives of teen survivors, adult survivors, and their families.

How "realistic"



How "realistic" is this film?

It's important to remember that this film is a drama. The dialogue, and the lives and feelings of the characters, are as true as possible to "real life", but a drama can represent only selected aspects of teenage sexual abuse, and selected events in the long process of recovery for each of the characters.

The teen group you see in the film differs in some important ways from ones you would find in our everyday world. The film is not meant as a therapeutic model for group work with teens. In fact some aspects of the film may alarm sexual abuse survivors, if they think this is exactly how a group will be run. With survivors, with professionals, or with other adults, you may need to discuss and clarify specific issues.

Here are some points that might come up:

1.

Boys and girls are usually in separate teen groups.

Most teens would feel too vulnerable and unsafe to discuss such intimate details with members of the opposite sex.

2.

Teens do not usually disclose their abuse right away.

In the film, Hank tells his story at the first meeting. For many teens, however, it takes several meetings before they feel they can trust their peers enough to talk about their abuse.

3.

The purpose of the group and "group rules" are usually established first.

The first meeting of most teen groups is dedicated to ensuring that every group member feels comfortable and understands what they are all there for. In some groups, members develop a list of rules they all agree to - for instance, confidentiality, safety, only one person talking at a time, trying to be a good listener, respecting one another, and trying to be on time.

4.

Recovery is usually a long, slow process.

It may seem to teens viewing the film that the characters' problems are solved very neatly and quickly - but that's because the film can't show the many weeks of meetings and struggles and hard work done by the characters on their long journey towards recovery. Sometimes abuse is only one of many things a teen is trying to cope with. They may also be dealing with alcoholic parents, family violence, poverty, or other difficulties in their lives.

5.

Sexual abuse occurs throughout our society.

The five stories of sexual abuse dramatized in this film do not represent all possible situations. Every year, thousands of teenage girls and boys in Canada are sexually abused, in all strata of society and in all regions of the country. While people usually think of sexual abuse as a man abusing a girl or boy, women can abuse girls or boys, and teenage boys and teenage girls can also be abusers.

6.

Families do provide crucial support.

The teens in the film air grievances about the ways in which their families responded to the abuse. While the feelings expressed are honest and legitimate they may be difficult for some parents and family members to hear. Many parents and family members are very supportive and able to protect their children, once the abuse is exposed. Even an initial reaction of disbelief can change to one of support and understanding, especially if parents and families receive information and support themselves. It should be noted that the teens in the film also express feelings of love and connection with their families, and we see that they still need their families' support.

Using the film

The film is composed of six segments that can be viewed individually, or together as a whole. Each segment addresses certain issues or feelings as it features one of the teens and their own story. You may want to show the whole film first, then return to specific segments for follow-up. If you are short of time, you will probably at least want to show the beginning of the film, "First teen-group meeting", to introduce the characters – and then show your chosen segment.

Using the guide

The **Film Outline** at the centre of the guide, pages 10 to 21, gives a visual outline of the film at the top of the page, and program notes for each of the six film segments. The split bottom pages give some suggested questions for discussion to be used for each purpose: for therapy and counselling with **teen survivors, adult survivors, and families**; for **professional development**; and for **public education and awareness**.

The other sections in the guide give additional suggestions and background information for using the film effectively with each of these audiences.

Suggestions for users not trained in the field of sexual abuse

If you are preparing to use the film to help a group or individual to understand how teen survivors of sexual abuse feel, the following may be helpful.

Good Things too deals with sensitive material in a forthright manner, and for this reason may be difficult for some to watch. It may trigger memories of abuse in some audience members, and others may have strong emotional reactions – so be ready to respond to this possibility. If you have strong emotional reactions yourself, you may want to talk about it with someone you trust.

If you intend to show this film to others, it is important that you be well prepared and that you have a clear purpose in mind before you begin.

You may want to consider how you feel about the following questions:

- If you are an abuse survivor yourself, do you feel your own experience is sufficiently resolved for you to work with the film?
- If someone discloses to you that they have been abused, are you comfortable with listening to them? If a teen discloses to you, are you prepared to take steps to help protect them?

If you feel uncertain, you probably need more information or support before you're ready to work with the film.

Be prepared for questions and interactions. The way you respond is important. In general, be open and accept the ideas and feelings expressed. More specifically:

- avoid telling anyone how they should feel
- avoid interpreting remarks and feelings for them
- don't confuse your feelings with theirs
- be aware that the discussion may not go the way you expected, since audience members will be filtering this highly sensitive material through their own experiences.

Please feel free to photocopy any of the material in this guide.

About the effects of sexual abuse: For Teen Survivors



What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is an abuse of power. If someone older or bigger has forced or pressured you into sexual activity, that's sexual abuse. You can be sexually abused without being touched. If you've been forced to watch sexual acts, movies, or videos, or read pornographic magazines, that's sexual abuse. If someone continually refuses to respect your privacy while you're dressing or when you're in the bathroom, that's also sexual abuse.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is a form of sexual abuse. It's sexual attention you didn't want, often in the form of humiliating, degrading remarks, looks, and gestures.

Why do we have laws about sex?

There are laws about sexual activity written into the Criminal Code of Canada to protect people, especially young people, from exploitation and abuse. The laws recognize that some people are able to dominate and use others simply because they have more power. Some people are stronger, bigger, older, smarter or richer than others. Some, like parents, teachers, babysitters or coaches, may have positions of authority and trust. Others have power because they use weapons. Laws about sexual abuse are designed to protect people from individuals who misuse their power.

How do I find out more about the laws?

So, There Are Laws About Sex! by Wendy Harvey and Thom McGuire is a book that explains what is legal and what isn't. It's available in Canada and it's easy to read. You can usually get it from a sexual assault centre or from a sexual abuse counsellor. If you want to know more about your rights, talk to a lawyer. Each province has a law society that will give you the names of lawyers specializing in sexual abuse matters.

Who is sexually abused?

Every year thousands of teenage girls and boys in Canada are sexually abused. Many teenagers were sexually abused when they were still in elementary school or earlier. For many, it started at home when they were little. It may have continued for years. If you were sexually abused when you were little, you might believe that your needs are not as important as everyone else's needs. If that early experience made you believe you don't deserve to be treated with respect, you might find it hard to stand up for yourself, and that can make you vulnerable to being abused again as a teenager.

Who are the abusers?

Abusers can be older teenage boys or adult men; older teenage girls or adult women; teens your own age that you date or who are casual friends. A lot of people think that if a man abuses a boy, or a woman abuses a girl, the abuser must be gay or lesbian. That is most often not the case. Most gays or lesbians, like most heterosexuals, want to be sexual with other adults, not with teenagers. Whether they abuse girls or boys or both, abusers are sexual bullies who like to use their power over someone who is younger, or smaller, or in a vulnerable position.

Will I ever recover from sexual abuse?

Yes! Even teens who were abused for years can recover from sexual abuse. You can grow up feeling good about yourself, having fun, having healthy relationships and rewarding work, and being a good parent.

The first step in recovering from sexual abuse is to tell someone. The next step is to find people who will support and care about you while you're recovering from the abuse. Many of the ways in which you feel bad about yourself are connected to the abuse. As you start to understand how the abuse affected you growing up, you'll discover how your strength and courage helped you survive. You'll get to experience the wonderful person that is you. You can have a good life!

Feelings you may have: For Teen Survivors



If you have been sexually abused, you may be feeling scared, sad, angry, depressed, guilty or confused. These reactions are understandable when someone you trusted has taken advantage of you. You may recognize yourself in the stories of Hank, Tina, Janine, Melissa, and Mike. Each of them reacted to their abuse in very different ways, but the feelings that they experienced were shared by all of them.

Feeling powerless

"Even now I can't go out at night alone. I'm still afraid something bad is going to happen."

- Tina

Tina feels a loss of power and is afraid because of the abuse. Being in a position where you feel like you have no control is a frightening thing, for a child, teen or adult. Your fear may centre on the abuse - you may be afraid that it will happen again, or that something is wrong with you. Your fear may spill over into other areas of your life - you may have nightmares, or be afraid of the dark, or of thunderstorms, or even the sound of a car passing your house.

"My dad controlled my life so completely I never could have anyone but him to love. I just felt so trapped."

