

**Penny Parks** was an internationally renowned consultant psychotherapist, trainer, author and motivational speaker. Having suffered abuse herself, Penny subsequently pioneered and developed the first comprehensive ‘inner child’ therapy model that became known as Parks Inner Child Therapy™ (PICT) and went on to offer training to organisations and individuals. She authored two books, *Rescuing the Inner Child* and *The Counsellor’s Guide to Parks Inner Child Therapy*, and was a gifted communicator, presenting Masterclass seminars for professional and personal development. She worked with individuals and organisations, including the NHS, MIND, Relate, Social Services, Police and Probation Services, Universities and Colleges, Psychotherapy & Hypnotherapy Training Organisations, Professional Associations, Private Agencies, Solicitors (as both trainer and expert witness) and many varied professionals. She was privileged to have been given Honorary Fellow Membership of both the National Council of Psychotherapists (NCP) and the National Counselling Society (NCS). Penny was born in America and moved to the UK in 1982, where she gained British Citizenship and lived with her husband until her death in 2020. Her company Penny Parks Training continues to train therapists in PICT.

P E N N Y   P A R K S

# Rescuing the Inner Child

Therapy for adults  
sexually abused as children



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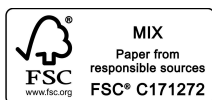
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To Dolly and Angel—  
my beloved daughters, cherished friends, kindest critics and  
valued supporters—I love you.

To Rod—  
my loving husband, loyal and supportive friend, financial backer  
and respected adviser—you are the treasure I thought I would  
never find.

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Penny Parks

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**Note** For ease of reading, victims of sexual abuse will be referred to throughout this book as 'she' rather than 'she/he', but both sexes are abused and the information in this book applies equally. The terms 'abuser' and 'aggressor' will be used interchangeably. The term 'victim' will be used rather than the term 'survivor', for 'victim' simply refers to an innocent person who is or has been subjected to oppression, hardship or mistreatment.

# Introduction

When people think of sexual abuse of children, they usually picture a stranger luring a child away with sweets and violently raping and murdering the child. They picture a frantic mother pleading for the safe return of her child, and a newspaper headline of the tragedy. The demand is then made for something to be done about crimes of that nature.

According to statistics published by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in only 14% of the cases of child sexual abuse is the abuser a stranger to the child: 86% of such crimes are committed by relatives or someone known to the child (S. J. Greighton and P. Noyes, *Child Abuse Trends in England and Wales*, NSPCC, 1989—suspected abuser other than a relative or parent substitute in 14% of sexual-abuse cases from 1983–7). The most common abuser is the natural father. There is no need to lure the child away with sweets—ready access and authority over the child already exist. Although the child does not understand the parent's reasons or actions, she sees no choice but to obey his requests.

Unlike the stranger who violently rapes and usually murders, the family aggressor starts slowly. Normal hugging and cuddling changing to sexual fondling may be the first step. The child is confused and frightened by this new behaviour—wanting the cuddling, but unable to see how to avoid the other unwanted attention. The aggressor capitalises on the child's naïvety and threatens that the child will 'be in trouble', 'go to jail', 'not be loved anymore' or perhaps 'have to go away' if she tells anyone about what *she*—the child—has done.

Children are very susceptible to threats of that kind, and they are easy targets to pin guilt upon—because of their naïvety, they do not understand that they are being tricked. Besides, children commonly experience the problem of guilt by



association. For instance, if a child is in the lounge with a friend who accidentally breaks a vase, it is not the friend that her mother shouts at and blames.

The child has no reason not to believe the trusted adult or relative, so the aggressor is free to bribe and blackmail until he feels quite secure that the secret will be kept. If the secret is found out or the child actually tells (which usually does not happen for years—perhaps only when a younger brother or sister is abused by the same parent, or the child reaches puberty) there are no blaring headlines or frantic mother pleading her child's case as there would be if the abuser were a stranger. In fact, until recently society seemed only to recognise children who were molested by strangers—it was too threatening to accept that a child down the street, next door or in someone's own home could be sexually abused by her father.

