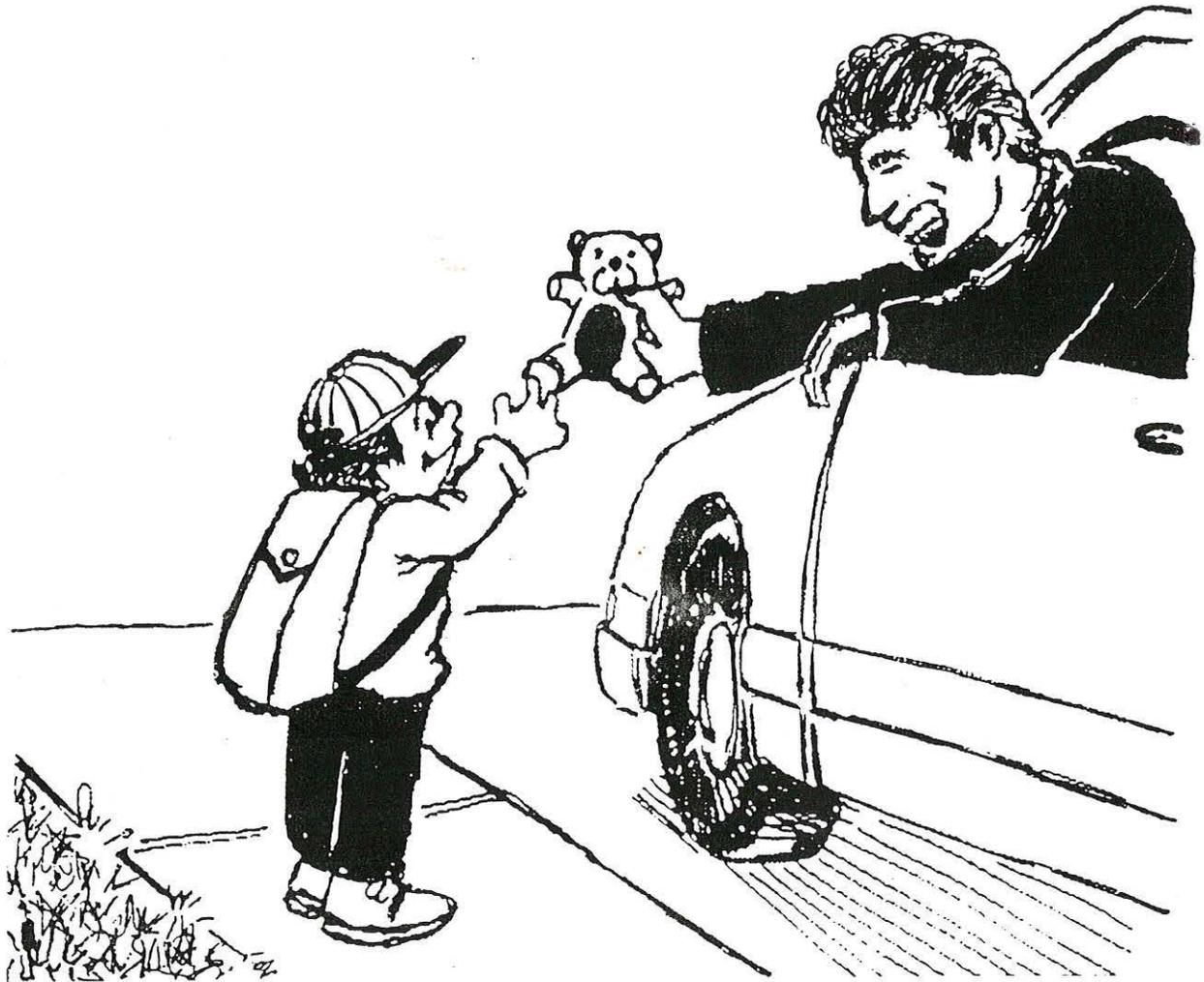


STREET SAFE KIDS

Protecting children from sexual predators – a street-proofing manual



“Street Safe Kids is one of the most comprehensive self-defense and street-proofing courses available. We strongly recommend that parents enroll their children in this ‘hands-on’ program.”