- Melissa

Feeling trapped is a very real response to a situation like Melissa's. If you have been abused by someone who is very controlling, someone who is supposed to be taking care of you, someone you love, it may be very difficult to see a way out of it. You may also feel guilty - as if it's somehow your fault the abuse is taking place. You may feel that if only you had behaved differently this wouldn't have happened to you. It is important to remember that it is never the child's fault.

"No way. A guy can't be abused by a woman...."

- Hank

One of Hank's reactions was to deny that he was abused. Telling yourself that nothing happened, or that something happened but it was no big deal, is another way to cope with feeling powerless. You may find it almost impossible to believe that anyone could do this to you. You may almost feel like it happened to somebody else, or that it happened to your body, but not to you.

Feeling betrayed

"Sometimes I wish all our family could just have a nice dinner together or something. Just so things could feel more normal again."

– Tina

When someone you love and trust abuses you, you may feel sad about the loss of family togetherness. Once you tell someone about the abuse, that feeling may get even worse, because other family members may blame you or withdraw from you. Wishing you could go back to a time when everybody was at least acting like things were all right is a common feeling. So is wishing you had never told, because you feel like you've made so much trouble for your family. It's important for you to remember that you didn't cause the trouble, the abuser did.

"Sometimes I feel sad because I really miss Owen... he'd take me to movies and restaurants and he really listened to me."

– Mike

Like Mike, you might feel sad about the loss of friendship you experienced if the person who abused you was also a special friend.

"You can't get close to people, right? 'Cause sooner or later they're just gonna screw you around. I mean, you can't trust anybody."

– Hank

The meaning Hank took from his experience of abuse was that you can't trust anyone. Like Hank, you may find the hurt and anger affecting many of your relationships with people. You may feel that you don't know who or what to trust - or whether you should trust anyone at all.

"I told my mom - she didn't believe me. Then I told my best friend...she started spreading rumours all over school."

– Janine

Like Janine, you may have found that the response to your disclosure of abuse was not what you expected. People may have accused you of lying, or blamed you instead of the abuser. They may have talked about your abuse in ways that made you uncomfortable, or told other people without respecting your right to confidentiality. All of these betrayals may make you wonder if you can trust anyone at all.

"I'm so pissed off at Owen. Sometimes I think up all sorts of ways to get him."

– Mike

Feelings of anger and revenge are understandable when, like Mike, you lose your trust in someone who was a special friend. It's important to acknowledge your feelings of anger and to look for safe ways of expressing your anger.

Feelings you may have: For Teen Survivors

● ● ● Feeling worthless

"I could never tell any of my friends what happened to me. Nobody would understand, they'd just call me a fag or something. Anyway, none of this would have happened if I wasn't weird to begin with."

- Mike

Like Mike, you may feel different or weird. You may feel like you are the only person in the world this could ever have happened to, and that it happened because there's something wrong with you. You may even feel that there is something weird about you, that you're somehow branded or marked - like Mike, a "walking target". Even though this isn't true, it's an understandable response to your experience.

"My sister says it's my fault that Dad can't come home... it just feels like everything's a total mess."

- Melissa

If you kept the secret of your abuse for a long time, you already have a sense of being different from other kids. You may even feel a sense of shame, that the abuse is your fault. Like Melissa, you may have tried to protect other members of your family by not disclosing the abuse or by taking the abuse yourself. It's important to remember that what the abuser did is wrong. It's not your fault.

"I really hated myself. One night I felt so bad I just couldn't take it any more."

- Janine

Feelings of hopelessness and shame may lead to feeling like you have no other choice but suicide. Like Janine, you may be desperate to do anything that will stop you from feeling so screwed up. Janine was lucky to wake up in the hospital the

next day and realize that she didn't really want to die. She went to look for help, and finally found someone who believed her and was able to help her. Sometimes it feels as if there are no other choices, but don't give up: there's always something you can do to change the situation, including looking for someone who cares about you and can help you.

Feeling confused about sex

"Sometimes with guys - I'd feel like when my brother was abusing me. I couldn't seem to say no."

- Tina

Tina has trouble establishing healthy relationships with boys. She finds it difficult to say "no" to sexual advances, even though she feels bad later. Sexuality and sexual behaviour are hard for any teen to deal with. If you are dealing with a history of sexual abuse as well, it gets a lot harder. As a result, your sexual feelings as well as your behaviour can confuse you.

"Why me? I felt like it must be written all over my face. Like Owen thought I was gay and figured I'd be into it."

- Mike

If the abuser was the same gender as you, you may feel confused about your sexual identity. Some people are naturally gay or lesbian as part of who they really are. Others choose to be gay or lesbian. Being abused can create some confusion. You may wonder whether the experience of being abused may have somehow turned you into a homosexual. It's important to remember that homosexuality is not usually a result of sexual abuse.

"Nobody else would have liked what my dad did to me. I feel like some kind of pervert. I never want to have anything to do with sex again."

- Melissa

If your body felt good at some point when you were being abused, you may feel, as Melissa did, like "some kind of pervert". In situations where you are sexually aroused, you may feel loss of control and experience fear, flashbacks, sadness or anger. You may not be able to figure out just when you want to say yes and when you want to say no. You may be tempted to avoid sex and sexuality altogether.

"I feel like I'm the only guy that doesn't have anybody to love or be close to."

- Hank

You may be sexually active, but still feel alone and lonely. Your experience of abuse may make you feel emotionally separate and prevent you from really getting close to another person. Like Hank, you may find that sex isn't a substitute for love and trust.

Feeling hopeful

"It's been hard, but facing this stuff has made me feel a lot better."

- Janine

"Shit happens and you feel bad... but it doesn't have to run your life forever."

- Hank

Like the teens in the film, you may have coped with your feelings through using drugs, overeating, retreating to your room, or dreaming of revenge. Any one of these may have helped you regain some control over your life and helped you survive the abuse.

And you are a survivor. Even though healing is a long process, being here now, ready to think or talk about your abuse, is a sign that you're moving down the road towards a safe, healthy life. And remember - good things can still happen too!

Significance

Hank had a hard time admitting that what happened to him was sexual abuse. He felt that guys couldn't be abused by women, and admitting that his babysitter had sexually abused him made him "feel like a wimp". But the abuse had affected him. Without knowing why, Hank grew up believing "you can't trust anybody". His mistrust kept him from forming meaningful relationships, and he turned to drugs and stealing. As his psychologist Ted puts it, "Sometimes just to keep going, people push things aside, or deny it. It's too painful to deal with so they just forget about it." Hank had a hard time admitting he was abused by a female, but found that talking about it did help.

First teen-group meeting: Hank tells about his babysitter



On his way to the meeting Mike remembers

Mike *"I'm not a faggot, you jerk!"*

Mike arrives at the teen group and meets Fran and teens Hank, Tina, Janine, and Melissa.

Fran *"The idea of the group is that we're here to support each other. It's perfectly okay to say as little or as much as you want."*

This film shows five teen actors in a scripted drama. In "real life":

- Hank would not likely disclose at the first meeting: it usually takes weeks for trust to build among group members
- boys and girls usually work in separate teen groups
- healing is a long, slow process: many events leading towards recovery are not shown in the film.



Using the film with Teen Survivors

Talking about the abuse

Hank is the first to talk about how he ended up in the teen group.

- In what ways does Hank try to let the group know that he's all right?
- How do you think Hank is really feeling?
- How do you feel when you talk about being abused?

Janine wasn't believed by her mother and she was betrayed by her best friend, Marsha.

- What happened when you first talked about being abused?
- Is it easier now to talk about the abuse?
- How do you know who you can trust?

Coping with the abuse

Hank coped with the abuse by pretending it didn't happen.

- What effect did this have on his life?
- Are there ways of coping with the abuse that don't seem to work for you anymore?
- Have you found new ways of coping that work?

Learning to trust

Being sexually abused can seriously affect a person's ability to trust others.

- How did the abuse affect Hank's feelings about women?
- Is it hard for you to trust people of the same sex as the person who abused you?
- Has being sexually abused affected your having a boyfriend or girlfriend? Has it affected other relationships?

Being abused by a woman

Hank had a hard time believing that being abused by a female teenage babysitter was sexual abuse.

- Do you believe a male can really be abused by a female?
- Do you think Hank is a wimp because he was abused by a female?