That abusing father (or relative) could easily be a policeman, a clergyman, a doctor, a lawyer or a member of the armed forces. Although society has seemed to want to categorise child-molesters as alcoholics, unemployed, uneducated, lower-class or criminal types only, in truth aggressors come from *all* walks of life and professions. When the profile of the abuser did not fit what society could tolerate, the abuse was simply justified by blaming the child ('must have been provocative') or the mother ('must have been frigid' etc.). However, to be fair, society often did not find out about such cases, for they were seldom divulged by the child's mother.

The majority of cases brought to a mother's attention by her child were disbelieved. If society did not want to know that fathers sexually abuse their own children, one can imagine how much more difficult it has been for mothers to accept this life-crushing information.

So, here is a crime that was only acknowledged as a crime in 14% of the total number of cases. That is like saying that murder is acknowledged as a crime only when the victim is redheaded. This social quirk made it possible for men (fewer aggressors are female) to sexually abuse children for years and, if found out, generally not have to face any consequences.

Fortunately, a small number of people have been able to make a loud enough noise about sexual abuse to awaken the sleeping giant called society. When the giant fully awakens, the

veil of secrecy will be removed and children will know that they have the right to say 'No' to unwanted touch (even if it *is* dear old dad). Aggressors will know that children will be more likely not only to say 'No' but also to tell someone. Children will be supported by a society ready to take responsible and knowledgeable action on their behalf.

Change has been slow, but at least it has finally begun. It has only been within the last few years that the subject of sexual abuse has been discussed on television and in newspapers and magazines. In fact, it was not until 1986 that British Telecom finally allowed the London-based Incest Crisis Line to use the word 'incest' in its phone-book listing—before that it had not been considered 'suitable'.

Obviously, the United Kingdom is just cracking the ice, but it is a start. The start has been concerned with children: how to prevent sexual abuse, how to recognise it if it is currently happening, how to help if it has already happened. However, one large body of people has not had its needs recognised or administered to. These people are the many adults who suffered sexual abuse as children. They are no longer the 'poor little innocent children' whom society is beginning to embrace. Instead, they are guilt-ridden, self-sabotaging, sexually dysfunctional, on-going victims. There is a list as long as your arm of problems these people can have, and helping agencies are confused about what kind of help to offer.

So far, only a small number of such victims have been able to regain their emotional health without professional intervention. Therein lies the reason for this book. The whys and wherefores of sexual abuse will be discussed, but the focus will be 'how to recover'. The message I learned personally, and share with my clients, is this: you will never *forget* what happened to you, but you can *stop hurting*. Parks Inner Child Therapy outlines the skills needed to stop the hurting.

However, if victims have any of the following problems, they should use this book in collaboration with a therapist and not attempt to solve their problems alone: if they cannot bear physical touch, if they are sexually interested in children, if they have only vague memories of abuse happening, or if they feel extremely disturbed or out of control (overdosing, self-mutilation, food/drug/alcohol abuse).

### Note to Partners of Abuse Victims

If you are the partner of a victim of sexual abuse, reading this book may be rough going. To know that your partner has experienced some of the pain you will be reading about will stir up conflicting emotions. You may feel that you want to 'do something' to help your partner feel better, but this feeling may also be accompanied by the desire to turn away from the pain. Caring partners usually experience these two contradictory feelings. It is quite normal, so do not call yourself names over it.

The 'something' you can do will involve a rather passive role: *listening, supporting and giving space.*

*Listening* will be difficult, and sometimes you may have to stop and continue later. The story may be painful to hear or tell, so both of you should consider it permissible to stop when either person needs to. Most victims want to be able to talk about the abuse with their partner but need to choose their own time and also need to know that their partner will not turn away repulsed in any way.