Mabyn Armstrong, director of prevention
The Missing Children’s Network Canada

George J. Manoli

Child Sexual Abuse : Myths, Facts and Stats

1. **MYTH** : Only strangers attack children.

Facts and stats : According to 1995 RCMP Canadian statistics, there were 68 child abduction cases perpetrated criminally by strangers or non-family members. These stranger abduction cases made up less than 1% of the 55,749 missing Canadian children reported that year. Over 75% of missing children are runaways within high school age.

Every research analyzed points the finger at one element: Children are sexually abused by someone the family and the child know or get to know. This abuse is so deeply rooted throughout the entire family structure that stopping it often means breaking up the entire family - a severe option at times too difficult for family members to face and deal with.

Between 60-80% of reported child sexual assault cases are committed by someone the child knows. In 25% of all cases, the offender is a father figure or related to the child in some way. Incest is prevalent in about 10% of reported sexual assaults. Indeed, the people likely to molest children are those who have the most opportunity and access to them. The relationship between the assailant and the child victim may affect the child's delayed reaction to the assault and to telling someone about the touching secret.

The chart below dissects the 1,383 sexual assault cases involving children and adults which took place in 1996 on the island of Montreal. Out of the 1,383 cases, 1,439 victims were involved. 60% of the victims knew their assailants (823 cases), 40% of the time the offender was a complete stranger to the victim (560 cases). Children and teens (0-17 years of age) were involved in 55.2% of the dossiers (795 cases), while adults (18-65 years of age) were involved in 44.8% of the dossiers.

Victims' age	Male victims	Female victims	Known offenders - 823 cases (59.5%)
00-11	123	257	Unknown offenders - 560 cases (40.5%)
12-17	58	353	Acquaintance - 537 cases (65.2%)
18-25	16	284	Natural parent - 87 cases (10.6%)
26-35	17	178	Family environment - 47 cases (5.8%)
36-59	1	139	Ex-spouses - 48 cases (5.8%)
60 plus	1	12	Neighbor - 42 cases (5.1%)
Total	216	1223	Spouse - 20 cases (2.4%)
			Boss/Owner - 20 cases (2.4%)
			Caregiver - 14 cases (1.7%)
			Medical - 8 cases (1%)

Child sexual abuse : Myths, facts & stats

About the offenders : 95-97% of the offenders were predominantly male, ranging from 17 to 68 years of age. They tend to victimize children of their own race. In 41% of the cases the offenses were repeated regularly ranging in periods of weeks to 7 years.



"In Quebec, 17% of assailants accused of sexual assault crimes are teenagers. It is estimated that teenagers are responsible for sexually assaulting 20-30% of women victims and 40-50% of child victims. Less than 3% of all child sexual assault offenders are female. Less than 10% of convicted felony child molesters go to prison. In violent prison populations, child molesters are considered the lowest form of humanity. It is estimated that within 5 years of being freed from incarceration, 40% of these molesters will rape again. (Les Agressions Sexuelles - Stop - Quebec Government Report, 1995).

The chart below analyzes the relationship between the victim's age and the number of suspects (male and female) accused in the 1,383 sexual assault cases that took place in 1996 on the island of Montreal. It should be noted that in 74.25% of the cases the crime is resolved and the suspects were caught by the Montreal Police Force. For the remaining 24.75% of the cases, the dossiers were either left inactive, or charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence (not identified in a line-up, etc.) or due to the victim's wishes not to continue the judicial proceedings against the suspect.

Victim's age	Suspects accused	Male offenders	Female offenders
00 - 11	84	83	1
12 - 17	95	93	2
18 - 25	70	70	0
26 - 35	46	46	0
36 - 59	30	30	0
60 plus	4	4	0
Total	329	326	3

The chart below indicates the ages of offenders accused of sexual assault in 1996 on the island of Montreal. It should be noted that 14.3% of the offenders were between 11 and 20 years of age, while 85.7% of the offenders were over 21 years old. These findings correlate with the 1995 Quebec government report entitled "Les Agressions Sexuel, Stop."