Although we don't see it in the film, women can also abuse girls.

- Do you believe a girl can really be abused by a woman?
- Do you think there is something wrong with a girl if she is abused by a woman?

Using the film with Adult Survivors

Denial and Minimization

Even after Hank recognized that what had happened to him was sexual abuse, he had a hard time believing it had much impact on his feelings or behaviour. He thought it was "no big deal".

- How did you first begin to understand that what happened to you was abuse?
- Has it been hard for you to believe that the abuse has had a major effect on you?
- Do you have difficulty in seeing some of your present behaviours as related to the abuse?

Trusting others

Trust becomes a big issue when the people who are supposed to take care of you don't.

- How has trust changed for you?

Being abused by a woman

Hank told the group that you can't trust anyone - especially women.

- How has abuse by a woman affected your attitude towards women?
- How has it affected your sexual relationships?

Using the film for professional development
and public education and awareness

Therapists and counsellors

- How could you help Hank understand that this really was sexual abuse?
- In what way might working with Hank be a challenge for you?
- Are there other resources that you feel might benefit Hank?

Social, health, and family services; Police, legal, and correctional services

- How does the system in which you work support a client like Hank?
- What in the system makes it difficult to support a client like Hank?
- What if Hank had filed a report against the babysitter?

Teachers and school administrators

- If Hank had been a student at your school and you discovered he was involved in drugs at the arcade downtown, what steps could you take to help him?

Public Education and Awareness

- Before hearing Hank's disclosure, what might you have thought about Hank's character?
- Do you think it's really possible for a boy or a girl to be abused by a female babysitter, sister, or aunt?
- What have you learned about the effects of sexual abuse from this segment?

Discussion: Explore the group's attitudes and possible biases about whether the babysitter's actions constituted "abuse".

● ● ● Using the film with Families

Talking about the abuse

It took Hank a long time to believe that he had been abused because he didn't think "guys could be abused by a woman".

- Why do you think Hank believed this?
- Do you think you would take it seriously if your son told you he had been abused by a female teenage babysitter? What would you do?

Hank's parents didn't know about the abuse until he disclosed to his psychologist.

- Did your child disclose the abuse to you first, or to someone else? How did you feel about this disclosure?

Coping with the abuse

Hank didn't understand the connection between what happened with his babysitter and his behaviour as a teenager.

- Did your son or daughter act in ways that you found difficult, and which you now think may have been connected with the abuse?
- How do you sort out what is normal teenage behaviour and what is a signal of more serious problems?
- How might parents be supportive to a son that's been abused?
- What would he need to hear from his mother? From his father?
- How might you support your son in finding open expression for his feelings?



Hank "As far as I'm concerned this stuff has nothing to do with me. I can take care of myself... I mean you can't trust anyone..."

Hank "We'd get high and just hang out. Part of my probation was, I had to see this psychologist guy, Ted."



Psychologist Ted "Do you think it's possible you were doing drugs and stealing because of your feelings about the sexual abuse?"

"You know, Hank, sometimes just to keep going, people push things aside, or deny it. It's too painful to deal with so they just forget about it."

"At least I can understand why I was doing all that stuff. It does help to talk about it."

Hank "I was just a kid and I didn't know what to do. So I just pretended like it never happened. I never talked about it with anybody."



Learning to trust

Hank's experience led him to mistrust others, especially women.

- How supportive are you of other people? How do you think you convey those feelings to other members of your family?
- Has your experience in dealing with the abuse of the teen in your family changed your sense of trusting others?
- What ways have you found to help your child regain his/her sense of trust in other people?
- How might parents ensure their children's safety without destroying their ability to trust people?

Boys abused by a woman

For family members in which the survivor is male and was abused by a woman:

- Was it difficult for you to believe that this could happen?
- What might be some of the feelings a boy might experience?
- How did you feel when you found out about the abuse? How did the survivor react?

Significance

Tina went into counselling because of an eating disorder. It was there that she began to talk about being abused by her brother as a child. Although she "almost forgot" about the abuse, she often had nightmares and felt afraid. When she reached adolescence, her fears intensified. She had difficulty saying no to boys' sexual advances and started having flashbacks. By talking about the abuse, she stopped feeling so "alone and scared". She began to understand that bingeing and purging were an attempt to regain control of her body. While she's a little embarrassed by her behaviour, she tells the group that "it was the best thing I could come up with at the time". Tina admits that talking about her feelings helped her to not feel as alone and scared as she used to.

**October 10th meeting:
Tina tells about her brother**



Tina *"My parents would go out and leave my older brother to babysit me. I couldn't tell my parents why I was afraid of my brother."*



Tina *"I almost forgot about it. Then I started going out with guys and I started getting these memories and bad dreams."*

Fran *"When things remind you of the abuse, it's normal to feel scared and not know what to do."*

••• **Using the film with Teen Survivors**

Fear

Tina talks about many different kinds of fear. Even though her brother is not allowed to come to her house she is still afraid.

- What was Tina afraid of?
- Have you had other fears that Tina doesn't talk about?
- How do you make yourself feel safer?

Not being able to say no

Tina talks about feeling "weird" when she was out with a boy.

- Do you think Tina was afraid to say no?
- What other reasons could there be for her behaviour?
- Do you ever find yourself in situations where it's hard not to give in to what somebody else wants?
- Are there ways to make it easier for you to say no?

Eating Disorders

Tina tried to regain control of her body by bingeing and purging.

- Why do you think Tina chose this way of trying to regain control?
- Do you ever use food to make yourself feel better or more in control?

Flashbacks

Janine tells Tina that what she is describing sounds like a flashback.

- Have you had memories that are so vivid that it feels like you are right back there?
- Is there anything you have found to stop the flashback or make it feel less frightening?

Using the film with Adult Survivors

Being afraid

Tina tells the group that she still feels afraid, and that somehow she still doesn't feel safe.

- Was fear one of the feelings you experienced as a result of the abuse? How did that fear affect your life?
- Have those feelings changed over the years? Have you found ways to make yourself feel safer?

Remembering

Tina's experience of forgetting and remembering is not uncommon. Recovering the memories of abuse is often a long process. Situations or events can trigger those memories.

- What triggers memories of the abuse for you?
- Have you found ways to anticipate and cope with your reactions and feelings about the memories?

For women adult survivors

Sometimes our responses to abuse are reinforced by cultural assumptions. Women, historically, have been expected to put other people's wants and needs before their own. This makes it very hard for women to say no in a variety of situations including those of sexual intimacy.

- How comfortable are you in asserting your own wants or needs?
- Do you think societal views about women made you more vulnerable to the abuse?
- How do you feel about these societal views?

Fears

Like Tina, the sexual abuse survivor in your family may experience many different kinds of fears, including nightmares, anxiety or panic attacks, or phobias.

- Has the abuse made you more fearful for the survivor, or for yourself? Have you found ways to cope with those fears?
- What ways have you found to help the survivor feel safer? To help yourself feel safer?

Sibling abuse

This is an especially difficult situation for parents who not only feel responsible for the safety of one child, but also responsible for the behaviour of the other.

- How did you feel when you first learned about the abuse?

- What steps did you or someone else take to ensure the safety of your child from the abuser?
- Are you able to balance a supportive approach for both children?
- Have you felt pressure about which child to support?
- What ways have you found to cope with your own feelings of guilt and anger?
- How has the experience of abuse changed the way your family members interact with one another?

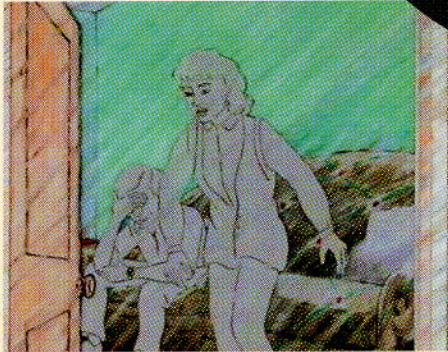
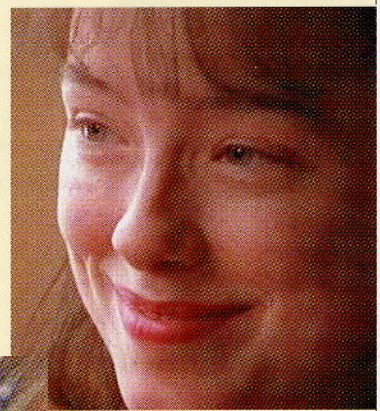
Using the film for professional development
and public education and awareness

Therapists and counsellors

- When teens come to you for counselling about eating disorders, do you consider the possibility of a history of sexual abuse?
- If Tina had come to you for counselling about eating disorders and disclosed that her brother had abused her, how would you have reacted? What kinds of support would you have recommended for the family?
- What strategies or techniques might you use to help Tina deal with the flashbacks?