Tears should be expected, but comments such as 'You poor thing' are not helpful. To convey your sorrow about your partner's experience, try statements such as 'I'm so sorry you had to go through that.' *Never* question why your partner did not tell someone or imply that any guilt is attached to her. If your partner is comfortable with touch, feel free to offer a safe cuddle. If you are unsure about whether your partner wants a cuddle, you can ask, 'Would a cuddle be welcome right now?', or just back off if your partner stiffens up when you attempt to hold her.

*Support* means that you are on your partner's side. Never try to help your partner understand the abuser or her mother with statements such as 'He must have been a sick man—you should feel sorry for him' or 'You can't blame your mother—she probably didn't know.' Your partner will have to come to terms with feelings about the abuser or about her mother on her own. To sound as though you are making excuses for the abuser or the mother will only delay the healing process and alienate you from your partner.

*Giving space* simply means allowing your partner time to

sort out emotions and reactions to memories with minimum pressure. Your own needs may have to take second place now and again, but the sacrifice will be well worth it. Your partner may be facing several months of disturbance—sometimes withdrawing from you; at other times needing extra comfort. When she works on anger exercises you may experience some of that anger spilling over on to you. Accommodate the erratic behaviour as best you can, *but* do not be afraid kindly to make your limits clear. It is a good opportunity for both of you to develop your skills in the area of compromise.

If the abuser is still alive and perhaps even living down the street, you may feel like telling the person what a dirty so-and-so you think he is. Some husbands want to beat up the abuser. Before rushing out the door to vent your anger, find out what your partner wants. If your partner is saying, 'No, don't do that' then you must honour her request. To do otherwise is to put your partner back into a powerless position—unable to stop from happening something that is frightening and confusing. If you are left with a raging anger, try the pillow-bashing exercise you will learn about later on in the book (Chapter 7) to let off steam. Your partner needs you to be supportive of her feelings, so knowing you are bashing a pillow instead of the abuser will help prove your support better than mere words could do. Respecting your partner's wishes also creates trust—a valuable commodity in any relationship.

## Contributors

Throughout this book, you will be reading about several people who were sexually abused as children. Their information comes from work they did as a part of therapy. They have donated this homework so that others can learn from it and know they are not alone. The names of all these contributors have been changed, however. The first of these contributions is a poem written by a male victim we will call Richard.

### *Look for the Child*

Look for the child that doesn't play  
While others laugh and run.

Does it cross your mind why he stands alone  
Instead of joining in the fun?

He never seems to have a friend  
And is never a part of the crowd.  
You will never hear him say very much  
But inside he is screaming out loud.

He pleads for help with movement  
And every unspoken word.  
He shouts at the world through saddened eyes  
But no one's ever heard.

Always silent and full of mistrust  
With any friendship showing doubt.  
He feels he can't talk to anyone  
In case his secret should slip out.

He can't run up and tell you  
What he is going through.  
Because he feels the guilt is all his own  
He feels there is nothing he can do.

He didn't go off in a stranger's car  
Or take sweets from a dirty old man.  
He was with somebody he trusted and loved  
When his torment first began.

Please don't ignore this sad-eyed boy  
Don't turn and walk away.  
Show him some love and gain his trust,  
Listen to what he has to say.

It may not be pleasant, it may even hurt.  
But hear his story through.  
Do what you can to help this child  
Because it could so easily have been you.

# 1 Abuse

## What is Sexual Abuse?

There are a number of definitions of sexual abuse, depending on the context in which it is approached—for example, the law, helping agencies or therapy. Whether sexual abuse involves fondling or penetration, the emotional damage to the child is the same, trust is destroyed. This book will therefore define sexual abuse from the context of therapy: sexual abuse is an adult involving a child in any activity from which the adult expects to derive sexual arousal. When that adult is related to the child, the term 'incest' will also be used for such abuse.

