

Survivors' Stories Matter

Why it can be difficult to tell someone

- Fear you won't be believed
- Fear nothing will be done about it
- Fear something will be done that isn't what you want
- Fear the abuser will hurt you or someone you care about
- Fear of being judged

Please know these fears are common, and you are not alone.

Find professional support that's right for you

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy

MOCSA offers free of charge counseling to children and adults. Or you can look for a private practice therapist at www.psychologytoday.com.

If you live outside the Kansas City area, search "sexual abuse support organizations near me."

A good therapist is like a comfortable pair of shoes. If the first person you talk to doesn't "fit," contact someone else.

Survivors have options

When you're ready to tell your story, you could:

- Tell a trusted friend or family member
- Talk with a school counselor
- Talk confidentially with a trained professional

- Call MOCSA's 24-hour crisis line
Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

MO 816-531-0233

KS 913-642-0233

- Contact RAINN
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network

Chat at online.rainn.org

Call 800-656-HOPE (4673)

- Contact a therapist who can support your journey with effective therapies such as EMDR
- Report abuse
Missouri Child Abuse Hotline 800-392-3738
Kansas Child Abuse Hotline 800-922-5330
National Child Abuse Hotline: 800-4-A-CHILD

If you tell a friend or family member and they don't believe you or fail to support you, tell someone else. Keep telling until you find the right person.

It's your choice.

How can all of us help make it easier for survivors to speak?

Create a culture that helps them be heard.

- **Make it okay to talk about it.** Discuss sexual abuse in class, talk about current events and books that address this topic—both nonfiction and fiction.
- **Educate your organization or group.**
 - Host a training session for employees, parents, coaches, counselors, caregivers—any group that works with or cares about the safety of children.
 - If your group works with children, make sure everyone knows who to talk to if they suspect abuse or signs of grooming.

Offer meaningful support.

It can be hard for survivors to trust. Your response matters.

- **Listen and believe.** Say, "I believe you. That shouldn't have happened to you. It's not your fault." Let them talk as much or as little as they choose. Don't say or imply that they need to get over it or move forward—this is their journey. Remember, you may be the first person they have ever shared their story with.
- **Avoid judging.** Do not think or say things like "if she hadn't been wearing that clothing" or "if he hadn't hung out with that family." No judging. No one ever deserves to be assaulted or abused.
- **Let survivors know you care.** "I'm sorry that happened to you. Is there anything I can do?" Check in with them. Be their friend or support system.

The responsibility belongs to each of us.