Social, health, and family services; Police, legal, and correctional services

- What do you think went on in Tina's family after they acknowledged that Tina had been sexually abused by her older brother? What would have been some of the issues in establishing safety?
- Should Tina's brother have been charged? Is he a potential re-offender? What kinds of support exist to help teenagers who are sexual-abuse offenders?



Tina *"Sometimes with guys... I'd feel like when my brother was abusing me. I couldn't say no. Afterwards I'd feel really bad."*



Tina *"I started to feel like I was out of control. To feel okay again, I'd eat. Finally my mom caught me."*

Tina *"I agreed to see a counsellor. I feel less crazy inside, and I'm not doing that weird stuff around food anymore."*

Tina *"My brother denied the whole thing. My parents were really upset. He's not allowed to come near me but I still don't feel safe."*

"I don't feel as alone and scared as I used to. Feels way better..."

Teachers and school administrators

- If Tina had been a student in your school and you suspected she suffered from eating disorders, what kinds of resources would you have accessed in order to help her?

Public Education and Awareness

- Do you think Tina's older brother should have been charged? Do you think he might offend again?
- How common do you think sibling sexual abuse is in our society?

Janine's first attempts to disclose the abuse were disasters. Even though her mother was a survivor herself, she was unable to support Janine. Her best friend Marsha gossiped about her at school. Finally Janine left home and dropped out of school. But the feelings of anger and shame that she carried from the abuse stayed with her. Bouts of drinking, prostitution and drug use were followed by depression and isolation, and eventually, as Janine tells the group, "I got so I just couldn't feel anything any more. I just felt numb all the time." A failed suicide attempt made her realize that she didn't really want to die - she just wanted "to stop feeling so screwed up". Being believed by her counsellor was Janine's important first step towards healing.

Janine *"After I told my friend Marsha about my step-dad abusing me and she spread it all over school, I started cutting classes a lot."*

**Stepfather**

"You ever say a word and I'll beat the shit outa ya."



Janine *"Finally, I left home for good. Hooking was no big deal. I felt I had some control in my life again."*

"We'd party all night. I'd stay high, to keep from going crazy. After awhile, I couldn't feel anything any more."

● ● ● Using the film with **Teen Survivors**

Anger

Janine had a lot of good reasons to be angry - not only at her stepfather, but at her mother and her best friend as well.

- How does Janine deal with her anger?
- What do you do when you get really angry?
- What are some safe ways to deal with your anger?

Drugs, drinking, prostitution

Janine used all of these things to try to get control of her life and her feelings.

- What does Janine's behaviour teach us about ways to cope?
- What methods did she find for getting control back in her life?
- Have you used alcohol or other drugs to help you cope with your feelings?
- What happens to those feelings when you are drunk or stoned?
- What other ways have you found to cope with your feelings?

Feeling depressed or numb

Some people define depression as "anger turned inward".

- What are you feeling when you say you're depressed?
- Do you know what the symptoms of depression are?
- When you're feeling hopeless, what kinds of things help you?

Suicide

Janine attempted suicide as a way to stop feeling so hurt and screwed up.

- Are there times that you think of suicide as a way to make the feelings go away?
- What kinds of things help you make it through those times?
- Do you know where to go to get help when you're feeling suicidal?

• • • Using the film with **Adult Survivors**

Coping

One of the ways Janine coped with her feelings about the abuse was with alcohol and other drug abuse.

- Why do you think she chose those particular ways of coping?
- What ways did you find to cope with the abuse? Why do you think you made the choices you did?
- What role, if any, do you think your family's ways of coping played in the choices you made?

Anger

Being angry about what happened to you is a pretty healthy response to being abused. Sometimes, however, the anger is deflected towards other areas of our lives, or even turned inward to ourselves.

- What ways have you found that your anger about the abuse has had long-term effects in other areas of your life?
- Have you found ways to safely express that anger?
- Has your anger changed or modified over time?
- Are feelings such as hurt, loss, sadness, and fear also present with the anger?

Anger

Janine is angry at her stepfather for abusing her, and at her mother for not believing or protecting her.

- What do you think Janine's mother was feeling when Janine told her that her stepfather was abusing her? How might her feelings have influenced her belief in Janine's disclosure?
- What are some of the ways the teen survivor in your family has demonstrated their anger?
- How do you deal with the part of that anger that is directed at you?
- How do you deal with your own anger about the abuse?
- How do the members of your family usually deal with anger - both their own and others'?

Alcohol, drugs and prostitution

For families where alcohol, other drugs and/or prostitution are an issue.

- How can one make sense of Janine's use of alcohol and other drugs?
- In what ways are your own coping strategies similar to or different from Janine's?
- Do you feel responsible for the behaviour of the teen survivor in your family? Do you feel blamed?
- Have you found ways to support your family member in dealing with his/her drug abuse or prostitution?
- Have you found sources of support outside the family? Have they been useful for you or your family member?

Using the film for professional development
and public education and awareness

Therapists and counsellors

- What might be the risks involved for Janine as she begins to attend sessions?
- What steps might you take to minimize the risks?
- What might be the challenges to one's own value system in dealing with a client like Janine?

Social, health, and family services

- What are the difficulties inherent in providing service for a client like Janine?
- What methods of intervention have you found to be most effective?
- What might be the challenges to one's own value system in dealing with a client like Janine?

Janine "I really hated myself. One night I felt so bad, I couldn't take it any more.

When I woke up in the hospital... I was glad to be alive... Finally someone believed me and helped me."



Janine "I told my mom long ago, but she was afraid of my stepdad and so she told me I shouldn't make things up... When I found out she had been sexually abused as a kid, I was really angry with her."

Janine "Living in the group home, I felt pissed off all the time:
'Dear Asshole...'
I never sent the letter but it felt good to write it."



Hank "I couldn't afford to have feelings. I felt dead inside."

"Some days I feel like I've been dealing with it forever. Other days, when I'm feeling stronger I think, "Right on, Janine! You're gonna make it, just take it one day at a time."

Police, legal, and correctional services

- What might be the challenges to one's own value system in dealing with a client like Janine?
- Given the known incidence of sexual abuse among prostitutes, what types of collaboration can be implemented between the criminal justice system and the helping professions?

Teachers and school administrators

- What resources are available in the school system for a student like Janine?
- What types of behaviour at school might alert you to the fact that a child/teen has been sexually abused?

Public Education and Awareness

What effect, if any, has Janine's story had on your existing attitudes, beliefs, and values?

Significance

Melissa has spent her life in isolation and loneliness. She was so alone she didn't even know that what her dad was doing was wrong. When she became more informed and tried to say no, her father's threats and her desire to protect her younger sister continued to keep her trapped. Melissa tells the group, "My dad liked having me all to himself. I never really had any friends." Her isolation is reinforced by her feeling different from other girls. Once Melissa discloses, her family undergoes a breakdown. Dad is jailed, her sister blames Melissa, and mom is caught up in worrying about survival. Melissa is left feeling the blame: "Everything is a total mess." Talking to other teens is hard for Melissa but with their support she feels less alone.

**January 16th meeting:
Melissa tells about her father**



Melissa *"I wrote this before anybody told me what was happening to me:
I am an invisible person
Lost here in my lonely room
No one knows how sad I feel..."*



Melissa *"Dad was always hugging and kissing me when I was little... When I got older, he started doing more stuff."*

Using the film with Teen Survivors

Feeling trapped and alone

The only time Melissa could be free of her dad was when she was in school, so her schoolwork and her teachers became an important support system for her.

- What does Melissa teach us about the importance of having someone to talk to?
- What support systems do you have in your life?
- Have you been able to use them to help you cope with the abuse?
- Which ones have been of real help to you?

Feeling like it's your fault

Melissa feels responsible for her family's problems since her dad went to jail.