Some abused children do not have their bodies sexually interfered with; instead, they witness sexual behaviour of adults—such as exposure, masturbation or intercourse. This can damage the child's trust. One young woman described how, during her childhood, her father would expose himself to her whenever they were alone in the house. He only touched her on the arm, but she never knew when he would appear, naked and grinning foolishly. He would stand there for a short time, red in the face, with an erection, then leave the room as quickly as he arrived. The behaviour was never spoken about, and when he returned later he was dressed and behaved normally. The inappropriateness of his actions, both during and after the event, damaged the child's trust.

Other inappropriate behaviours are hugging a child up against an adult's erection, 'accidentally' fondling genitals or breasts time after time, and kisses that turn into French kissing. In these cases, there is no clothing removed and the adult acts perfectly normal afterwards. The child is left feeling confused and guilty—not knowing exactly what happened (depending on her age) and not knowing how to stop it.

We shall also discuss (in Chapter 11—Sexual Dysfunction)

the kind of damage done when a mother places her son as head of the house—in the role of a partner. Even without overt sexual activity, the inappropriate intimate nature of such a relationship erodes the child's trust in the adult. In Chapter 6 the effects of emotional abuse will be discussed. The exercises outlined in this book are effective for overcoming the effects of any childhood abuse, be it emotional, physical or sexual.

Most of the cases in this book will represent the typical type of sexual abuse experienced by the clients from my practice. Their experiences are very similar to those of the victims I worked with in America: experiences that generally consist of manual or oral genital stimulation (performed by either the abusers or the victim) and attempted or completed penetration.

Normal hugging and kissing will *not* be interpreted by the child as abuse. Many parents have become anxious and fearful about this, but children do not become frightened and confused by loving hugs and kisses—they *need* them.

However, children can respond negatively to 'bully hugging'—that is, hugging which consists of holding children against their will or tossing them in the air, ignoring their discomfort and fright. This behaviour is often accompanied by statements such as 'She's just acting like a baby' or 'She *really* loves it.' Many clients have expressed anger about treatment that ignored their right to say 'No.' It also undermines trust in the adult. ('Bully hugging' does not in any way refer to the hugging therapy being advocated in some quarters for use with autistic children.)

Sometimes parents have passing feelings of sexual stimulation when interacting with their children. The child may recognise these and/or feel stimulation as well. If these are isolated experiences and the parents had not planned them to happen, there should be no damage done. If, however, the parent finds such experiences happening more often, or is even setting up occasions where they are likely to happen, then it is time to seek help.

## **Abuse Cases**

The following are three case histories. The stories were told to me by adults, but I have rewritten them as they were

experienced, in the language a child would use. They are examples of the circumstances that children can be faced with. For those reading this book who do not have a background of sexual abuse, these histories can help you understand the type of things that children experience.

*Linda (age thirteen)*

My dad has been doing it to me since I can remember. He wanted a boy when I was born—I think he just never liked me since. On Fridays, when mum goes shopping, dad watches from the landing till she's out of sight. Then he locks the doors and I know what's coming next. First he gets the cane from its hiding place, then I really get it for whatever I did wrong during the week.

After the caning, he takes off my clothes and lies on top of me. He pokes at me between my legs with his thing, swearing at me all the time. He gets really angry-acting and red-faced when he's doing that. Then he stands over me and rubs his thing until the white stuff comes out on to me. After that I get another beating for any protesting I did when he was on top of me.

My mum never mentions the cane marks, and I don't think she would care about the other either.

My teacher at school was really nice. She used to like me. I told her what daddy did to me, 'cause I thought she could stop the beatings and the other. But she was angry and called me a liar. I had to stand in the waste basket at school that day, facing the wall with a sign on my back that said 'liar'. She sent a note home to dad and he came to the school, took me home and punished me.

Dad broke my arm when he hit me with a chair once. After the plaster was on I was sitting in the back garden, just hating him. Suddenly, I got a great idea to get back at him. He grew prize tomatoes and was just about ready to take them into a show. Well, since he always called me 'slug', I decided I would be one. So, I carefully ate little holes in the tomatoes, just like a slug would! He never knew it was me and he really cursed those slugs—I was glad to pay him back.

