

For Husbands: Five Tips to Help Your Wife Overcome Childhood Sexual Abuse

If you know – or suspect – that your wife was sexually abused as a child, you probably want to help in any and every way you can. It's natural to do the guy thing and look for ways to “fix” the situation, but it's just not that simple. You're probably confused and wonder if there's anything you *can* do – and that's frustrating.

The scars of abuse often persist into adulthood, and feelings of guilt and shame prevent many victims from talking about their past. In doing so, they shut out and hurt those who care for them the most. But while the devastating and long-lasting emotional damage that results from sexual abuse can have significant impact on a person's ability to engage in healthy relationships, it's not the end of the story. *There is hope for healing.* Here are five things you can do to help your wife:

1. Stand with her

For a woman, especially, the process of identifying and dealing with the repercussions of childhood sexual abuse can be a wild roller coaster ride, marked by quickly changing emotions and unexpected memory triggers. Your wife's trust was betrayed in the most devastating way, and she may have difficulty letting you (or anyone else) get close enough to help. But she needs the comfort and reassurance that comes from a strong support system – and that starts with you. Begin by communicating your unconditional care and commitment to her. Let her know that you have her back, no matter what.

2. Lay the burden at the feet of Jesus

We're taught in Luke 4:18 that Jesus came to *proclaim good news to the afflicted, joy to the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives and comfort to those who are crushed and bruised.* You and your wife can take hold of this promise and make it yours as a couple – memorizing it, hiding it in your hearts, and praying over it day and night. It is the Word of God, and its power can be fully unleashed in your lives as you drink deeply from the well of its truth and allow the Holy Spirit to weave it into the very fabric of your hearts and minds.

3. Emphasize that it's not her fault

The third step is to help your wife realize and accept that the abuse she endured as a child was *not* her fault. It's common for victims to blame themselves, whether consciously or subconsciously, but that guilt is false. She needs to make a conscious attempt to leave it behind; of course, while that sounds simple, it can be very difficult to accomplish. An abuse victim can begin the process by affirming daily (and *being* affirmed, especially by you) that she is pure and spotless in the sight of God – regardless of what may have happened at the hands of others.

4. Study up

Next, get some outside input. Books can be helpful in this regard, and we've listed several below that we'd like to recommend for your consideration. All of these titles are available through our ministry and can be ordered by calling our offices or visiting our [Online Store](#).

5. Seek qualified professional assistance

Finally – and this is key – seek out the help of a trained Christian therapist. Accurate information is a good place to begin the restorative process, but head knowledge by itself isn't enough to bring the needed healing to completion. When children are violated, their sense of trust is damaged. As a result, thorough restoration can only take place within the context of healthy relationships. Your marriage can be the core of this process, especially if you are loving and patient. Still, the task is simply too big for the two of you to tackle alone. A person who experienced childhood abuse needs deep emotional, psychological and spiritual guidance. This is a job for a skilled and gifted professional.

With all this in mind, we'd like to invite you or your wife to call and speak with a member of Focus on the Family's Counseling staff. Our counselors can help you both get started on the journey of healing and provide referrals to qualified marriage and family therapists practicing in your area.

If your marriage is seriously struggling – from the fallout of the abuse your wife suffered, and/or other factors – we also recommend considering the in-depth services available through the [Focus on the Family National Institute of Marriage](#). This unique organization was created for the specific purpose of saving relationships in crisis. Headquartered in Branson, Missouri, NIM has served as a pioneer in the development of the Marriage Intensives Model. This innovative approach to crisis counseling has been revolutionary in rescuing marriages in distress and on the brink of divorce. Follow-up research indicates that *85 percent* of these couples remain married two years after their Intensive Experience.

You may speak to one of our staff counselors (at no charge), or inquire about Intensive Marriage Counseling at the [National Institute of Marriage](#), by calling **1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459)**.

Resources:

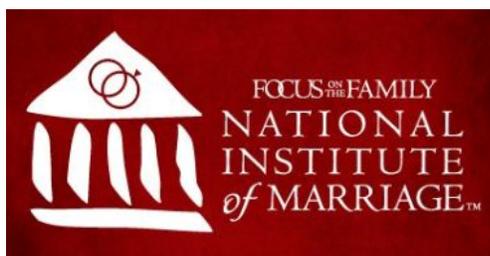
[*When a Woman You Love Was Abused: A Husband's Guide to Helping Her Overcome Childhood Sexual Molestation*](#) (book)

[*No Place to Cry: The Hurt and Healing of Sexual Abuse*](#) (book)

[*The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse*](#) (book)

[*On The Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*](#) (book)

[*Hush: Moving from Silence to Healing After Childhood Sexual Abuse*](#) (book)



Helping Families Thrive