- What do you think about how Melissa's mother and sister reacted?
- How could Melissa change her feelings about her family?
- How did your family's reactions to your disclosure about the abuse affect how you felt about yourself?

Grief and Loss

Melissa sometimes misses her father and just wishes that “everything could be normal again”.

- What do you think Melissa is saying here?
- Do you find yourself having mixed feelings about the person who abused you?
- What other losses have you experienced as a result of the abuse?
- What ways do you have of expressing your feelings of loss?

Family breakdown

Once Melissa disclosed, her family experienced a massive change. Dad was jailed, Mother was penniless, and her sister blamed Melissa for everything that happened.

- What would Melissa’s family be like now if she had never disclosed?
- What was the impact of your disclosure on your family?
- Do you feel responsible for the feelings of the other members of your family?

● ● ● Using the film with **Adult Survivors**

Disclosure

Melissa's experience of abuse went on for a long time before she was finally able to tell her teacher.

- What are some of the reasons children or teens don't tell about the abuse?
- What were your fears about telling?
- How did you know when it was safe to tell?
- How did you feel after you disclosed?

For incest survivors

The aftermath of disclosure can be especially difficult if the abuser is a parent or sibling or other family member.

- What was your family like before your disclosure?
- How has your family changed since the disclosure?
- Were you unable to disclose because you felt responsible for other family members?
- What kinds of support systems did you find, either within or outside your family?

Using the film with Families

When a family member has been the abuser

This is one of the most difficult kinds of abuse for a family to deal with. Every member of the family has to cope with a whole range of feelings from anger and denial, to guilt and grief. This may make it extremely difficult for other family members to support the child who has been abused.

About Melissa's family

- What would life be like for the family if Melissa never disclosed?
- How would Melissa's family need to change in order to make an abusive situation less likely?

For non-offending parents

- What ways have you found to cope with the impact of abuse on your child and your family?
- If you have other children, how have they reacted?
- What has been the most difficult thing for you to cope with?
- What are the positive elements of your family structure that can help you and your family begin the process of healing?
- If your child first told someone else about the abuse, how did that make you feel?
- Have you ever wished your child hadn't disclosed?
- Have you been able to find support from people or agencies outside your family?

Using the film for professional development
and public education and awareness

Therapists and counsellors

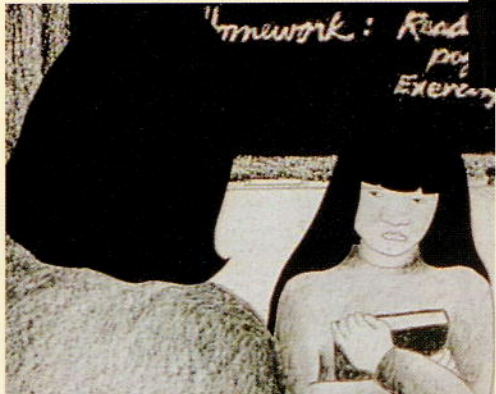
- What potential challenges and risks do you foresee in working with a family like Melissa's?
- How might you assist Melissa's mother if she came to you for counselling?
- What issues might need to be addressed when working with someone from a different culture than your own?

Social, health, and family services

- What kinds of support would you put in place to help Melissa and her family in their grief and loss, as well as to help them financially?
- In what ways might a family's cultural background affect how they deal with a disclosure of sexual abuse?



Tina "Sometimes I feel like my parents just want me to forgive my brother so we can be a normal family again."



Melissa "Sometimes I wish I hadn't said anything. My sister says it's my fault that Dad can't come home. And my mom is always saying how she can't pay the bills without his paycheque."

Mike "Sometimes I feel sad cause I miss Owen. He'd take me to the movies and we'd go to restaurants and talk."



Melissa "I felt so trapped. Finally my favourite teacher noticed that I wasn't getting my assignments finished. I told her what my dad was doing."

Melissa "I feel like I've lost everything and all that's left is this sad, heavy feeling."

"I never had any friends to talk to before. I don't feel so alone any more."

Police, legal, and correctional services

- What are some of the complications inherent in the criminal justice system when dealing with sexual abuse cases in cultures other than that of the predominant cultural group in your community?

Public Education and Awareness

- How prevalent in our society do you think are cases like Melissa's, in which incest goes on over a long period of time?

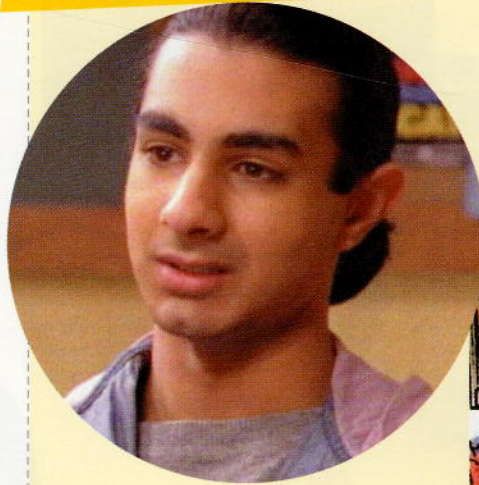
Teachers and school administrators

- If Melissa disclosed to you that she had been abused for years by her father, what would you say to her initially, and what steps would you take?

Significance

Mike has been left with a lot of confusion about his sexual identity. He was abused by his uncle, and then later by an older friend. Because the abusers were men, Mike worries that he might be gay. The negative comments that his peers make about homosexuality convinces him that he could never tell his friends about his experience because "they wouldn't understand". Mike is very angry with his abusers. He thinks about ways of avenging himself, but at the same time he misses Owen and is hurt by what feels like a betrayal of friendship. Because he's male, Mike feels that he should have been able to prevent the abuse, and that somehow it was his fault. Finally he understands that "nobody has the right to abuse anybody else like that".

**February 13th meeting:
Mike tells about Owen**



Mike *"I was worried that I might have AIDS."*



Mike *"Everybody at school is so down on gays. Even my dad. The first thing he says to the social worker, 'Does this mean my son is going to be a homosexual?'"*

Social Worker *"What happened to Mike is an abuse of power. It doesn't have a lot to do with sexual orientation."*

● ● ● **Using the film with Teen Survivors**

Confused sexuality

Mike worries that there is something about him that makes him a target for male offenders. Fran tells him it usually has to do with the opportunity the offender sees.

- What "opportunity" do you think Owen saw when he approached Mike?
- Do you think sexual orientation has anything to do with abuse?

Feeling like it's your fault

Mike tells the group "...the whole thing was my fault".

- Do you think it was Mike's fault that Owen abused him?
- Do you feel like it was your fault that you were abused?

Feeling betrayed and angry

Mike feels betrayed by Owen and wishes there was a way to get even.

- What kinds of feelings are involved in feeling betrayed?
- Do you think about ways of getting even with the abuser?
- Is there anything you can safely do to address your desire for revenge?

Homophobia

Taunts like “wimp” and “weak wrists” and “nice shirt, Dwayne” are commonly heard in our schools. Mike is painfully aware that “everyone at school is down on gays”. Homophobia seems to be embedded in our culture.

- How would you define “homophobia”?
- Have you seen examples of homophobia in your friends or families?
- Have those examples influenced the way you think about homosexuality?
- Do you think you are homophobic?
- Do the attitudes of your friends and family towards homosexuality affect your own healing and recovery?

AIDS

Both Mike and Janine worry about contracting HIV or AIDS. Both have been tested.

- Is there anybody else in the teen group who might be at risk of contracting HIV or AIDS?
- Do you worry about being HIV positive because of the abuse, or because of other activities?
- Do you know where to go to get information and testing for HIV?
- Now that you’re informed, would you have unprotected sex? Would you share needles?



Using the film with Adult Survivors

Being abused by more than one abuser

Mike was abused by his uncle as a young boy. He forgot about the abuse until he was an adolescent when he was again abused by an older man.

- Do you think Mike's first experience of abuse left him vulnerable to being abused again?
- What are the feelings caused by the abuse that might make you vulnerable to recurring abuse?

For adult male survivors abused by a man

Like Mike, many boys who have been abused by men worry that it happened because they are gay or that the experience will somehow turn them into homosexuals. This can make both their relationships with other men and with women difficult.