My gran came to visit soon after that and saw the cane marks on my backside when she went to look at some boils I



had there. She's going to take me to live with her. I won't tell her about the other—I don't want her to be angry with me like the teacher was.

*Steven (age eleven)*

It started one day when I went to see my friend, Grace. We used to go horse-riding together. This time just Grace and her father were home. He wanted Grace to walk to the shops for something and said she could buy us some sweets too. I started to go with her, but he said 'No', it would take too long if we both went. So, Grace went on her own and I waited with her father. She was going to be gone about twenty minutes.

After she left, her father went upstairs. Then he called me to come up there. I thought it was peculiar, but I wasn't going to say 'No' to a grown-up. He was in the bathroom, the door was open and he stood looking at me with his willy outside of his trousers. I had never seen a grown man's willy before and I felt ever so embarrassed and uncomfortable. I didn't know where to look.

He sort of beckoned me over to him. I was very confused—I didn't know what the point was. He put one hand very firmly on my shoulder and put my hand on his willy. He moved my hand up and down and then told me to do it on my own. I kept letting go—I didn't understand. I was really scared and my stomach felt funny and upset. He was acting funny—sort of nervous and het-up. He seemed out of control and was breathing funny. He told me roughly not to let go of his willy again and kept his hand over mine, making it move faster. All I could think was 'Why is this happening? Why is he doing this?' Soon, some white, sticky stuff came out of his willy. I felt like I was going to be sick. He finally allowed me to let go.

He was calmer now and took me downstairs. He kept saying I mustn't tell. I felt like I was in a daze or a bad dream. Grace came back and I said I wanted to go home. Her father walked me to the door and pushed some money in my hand as I stepped out. I didn't know what to think—the coins made me feel like I was made a part of it. If I told anyone he would say I had taken money. They would think I wanted

money to do this and I knew it must be very bad, whatever it was. I knew I would never tell anyone anyway—how could I tell something so horrible? I threw the money away. I went home and stayed in my room all day. I saw him a couple of days later walking past my house. He said he was sorry about 'the other day' and told me to forget about it.

A couple of months later, I went to see if Grace could ride horses again. Her father answered the door. He said Grace was home and invited me inside. I stepped just into the hall and stood by the door. He went to the other room and called Grace. He returned, put his hand on my shoulder and said she wasn't there. He kept hold of my shoulder and marched me upstairs. I was frantic with fear, but I didn't know how to get away. I kept thinking, 'Oh no, I've got myself in this trouble again.' He must have known no one was going to be home for a long time.

He took me to the bedroom and told me to take off my clothes. I was so scared I was shaking. I could hardly undo the buttons. He took off his trousers. He made me lie on my stomach and he was acting crazy again. He took some vaseline and put it on his willy. He was nervous and kept fumbling the jar and dropping it. I felt so trapped and scared. Then he put his willy in my bum. At first, he was just poking at me with his willy—I was crying and squirming. When he poked it inside my bum, it hurt so much that I screamed out. He put his hand over my face. I knew nothing would ever be the same again—I remember thinking, 'This is the end of the world.'

I never told—how could I? It was more horrible than the other time. I started wetting the bed at night and once I even soiled it. My father was so angry with me. I had lots of nightmares and I couldn't shut out of my mind what happened. I couldn't concentrate at school and my marks were terrible. My parents said I was acting like a baby all the time. I could never tell them what happened. I wondered if other men did that to boys. I was always careful never to be alone with any man.

*Peggy (age nine—American)*

Did I ever try to tell? Yeah, I did tell my mum when I was six.

I got real scared, 'cause I heard at school what the 'F word' meant, and that was what my stepfather was doing to me! So, even though I was scared to tell my mum, I was *more* scared about such a bad thing happening to me.