Offenders age	Suspects accused	Offenders age	Suspects accused
00 - 10	0 (0%)	41 - 50	57 (18.5%)
11 - 20	44 (14.3%)	51 - 60	29 (9.4%)
21 - 30	72 (23.4%)	60 +	20 (6.5%)
31 - 40	86 (27.9%)	Total	308 suspects

About the victims : Victims range from infants to under 17 years of age; medium age being 11. They are usually young, inexperienced, often having low self-esteem and wanting to be loved.

"Although boys and girls of any age are vulnerable, 22% of child sexual assault victims are under 6 years old. Recent studies suggest that as many as 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will experience some form of sexual assault before the age of 18." (Feeling Yes, Feeling No - NFBC).

"According to Pauzé and Mercier, there are eight girls for every two boys who are victims of sexual assault...Native-Indian children suffer greatly from sexual exploitation. Dumont-Smith and Labelle in their 1991 study, indicated that approximately 30% of Native-Indian children (80% of girls and 50% of boys) have been sexually exploited in one form or another - generally from a family member." (Les Agressions Sexuelles - Stop - Quebec. Government report, 1995).

"Dr. Gene Abel found that two-thirds of all victims molested outside the home were boys. Unlike intrafamilial sexual abuse, in which the most common reported victim is a young female, in child sex rings we are often dealing with the adolescent boy victim." (Child Sex Rings - A Behavioral Analysis - NCMEC, 1992).

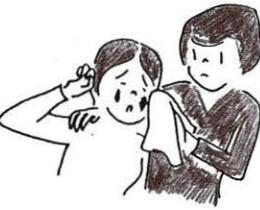
"There seems to be a correlation between childhood sexual violence and adolescent and adult prostitution. About 76-90% of female and male prostitutes have had a previous history of being sexually abused during their childhood - the majority of encounters being of incestuous nature." (Les Agressions Sexuelles : Ça Suffit!, 1993).

Parental duty during this abuse? Child neglect, of one or more types, was found to exist in 79% of the cases. Most common was emotional neglect. Other types of neglect were physical, moral, medical or educational neglect.

"Physical abuse was found in 11% of the families. Parents contributed to the circumstances of the sexual molestation of children in 72% of the cases by acts of omission, acts of commission (granting authority to someone to do a job) or by perpetration of the offense. In 29% of the situations parents (a) Failed to provide proper controls over children; (b) Provided inadequate supervision for children when parents were out of the home; (c) Took no action to protect children even under circumstances when they had reason to suspect that children were being exposed to potential if not actual, sexual abuse." (AHACD, 1969)



Reporting sexual abuse : How do you tell a child not to respond to attention and affection? All children crave it, especially children who are not getting attention and affection at home. 75-90% of sexual assault cases involving children are not reported to the proper authorities. These incidents are usually reported only when hospitals or other social agencies are involved.



"Girls report molestations four to one over boys. Why? One. boys are more susceptible to embarrassment (shame of a homosexual encounter). Boys do not like to admit to themselves, their friends, or their families that anything like this could have happened to them. The stigma of the action is too great for them to bear. And two, because boys fear that if their parents become worried about them they will respond by placing more restrictions on them." (Not My Child, J. Wagner, 1994).

Boys have a harder time telling about 'touching secrets' for several reasons: They feel guilty for having felt sexual excitement during the encounter, they run the risk of being seen as a passive victim rather than someone who stood up and tried to fight their way out, and fear of being labeled a homosexual, etc.

"It is extremely difficult for a child to tell even a trusted adult, about 'Not Okay Touching'. There are a host of internal obstacles that must be overcome for the child to risk disclosing what has happened. Before a child will talk to someone, they must climb a mountain of overwhelming feelings. Fear of not being believed, fear of losing love, fear of losing an important caretaker, fear of physical threats, fear of abandonment, misguided guilt about causing or deserving the mistreatment, doubts about what will happen, confusion over ambivalent feelings about the abuser." (Kids & Company, Together For Safety).