- Did the abuse leave you feeling confused about your sexual orientation? How did you cope with those feelings?
- What impact did the abuse have on your ability to relate to other males? To relate to women?
- How did it affect your intimate relationships?
- Do these feelings still affect your relationships?

If your son was abused by a man

It is common for boys who have been abused by a male to worry that they may become homosexual as a result of the abuse. In Mike's case, it is clear that his father shared his fears. Therapists working with boys who have been abused by a man usually impress upon the boy that being abused can cause some confusion, but that being gay or straight is not usually a result of sexual abuse. They will often point out that some people are naturally gay or lesbian as part of who they really are, and that others choose to be gay or lesbian.

- Is it hard for you to talk to your son about these issues because of your own attitudes and feelings about sexuality?
- If you are part of a two-parent family, was your response to his abuse different from that of your spouse? Did this make it more or less difficult to cope with the abuse?
- What ways have you found to support your son in dealing with whatever confusion he may have concerning his sexual orientation?
- Has the abuse had an impact on the way your son relates to other males? To females?

Using the film for professional development
and public education and awareness

Therapists and counsellors

- If you were working with Mike in an individual therapeutic situation, what strategies could you use to help resolve his confusion about sexual identity?
- If Mike's sexual orientation is gay, how might you support him?
- Why is clarity about one's own attitudes, values, and beliefs so important in working with clients?

Social, health, and family services

- In what ways could you involve Mike's family in helping in his recovery?
- In what ways might a family's cultural background affect how they deal with a disclosure of sexual abuse?

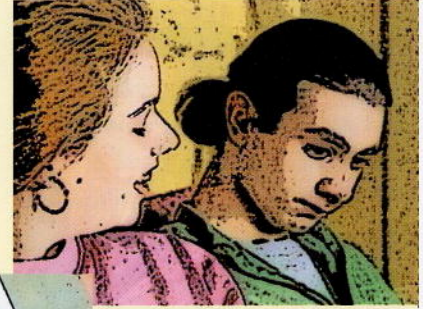
Police, legal, and correctional services

- To what extent does homophobia still need to be addressed within the criminal justice system? What are the implications?

Mike "Why me?
I feel like I had
it written all
over my face.
...Like Owen
thought I was
gay and figured
I'd be into it."



Mike "Everything feels mixed
up now. I want to be with a girl
but then... all I can think of is
what happened with Owen and I
feel confused."



Hank "Because we're guys
everybody expects us to be
able to protect ourselves.
But it's not like we always
know what to do."



Mike "Sometimes I
think up all sorts of
ways to get him... I
really hate him. I'd like
to tear him to shreds."



**"I'm starting to see that it really
wasn't my fault. Nobody has the right
to abuse someone like that."**

Teachers and school administrators

- If the basketball coach reported to you that there had been a scuffle on the courts and that other boys were teasing Mike about being "limp-wristed", what would you do?
- Do you feel your school provides enough support and information for boys who have been sexually abused?
- What further understanding about sexual abuse have you gained from Mike's story?

Public Education and Awareness

- What questions does the film raise for you about your own attitudes towards homosexuality?
- What questions does the film raise for you about your own attitudes towards the sexual abuse of boys?
- Has the film influenced your opinions?

Significance

In the last session of the film, Fran leads the group in an imagination exercise that allows the teens to visualize making good choices and feeling empowered. We see Hank with a girlfriend who's the right age for him. Tina is able to say no to sexual advances from her date. Janine confronts her stepfather and is at a school where she is accepted. Melissa has made a friend. Mike wins the basketball game and his teammates' acceptance. The work each teen has done has helped them understand how the abuse interfered with their growing up. Even though they still have concerns, they discover wonderful things about themselves that were covered up because of the abuse - and as Janine says for all of them: "Good things can still happen too."

March 12th meeting: Healing visualization

Fran *"Let's wrap things up by doing one of our imagination exercises."*

...Relax as you take yourself to a favourite place where you feel safe and comfortable.

You begin to get a message from yourself, from your strong inner voice..."

Hank sees himself dating a girl his own age and having fun with friends.



Melissa sees herself having fun with a new friend.

Tina sees herself saying no to sexual advances from her date.



Using the film with Teen Survivors

In the last session, the teens talk about their ups and downs.

- Have you found, like Janine, that facing the abuse has made a difference in your life?
- Is it getting any easier to feel okay about yourself and your life?
- Do you sometimes wonder, like Melissa, whether it's possible to fully recover from sexual abuse and feel happy and good about your life?
- What strengths allow you to go on, in spite of the abuse?

During the visualization exercise, the teens experience themselves making good choices and feeling empowered.

- What would you have visualized in the last session if you had been a member of the teen group, doing the visualization exercise about dealing positively with issues you've been struggling with?

- What are your personal goals for yourself - for today - for this week - for this year?

- What is the first smallest step you can take towards those goals?

During the visualization exercise, the teens experience themselves making good choices and feeling empowered.

- What would you have visualized in the last session if you had been a member of the teen group, doing the visualization exercise about dealing positively with issues you've been struggling with?

- What are your personal goals for yourself - for today - for this week - for this year?

- What is the first smallest step you can take towards those goals?

Using the film in therapy and counselling
with **Adult Survivors**

● ● ●
By the last session of the group, each of the teens feels that he or she has begun the process of recovery.

- What elements did you find must be in place in order to start the process of recovery?
- In your own life, how have you tried to get the things you need in order to start the process of recovery?

- Has that process been different from what you expected?
- Where do you feel you are in your own recovery process?
- How do you imagine your life to be five years from now? What's the next smallest step you could take to move you in that direction?

Using the film with Families

The process of recovery can be a long and difficult one. Sometimes it may seem like you're making progress only to find yourself feeling like you're back at square one.

- How can you support your teen in dealing with the ups and downs of the recovery process?
- How do you cope with your own feelings of frustration or impatience or hopelessness about the process?

The impact of abuse goes beyond the person who was abused.

- What has happened since you disclosed that you had been abused?
- Have you been able to find support to cope with your own feelings about the abuse?
- What strengths do you have that have helped you through this experience?
- How has your family, as a whole, been able to recover from the abuse?

Using the film for professional development and public education and awareness

Therapists and counsellors

- What suggestions might you make to clients to ensure ongoing support after counselling has ended?
- What indicators would show that your client has made significant steps towards recovery?

Social, health, and family services

- What resources are available to families who have started the healing process but may need a little more additional support to keep them hopeful?
- How does the recovery process affect the legal process, and vice versa?
- What part does your agency play in these interrelationships?
- What additional support could you give to abused teens and their families?



Mike sees himself sinking the winning basket and feeling accepted by his teammates.

Tina "It's not going away overnight but I do feel better than I used to."

Melissa "Some days I wonder if I'll ever feel okay again."

Hank "Shit happens and you feel bad about it... but it doesn't have to run your life forever."



Janine sees herself sending her letter to her step-dad and feeling comfortable and accepted at school.



Janine
"You gotta remember...
Good things can still happen
too!"

Police, legal, and correctional services

- What do clients need to know in order to be prepared for entering the judicial system?
- How does the legal process affect the recovery process, and vice versa?

Teachers and school administrators

- In what ways could school and district personnel help support teens who have been sexually abused?
- How does your school staff deal with confidentiality, when balancing a teen's need for privacy with staff members' desire to help?

Public Education and Awareness

- What might be helpful for a family to hear from others or to experience from others as they begin their road to recovery?
- How can the larger community help families and sexual abuse survivors in their recovery process?

About the effects of sexual abuse: For Adult Survivors



You will probably recognize some aspects of your own experience in the stories told by the teens in the film, and as an adult you may still be struggling with similar issues.

As an adult, like Janine you may still be saying: "Why didn't my mom believe me?" Or like Mike: "Why didn't I do anything to stop him?" You might consider what the teens' lives would be like ten, fifteen or twenty years later, if they hadn't found the support you see them getting in the film. They may still be having feelings like the ones they had as teens, but may be carrying additional burdens such as substance abuse, loss of trust in relationships, difficulties in marriage and parenting, and difficulties in keeping a job.

As an adult, like Janine you may still be saying: "Why didn't my mom believe me?"
Or like Mike:
"Why didn't I do anything to stop him?"