I wasn't sure what to say. I waited till my stepfather left the house. The more I thought about it, the more I started to cry. Then I was crying so hard, I was hiccuping. My mum put me on her lap first (she doesn't do that much) and wanted to know what was wrong. When I finally told her that 'Daddy put his thing in my thing,' she was really mad. She put me off her lap and shook and shook me. She kept screaming, 'You're lying, aren't you? Aren't you? You filthy trouble-maker!' In the end I just agreed I was lying. Then I got a spanking for being a little liar.

I tried to tell again when I was eight. My aunt and mum went to the shops and left me with my uncle. They were visiting us for a week. (He was the first one who did stuff to me, ever since I lived with them for a while when I was two.)

We lived in a caravan with windows at the front and the sofa up against the window. Uncle Harry was sitting on the sofa with his trousers down around his feet. I had to take my panties off and lift up my dress and stand over his face. He did stuff to me with his mouth like that and rubbed his willy at the same time.

He told me to tell him as soon as I saw mum and auntie come round the corner. Instead, I got a good idea and didn't say anything! When the door opened, Uncle Harry was trying to move pretty fast. He still only had his trousers up to about his knees when he stumbled past mum and auntie coming in the door. His willy was showing and everything.

Well, they came in, and uncle finished running to the bedroom. I was still standing on the sofa (with my shoes on too!). Nobody said nothing. They just talked about the shopping. Finally, I put my pants on and read a funny book. Later, uncle came out of the bedroom and we all just sat around like always. Mum never even yelled at me for having my shoes on the sofa. Anyway, I guess my idea wasn't so good after all.

Richard, a male client, abused by his aunt, wrote about his experience in a poem:

*Before I Sleep, I Cry*

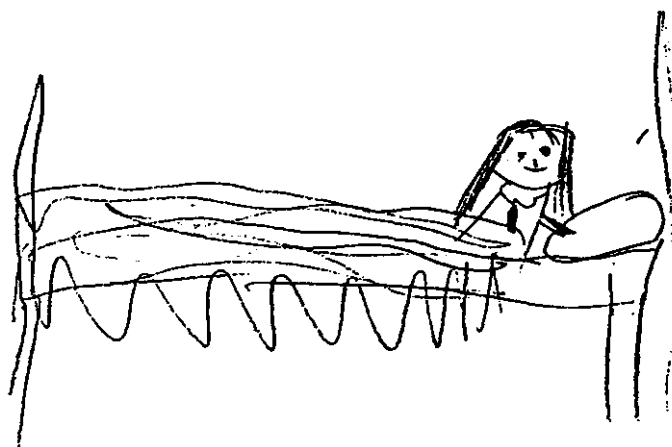
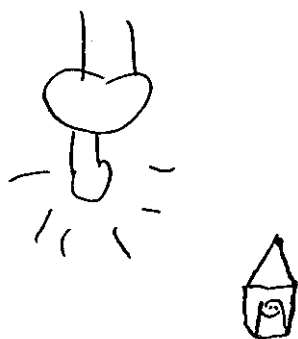
I don't like to sit upon your lap  
And cuddle close to you.  
I don't like it when you touch me  
And do the things you do.  
I know I shouldn't do it,  
Although I don't know why.  
But everytime it happens,  
Before I sleep, I cry.

Don't tell me that it's my fault  
Or that I'm the one to blame.  
Because I am just a little boy  
And I can't share your shame.  
Don't smack me when I'm not naughty,  
And don't watch me get undressed.  
Don't let me see you without your clothes,  
And when it's bedtime please let me rest.

Soon it will be time to go  
And mum won't let you near me.  
Then when I give a cry for help,  
Someone will be there to hear me.  
I'll be glad when I don't live here,  
Then you'll leave me alone.  
I'll be glad when I'm a big boy,  
Then I can bath all on my own.

### **A Child's Message**

The following drawing was done by Katy when she was seven years old. Recently she found some old school exercise books that had been stored away for years. She was astounded to discover several drawings she had made which all included light-bulbs that were almost exact replicas of circumcised penises.