In about half the cases, children told parents, or others, of the offense immediately after the occurrence, or within a day. Almost immediate disclosure by the victim occurred in cases where the offense was a single occurrence committed by a stranger, or where it was perpetrated by use of force, or threat of bodily harm.

"An important point for parents to remember about child molestation is that unhappy children can be the most vulnerable. Those who succumb without force are often influenced by a combination of soft talking and bribery because they are lonely or neglected. The finding that unhappy youngsters are most vulnerable is supported by Dr. Martin Gipson. Child victims, they found, had often been deprived of parental attention or material things. These children will consequently be more easily tempted by offers of money, favors or other adult overtures. Parents must provide sufficient love and attention at home. The child must feel secure and have credibility in the family." (How to Raise, Hechinger, 85).

After the sexual assault : Two-thirds of child victims were found to have been emotionally damaged by the occurrence. 52% were assessed to be mildly to moderately emotionally disturbed. 14% were severely disturbed. The probability of damage to the mental health of a child sexual abuse victim was greatly increased when there was a preexisting unhealthy emotional climate in the child's home.

"The victim's emotional disturbance was manifested in problem behavior: (a) 55% - hostile aggressive behavior; (b) 19% - antisocial, delinquent behavior; (c) 57% - school problems and school adjustment." (Protecting Child Victim of Sex Crimes Committed by Adults - The American Humane Assoc., 1969).

"There is evidence emerging that as many as one in three incidents of child sexual abuse are not remembered by adults who experienced them, and that the younger the child was at the time of the abuse, and the closer the relationship to the abuser, the more likely one is not to remember." (Child Abuse : Statistics, Research, and Resources - J. Hopper, 1997).

2. **MYTH** : Sexual assaults are always violent.

Facts and stats : The assault is usually non-violent. Rarely is a weapon used - guns are used in less than 1% of reported sexual aggressions while other types of weapons are used in less than 18% of reported sexual aggressions.

The child is engaged by persuasion, threats and bribes rather than physical force. Usually the offender will be gentle and treat the child "nicely."

"Most sexual offenses against children, including intercourse and oral sex, do not involve physical force. Most sexual offenses against children involve a seduction process: enticements, persuasion, affection, rewards, cajolement, flattery, gifts, and much needed attention. But a pedophile may also use threats, guilt, bribes, pressure, blackmail, entrapment, or adult authority to lure children into a sexual relationship." (Street Sense For Parents - Louis R. Mizell, Jr., 1995).



In 88% of reported cases, the child is subjected repeatedly to sexual assault because they are persuaded by the predator to keep the activity a secret. In 11% of the cases the child was coerced by direct use of force or under threat of bodily harm after the initial persuasion. The assault usually occurs in the child's familiar surroundings, frequently in their own home or that of a friend or relative.

Child sexual abuse : Myths, facts & stats

When dealing with abduction committed by a stranger, we are dealing with a different breed of individuals. Robert Stubber, author of the book "Missing" paints this picture of a predator:

"The child abductor is twisted and sadistic....He plays by his own set of rules that law-abiding people don't even know exist... He wants to possess the child, separating the child from his or her family and environment. Getting the child alone, he inflicts fear, sexual abuse, beatings, and even dismemberment and death. Quite possibly he passes the child around to others for their twisted desires. The child may be brainwashed, or even chained up in a basement or in a cage like an animal for years. It doesn't take much of this treatment to break the will and warp the fragile mind of the child. Even if rescued, the child's life can remain a living hell....It should also be noted that many molesters murder their victims because they are either afraid the children will tell on them or they feel such a sense of guilt for what they have done that in their twisted mind, they blame the child and kill them as an act of atonement." (Missing, Stranger Abduction - R. Stubber, '96)

In incestuous relationships, sexual abuse is mostly non-violent. It is not the violence but rather factors such as the duration of the incestuous relationship, emotional distance (difference) between the offender and the age of the child which greatly influences the degree of traumatization and disruption the child victim will experience. Children who are incest victims are denied a childhood, denied a loving, nurturing relationship of trust and they are exploited and betrayed by a person who is in a position of authority and trust.