Thinking about this might help you understand and accept the strategies for coping that you have developed over the years. If you had been offered the help of a support group when you were a teen, what would you have wanted to share? What would have been important to you at the time? If you'd heard other teens talk about how they'd been sexually abused, how would that have helped you?

How can I get help?

The first step is to admit to yourself that you may have been sexually abused. Denial is the single biggest obstacle to getting help. Admitting that you have been sexually abused takes courage, but once you've taken this major step, the next step is to look for a counsellor or support group or both.

Ask people you trust for personal recommendations, check with a professional counselling association or with a sexual-assault or counselling centre.

The first step is to admit to yourself that you may have been sexually abused.

What will a counsellor do?

Your counsellor will help you deal with the impact of the abuse, and help you to overcome the denial that makes it difficult to get in touch with your painful feelings. Then you can begin to resolve the trauma of the abuse, so that it no longer has negative effects on your life.

Your counsellor might recommend that you read books on the subject of sexual abuse, and - with your permission - may speak to your spouse or partner to suggest ways that he or she can support you in your recovery.

Your counsellor will help you deal with the impact of the abuse.

Your relationship with your counsellor is a partnership. You'll decide together what subjects you'll discuss, and when it's appropriate to slow down or end counselling. If you aren't happy with your counsellor, you have the right to find a different one.

Please feel free to photocopy any of the material in this guide.

How can my partner help me?

If you're in a relationship, your partner can be an invaluable source of support. Support means your partner can empathize with your pain, offer you love and encouragement, and support your decisions. But: do not use your partner as a counsellor.

Get support from your partner and counselling from your counsellor.

This places too great a strain on your relationship and it's unfair, if not impossible, to expect your partner to give you objective advice. Get support from your partner and counselling from your counsellor.

How can a support group help me?

A support group made up of adult survivors - either led by professionals or led by the participants themselves - can give you ongoing support in your healing. The experiences of other survivors can make you feel less alone, and can give you insights and ideas about your own situation.

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To find out if there are survivors' support groups in your community, contact a sexual-assault or counselling centre. If there isn't a group, you could approach a counsellor to see whether she or he would be willing to start one. Another option is to start a self-help group - a group that is run by the survivors themselves. The book *The Courage to Heal*, which is included in the "Print & Video Resources", pages 28 and 29, offers valuable information on support groups and self-help groups.

Is recovery possible?

Yes, but look on recovery as a process, not as a project with an end result. Different issues will come up for you at different points in your life, and you may want to go back to your counsellor for a few more sessions.

What is possible in recovery is that your sexual abuse symptoms will diminish, your self-esteem will increase, and your relationships will be more satisfying. You'll feel more in charge of your life. In other words, instead of having the effects of the sexual abuse run your life, you'll be running it yourself. You can have a good life!

For further information, see:

- "About the effects of sexual abuse", page 5, is addressed to teens but adult survivors may find the information helpful. There is a comprehensive list of "Feelings you may have" on pages 6 to 9, punctuated by quotes from the film.
- The "Film Outline", pages 10 to 21 at the centre of this guide, features an "Adult Survivors" section for each segment of the film where you will find program notes and questions for thought and discussion.
- "Print and Video Resources", pages 28 and 29, includes some titles of special interest to adult survivors.

Look on recovery as a process, not as a project with an end result.

About the effects of sexual abuse: For Families



As the parent, foster parent, sibling or extended-family member of a teen who has been sexually abused, you may recognize the situations and attitudes demonstrated by the teens in the film. The film is written from the point of view of the teens, and demonstrates many of the intense feelings that a teen who is sexually abused may have about their experience and their family's response. While the feelings expressed are honest and legitimate, they may be difficult for some family members to hear.

You may be one of the families who believed their teen immediately and provided all the support they needed. However, it's understandable that some teens feel their family has let them down - for instance Janine, whose mom was unable to support her; and Mike, whose family was more worried about how they would look to others than about how Mike was feeling.

Sexual abuse involves a wide range of emotional responses for everyone involved.

It's important that family members be able to understand their own feelings and their reactions to their teen's feelings, in order to provide support.

Although the teens in the film do express negative feelings towards their families, they also share feelings of loss, sadness about the changes, and wishing things could be different. Sexual abuse involves a wide range of emotional responses for everyone involved. It's important that family members be able to understand their own feelings and their reactions to their teen's feelings, in order to provide support.

How is the family affected by sexual abuse?

A family's response will vary greatly, in part determined by the circumstances of the abuse. If a parent or a sibling is the offender, the reactions can be complicated by divided loyalties - concern for the abuser as well as the survivor, or concern for the family as an economic or social unit.

Family members may simply not believe that the abuse took place, or they may minimize the abuse and its impact. They will likely feel anger towards the offender, but they may also feel angry at the survivor - and then guilt for feeling angry. While

these responses are natural, it is important to remember that the survivor is the one most in need of support. Try not to allow the reactions of other family members to impede his or her recovery. Family members who are having difficulty with the issue might seek out counselling or support groups to help them understand and come to terms with their own feelings.

The most important thing you can do for the teen survivor is to believe them.

How can non-offending family members help the teen survivor?

The most important thing you can do for the teen survivor is to believe them. Resist the temptation to minimize the abuse. Survivors of sexual abuse feel ashamed and confused when their perceptions are challenged. Listen to what the teen has to say, and don't make moral judgments. Teens need to be able to form their own opinions without your attempts to influence them.

Support your teen in seeking counselling and/or teen support groups to deal with the issue. Educate yourself about the process of recovery so that you can understand his/her feelings and reactions. Try not to take those reactions personally. Help your teen to direct their anger to its appropriate source. Keep the lines of communication open.

How do I support myself?

Being the parent of a sexual abuse survivor can be the most difficult challenge you will ever face and you will need to find your own sources of strength and support.

If you want to provide on-going support for your teen, you must recognize and take care of your own needs.

It will make things easier if you can take part in a parents' support group at the same time as your child is in counselling. In a group you can learn a lot about sexual abuse, talk about your own feelings, receive support from other parents in similar situations, and break down your guilt and isolation. If you want to provide on-going support for your teen, you must recognize and take care of your own needs.

What makes the difference is whether you work on the problems together. The communication and support you develop while you do this may establish a new sense of trust in your family.

Will our family ever recover?

Yes! Even if the abuse went on for a long time, your family can survive and recover. Remember that recovery is a process, and that each family member will react to that process more or less differently depending on their personalities, their relationship to the survivor and their own experience. Don't expect to arrive at some magical moment when everyone is feeling all right again. There will be ups and downs, but all families have rocky periods when one or more members have problems. What makes the difference is whether you work on the problems together. The communication and support you develop while you do this may establish a new sense of trust in your family.

Even if the abuse went on for a long time, your family can survive and recover.

For further information, see:

- "About the effects of sexual abuse", pages 5, is addressed to teens but family members may find the information helpful. There is a comprehensive list of feelings teens may have on pages 6 to 9, punctuated by quotes from the film.
- The "Film Outline", pages 10 to 21 at the centre of this guide, features a "Families" section for each segment of the film where you will find program notes and questions for thought and discussion.
- "Print and Video Resources", pages 28 and 29, includes some titles of special interest to families.

Using the film in Therapy and Counselling



Good Things too is designed as a tool for therapists and counsellors to help teen survivors recover from sexual abuse. It may also be useful in work with adult survivors and with families who are dealing with the effects of sexual abuse.

As the facilitator or the counsellor, you will be able to select or modify the questions so that they are appropriate to your particular group.

Working with Teen Survivors

There are suggestions throughout the guide for using the film with a teen audience. General suggestions can be found in "Using the film and guide" on page 4. Suggestions for questions that may help you initiate or develop discussion after viewing the film can be found in the "Film Outline", pages 10 to 21. As the facilitator or the counsellor, you will be able to select or modify the questions so that they are appropriate to your particular group.

You may find that the teens viewing the film develop a strong sense of identification, or perhaps antipathy, towards one or more of the characters in the film. It is often easier for any of us to identify with or be repelled by characteristics or circumstances of a fictional character than those of our own. This can be an opportunity for teen survivors to talk about the feelings evoked by the characters, and how those feelings might relate to their own feelings, attitudes and experiences.

You may find that the teens viewing the film develop a strong sense of identification, or perhaps antipathy, towards one or more of the characters in the film.

Adult survivors will recognize some aspects of their own experience in this film.