These drawings coincide with her sexual-abuse trauma and are typical of drawings done by children who are attempting to alert adults to the fact that something is wrong but are too frightened to use words. In Katy's case, and for most children, no one noticed, or if they did they were not able to understand the message or confront the issue.

## Loss of Trust

The natural father is the most common aggressor, according to P. B. Mrazek, M. A. Lynch and A. Bentovim's 'Sexual Abuse of Children in the United Kingdom' (*Child Abuse and Neglect*, vol. 7, 1983). When I first discovered this, it surprised me. Since my stepfather had been the main aggressor in my life, I had comforted myself with the fantasy that 'My real father wouldn't do this to me.' That fantasy was particularly important to me, as from the age of two until almost thirteen I had been sexually abused by five other relatives besides my stepfather. I needed to feel that, at least, *real* fathers do not have sex with their children. I was saddened to find out differently.

Generally children regard their genitals simply as for toilet purposes until puberty, when they begin to realise that there are sexual uses as well. An abuser makes the child aware of the sexual functions her body (and his too) is capable of well before the time at which this would normally happen—he physically identifies her sexuality prematurely. However, any trusted adult—especially a father or father figure—who introduces sex into his relationship with a child does much more than prematurely make the child physically aware of her sexuality. He removes not only innocence but also trust, which is an essential building block for a child's emotional development. No longer an innocent child, she has adult information that must be kept secret at all costs. Because she lives in fear that someone will discover the secret, she often avoids making close relationships, believing that discovery will lead to her becoming a social outcast. As one boy stated, 'I knew what was done to murderers, and murder was talked about. What was happening to me wasn't even talked about, so I couldn't imagine what the consequences might be.'

## Self-sabotage

When trust in parental figures is lost, an essential link with the adult world is severed. Child victims are emotionally on their own, with guilt, fear and feelings of inadequacy as companions. Many remain fixed at that child level of emotional development, as though the trauma put a stop on time. Adult information

and knowledge are added as they grow up, but the underlying guilt, fear and inadequacy remain and govern much of their decision-making.

The governing power of these feelings is seen in the compulsion to sabotage such happiness as comes their way. Relationships are strained to breaking-point by constant demands for proof of love (which can never be believed), by chronic jealousy (which cannot be comforted), by endless emotional tests (programmed for failure) and by sexual dysfunction (since pleasure is not allowed to the guilty).

Job success can be sabotaged, as well as health, friendships and even general social interaction. The burden of guilt demands punishment. Any set-backs or problems that occur in life can become verification of inadequacy—victims have the feeling that 'There is something terribly wrong with me or the sexual abuse wouldn't have happened, and this problem proves it.' Sometimes this idea of intrinsic inadequacy is reinforced from the start by the aggressor—'I wouldn't do this if you were a good girl'—or the child simply assumes that she is now bad because a bad thing has happened to her. Childhood friendships that drift apart can be perceived by the abused child as proof that she is 'defective'. As she grows up, normal losses in life—jobs, friendships, romance (not to mention serious losses such as death, health, etc.)—are simply regarded as further proof of guilt and inadequacy. Of course, proof of guilt requires more punishment, so the vicious circle continues.

When crisis becomes part of an abused child's life, it is then regarded as a normal situation. In the words of one counsellor from a refuge for battered women:

I have observed countless episodes of women who throw their lives into crisis when things become too peaceful. They seem to connect a sense of security with living in a continual crisis situation. As, because of childhood abuse, they have also come to connect love with pain, they need to be taught about self-sabotaging behaviour. Discussion of what a 'normal' relationship entails is also imperative.

The need for crises often extends to relationships with friends, family and children. I have also discussed with clients the fact that advertising and the media reinforce these

'love = pain' delusions. Commercials and soap operas seem to be the worst offenders and have an undue amount of influence on a woman who suffers from low self-esteem.