3. MYTH : Homosexuals abuse young boys.

Facts and stats : Contrary to what most people believe, most male adults who sexually abuse young boys are not homosexual in their adult relationships. A high percentage of pedophiles are married and have children of their own.

"80% of the male adults who exploit children sexually are heterosexual (mostly) or bisexual in their adult relationships. In fact, male pedophiles who are attracted to boy victims typically report that they are repulsed or uninterested in adult homosexual relationships." (Street Sense For Parents, Keeping Your Child Safe In A Dangerous World, Louis R. Mizell, Jr., 1995).

4. MYTH : Incest is a rare occurrence.

Facts and stats : Contrary to popular belief, incest is not a rare occurrence, nor is it confined to any one social class, ethnic group or religious background. Documented estimates of incest vary from 1 in 23, 1 in 17 to 1 in 10 children who are victims of incest. (Pamphlet On Incest, Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton)

5. MYTH : Children lie about sexual contact with adults.

Facts and stats : Being falsely accused of sexually abusing a child would be the worst nightmare anyone can imagine. Sometimes people do tell lies or the wrong person is accused but there is no clear evidence that children have lied about being sexually assaulted.

A child will lie to get out of trouble, but certainly not to get into trouble. Children do not make up stories about such serious matters. They rarely have the sexual knowledge or the cognitive capacities needed to make up explicit stories. Studies have shown that children rarely lie about sexual abuse. More often, a child will lie to protect the offender and save the family. When the incest is disclosed, the child may say they lied in order to stop the sometimes painful process of investigation and legal proceedings.

If your child tells you about an incident involving sexual contact, believe them. All accusations of sexual abuse should be taken very seriously and should be thoroughly investigated. The Quebec government's 1995 research report indicated that 10-15% of all reported sexual assault cases are false declarations.

6. MYTH : The child will always feel negatively towards the offender.

Facts and stats : The child will probably have ambivalent feelings toward the offender. They may have enjoyed the extra attention and they may have enjoyed the physical contact. At the same time they may be confused and resentful. They are also likely to pick up from the offender that the act is wrong. His demands for secrecy and his threats combine to make the child aware that the incestuous relationship is wrong. It is important to be aware of the many different feelings the victim may experience.

7. MYTH: Incest is a one or two time occurrence involving a single child

Facts and stats : Disclosure of incest, when it happens, usually occurs 3 to 7 years after the onset. Incest typically goes on for 3.5 years prior to discovery. It is not confined to one child, but usually involves children sequentially by age.

8. MYTH : The non-offending mothers in incestuous families know of the incest, often cause it and/or condone it.

Facts and stats : Of the non-offending mothers seen in many child sexual abuse treatment programs, one-half knew of the abuse, the other half did not. For those who knew, 50% took immediate action, 20% took action at a later date, and 30% took no action. The reasons the mothers took no action are complex. A majority of them were emotionally, physically and/or economically dependent on the offender. Many of them were as controlled by the offender as was the victim.

A majority of those who did not know of the abuse suffer from shock, disbelief and sometimes denial. To some it will be like finding a missing piece of the puzzle. They suffer guilt, self-blame and/or humiliation.

For all non-offending mothers disclosure means destruction of their self. They are challenged on three fronts : on their role as wife ; on their role as mother ; and on their role as a person.

9. MYTH : Children are seductive, or provocative. They fantasize about incest.

Facts and stats : Children do have sexual feelings appropriate to their developmental stage. They seek out attention and affection from adults, but it is the adult who determines the sexual nature of the encounter and bears responsibility for it - not the child.

Children are sensual. 'Seductive' is an adult interpretation of behavior which is bestowed on a child. Those who are being abused sexually learn, usually at a very young age that in order to get their needs met they must 'put out' sexually. They begin to equate love with sex. They begin behaving in 'sexual' ways to get affection. Their behavior is often labeled seductive.

10. MYTH : Incest is a problem that stays within the family.

Facts and stats : It is estimated that 50% of runaway girls and boys, 70% of adolescent drug addicts and 60% of young prostitutes were the victims of sexual abuse. The social price paid is now beginning to surface.