Working with Adult Survivors

Adult survivors will recognize some aspects of their own experience in this film, and the issues presented in the film may be issues that they are still struggling with. They may identify strongly with one or more of the teens in the film and, through that process, understand something new about their own experience.

For many adult survivors today, the opportunity was not available to have the counselling and support that Mike, Janine and the others have found. It might be a productive exercise for an adult survivors' group to imagine what would have happened to the teens in the film if they hadn't had an opportunity to disclose and engage in the recovery process while they were still in their teens. Such an exploration might help members of the group put in perspective some of their own coping strategies which may have had negative consequences in their lives.

Working with Families

The teens in the film express mixed feelings about their families and the support they got after disclosing. While the feelings expressed are honest and legitimate, they may be difficult for some parents and family members to hear. It may be helpful to point out that the film is written from the teens' point of view, and that a teen group is set up to be a safe place for teens to express their feelings. Parents may find it useful to compare and contrast the attitudes of the teens in the film with those of their own teens.

Parents may find it useful to compare and contrast the attitudes of the teens in the film with those of their own teens.

For further information, see:

- "About the effects of sexual abuse", page 5, is addressed to teens and designed for easy photocopying. You may also find this information useful for adult survivors and families you are working with.
- The "Film Outline", pages 10 to 21 at the centre of this guide, features a section entitled "Using the film with Teen Survivors" for each segment of the film, where you will find program notes and questions for thought and discussion. You will also find a section on using the film with adult survivors, and one on using the film with families.
- "Print and Video Resources", pages 28 and 29, includes titles of interest to therapists and counsellors working with teens, adult survivors, and family members.

Your community library may carry some of these resources.

Or contact a social or family services centre, a hospital, a rape crisis centre, or a specialized child-abuse centre in your community; they often can direct you to where resources might be available.



Print

For Teen Survivors

How long does it hurt?: A guide to recovering from incest and sexual abuse for teenagers, their friends, and their families. Cynthia L. Mather. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. Straightforward, easy to read, contains detailed information on a range of issues including self-esteem and relating to others.

The me nobody knows: A guide for teen survivors. Barbara Bean and Shari Bennett. Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993. Workbook format with information and exercises that guide teen survivors towards recovery.

Sexual abuse: Let's talk about it. Margaret O. Hyde. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. An easy introduction to what sexual abuse is, secrets, touching, and prevention. From 10 years to adult.

So, there are laws about sex! Wendy Harvey and Thom McGuire. Vancouver: Butterworth's Canada, 1989. An easy-to-read explanation of what is legal, and what isn't, in Canadian law.

Top Secret: Sexual assault information for teenagers only. Jennifer J. Fay and Billie Jo Flerchinger. Renton, Wash: King County Rape Relief, 1988. Fun-format teen-friendly advice about preventing rape, dealing with incest, helping a friend, and what to do after a sexual assault.

* **When teenage boys have been sexually abused: A guide for teenagers.** John Napier-Hemy. Vancouver: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 1991. A booklet in question-and-answer format.

* **When teenage girls have been sexually abused: A guide for teenagers.** Louise Doyle. Vancouver: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 1994. A booklet in question-and-answer format.

For Adult Survivors

The courage to heal: A guide for women survivors of sexual abuse. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis. Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1988. A thick but user-friendly book with a wide-ranging bibliography. Informative and useful whether you are a survivor or not. There is a separate workbook.

Outgrowing the pain. Eliana Gil. Walnut Creek, CA: Launch Press, 1983. Short, accessible information for adults who suspect they may have been abused as children.

Victims no longer: Men recovering from incest and other child sexual abuse. Mike Lew. Scarborough: Harper Collins, 1990. User-friendly, it includes personal stories. Includes an extensive list of resources.

* **When males have been sexually abused: A guide for adult male survivors.** John Napier-Hemy. Vancouver: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 1994. A booklet in question-and-answer format.

***When your partner has been sexually abused: A guide for partners.**

Louise Doyle, John Napier-Hemy. Vancouver: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 1994. A booklet in question-and-answer format.

For Families and members of the General Public

* **Sexual abuse counselling: A guide for children and parents.** John Napier-Hemy. Vancouver: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 1991. A booklet in question-and-answer format.

* **Sibling sexual abuse: A guide for parents.** John Napier-Hemy. Vancouver: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 1994. A booklet in question-and-answer format.

* These booklets are also available in English and French at no charge from the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Health Canada, 1-800-267-1291. TDD 1-800-561-5643.

NFB Video Resources

Some libraries and community services centres make these videos available on loan. Or call the National Film Board Video Sales toll-free number: in Canada, 1-800-267-7710; in U.S.A., 1-800-542-2164.

For a complete listing of videos on sexual abuse and other related subjects available from the National Film Board of Canada, write or fax: **The Caring Collection**, NFB Marketing D-5, P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3H5. Fax: (514) 496-2573.

Good Things Can Still Happen. NFB, 1992, 22 minutes. Order no. 9192 024. An interactive animated film for therapists and other professionals to use when working with sexually abused children, teens and adults who have disclosed abuse. A 32-page guide is included.

Sandra's Garden. NFB, 1990, 34 minutes. Order no. 0190 059. A story of an incest survivor. Sandra found the courage to speak the truth and, in so doing, began a journey to overcome the fear, guilt and denial that shaped her life.

To a Safer Place. NFB, 1987, 58 minutes. Order no. 0187 067. An inspiring story of how one woman comes to terms with her life as a survivor of incest. Shirley Turcotte has succeeded in building a rich and full life after being abused by her father from infancy to early childhood. For teens and adults.

Where Angels Dare. NFB, 1993, 26 minutes. Order no. 9193 054. In an intensely personal document about healing from childhood sexual abuse and torture, four women and two men speak honestly and eloquently of painful childhood experiences, the "angels" who guided them along the way, and their deeply felt commitment to building a better world for children.

Other Video Resources

For a comprehensive catalogue, *Preventing Family Violence: A catalogue of Canadian videos on family violence for the general public and professionals working in the field*, contact the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Health Canada, Ottawa, K1A 1B4 1-800-267-1291.

TDD 1-800-561-5643

Fax (613) 941-8930

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Brittaney Edgell as Janine
Yumi Yumada as Melissa
Ajay Karah as Mike
Margo Kane as Fran

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Key Grip
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Gaffer
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Linda Guns

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Goesta Struve-Dencher

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Hilary Denny
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Debra Rurak

Sound Facility
Sharpe Sound Studios

Line Producer
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Production Coordinator
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George Johnson

Executive Producers
Svend-Erik Eriksen
Don Haig

Produced by
the National Film Board of
Canada, Pacific Centre, 1995

47 minutes 23 seconds.
Order No. C 9195 175.

Sales information:
Canada: 1-800-267-7710
U.S.A.: 1-800-542-2164

User's Guide

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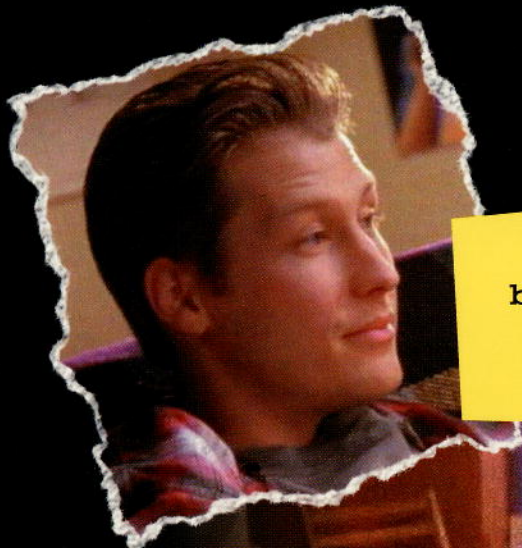
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"Shit happens and you feel
bad about it... but it doesn't
have to run your
life forever."



"You gotta remember...
Good things can still
happen too!"



Good Things too

is the second in a series.

The first film, **Good Things Can Still Happen**, is a 22-minute animated film about childhood sexual abuse, designed for use with child, teen, and adult survivors, as well as families; professional development; and public awareness. Accompanied by a 32-page User's Guide.

Produced by:
National Film Board of Canada,
Pacific Centre.

Good Things too
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Good Things Can Still Happen
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