

# Did you know?

- \* Sexual abuse of children and adolescents is not necessarily committed by strangers.
- \* Research from ECSAF and other countries reveals that most of the abusers are acquainted with or have regular contact with victims, such as parents, siblings, relatives, peers, neighbors, friends of family, babysitters, domestic helpers, teachers and coaches etc.
- \* Research in recent years has also shown that children who undergo severe trauma may experience brain abnormalities, increasing the chance of developing mental disorders such as anxiety or depression.
- \* Sexually abused children who do not receive appropriate assistance or counselling keep the issue concealed, which leaves them scarred for life. Possible outcomes include loss of confidence in people and society, or even issues with marriage or their future sex life. Early intervention and assistance are of utmost importance.
- \* We should believe in children, and treat their claims of sexual abuse seriously.

## Background and Mission

The End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation (ECSAF) is a non-government charitable organization founded in November 1998 by Ms Siao Fong Fong, an award-winning actress and a qualified child psychologist/therapist, with the mission to protect youngsters under 18 from sexual abuse.

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# Have you ever heard about it?

## Case A

### Elaine : 12 years old

Elaine has been sexually abused by her father since she was 8, but has kept it to herself. The truth was discovered by the school social worker at the secondary school she is attending.

"They seem to be a loving family. How can her mum not know that she is being sexually abused by her dad?"

"Elaine's father looks educated and well-mannered. How can he possibly be a sexual abuser?"

"There should be injury marks on the body if the child was abused. Since there aren't any, she should be fine."

? **Myth**

Within a warm, loving family, the mother would definitely know if the father did sexually abuse the children.

? **Myth**

Sexual abusers are usually people with dark sides to their personalities and unsightly appearances.

? **Myth**

Sexually abused children should have visible injuries on their bodies.

## ! Facts

- \* Many child sexual abuse cases are discovered years later, with some victims having been threatened to keep silent, while some were misled to believe that it's a secret between themselves and the abuser. Other cases remain undiscovered as the victim's mother is unwilling to accept the fact that her husband sexually abuses their child, leaving the victim in a constant state of fear.
- \* If the abuser is a close relative, the victim may face tremendous pressure which prevents the child from telling others about the incident. Younger victims do not know how to face other relatives, or may want to protect their family members, including the abuser. They fear speaking out will result in punishment or imprisonment of the abuser, which may upset other family members and strain the relationships. Some children fear their accounts of what happened may be met with skepticism.

## Case B

### James : 6 years old

James was molested by his piano teacher on multiple occasions on the pretext of teaching him rhythm counting.

"The teacher is married and has a five-year-old daughter. He has no reason to molest that child."

"He's a good teacher and treats James well. There's no way he would commit sexual abuse."

"If James was sexually abused, why did he keep attending lessons instead of speaking out? Is he lying to get out of class?"

? **Myth**

The teacher has a wife and a child. There is no need for him to seek sexual satisfaction by abusing children.

? **Myth**

Teachers that appear to be caring and passionate would not sexually abuse children.

? **Myth**

Some children lie about being victims of sexual abuse to get out of tutorials, piano or dance classes.

## ! Facts

- \* Children, especially toddlers, have limited understanding of what is sexual abuse. They may not disclose the incident to someone else right away because they don't realize they have been sexually abused, or because of the fear they would be punished for having done something wrong. The situation gets even more complicated when there is trust between the abuser and the child, such as a teacher, coach or a respected elder for the victim. The confusion and fear may cause the victim to panic and remain silent.

## Case C

### Emily: 15 years old

Emily fell in love with her swimming coach, who was then 26. They often practiced together and Emily's swimming skills did improve greatly. Later on, the coach met a new girlfriend and broke up with Emily. Emily told the school social worker that the coach had forced her to have sex with him multiple times.

"If Emily was indeed reluctant to have sex, why didn't she refuse immediately and continued to maintain contact with the abuser?"

"The girl shouldn't be harmed if it was consensual. That doesn't count as sexual abuse."

"It's no big deal. She's always hanging out with her many boyfriends. It's quite normal for her to have sex. What harm can it do to her?"

? **Myth**

The girl was fine with dating the coach and enjoying the free lessons, but accused the coach of sexually abusing her when he wanted to break up.

? **Myth**

The girl had sex voluntarily. Consensual sex does not constitute sexual abuse

? **Myth**

The girl has had many boyfriends. Sex should not be a big deal for her.

## ! Facts

- \* Any sexual activities which involve children constitute child sexual abuse, including the use of rewards to lure children into having sex, or sexually assaulting children's bodies by using threats, intimidation or violence. Some people misbelieve that consensual sex does not qualify as sexual abuse. In fact, any children who are dependent, developmentally immature or under the age of 16 should be protected by adults, who should refrain from engaging in any sexual activities with them.
- \* Many victims maintain relations with the abusers even after sexual abuse has occurred, especially when the abusers are authoritative figures. Experts in this area point out that the influence coaches have on athletes' careers keeps athletes from severing relations after such incidents. Meanwhile, the athletes may be too young or immature to critically analyze such relations.