



SARSAS self help guide: easy read

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Introduction

This booklet is about **sexual abuse**.



Abuse is the word we use when someone hurts us or does bad things to us.

Different people can abuse us.

They can be:



people we know well



people we have just met

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when someone makes you do something **sexual** when you do not want them to or do not know what is happening.

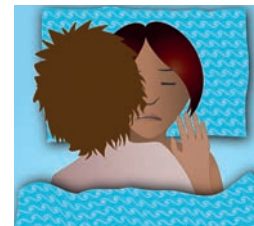
This could be:



kissing you



making you touch them in a sexual way



having sex with you when you do not want to



taking photos of you without your clothes



making you look at pornography in magazines, films or the internet

Sexual abuse can happen once or many times.

It can happen anywhere.

Sexual abuse is always wrong.

It is never your fault.

Sexual abuse is traumatic.



When something is **traumatic** it can make you very frightened and upset.

When something **traumatic** happens it can make you feel, think and behave in different ways.



This booklet will explain this and give you ideas about how to feel better.

Feelings

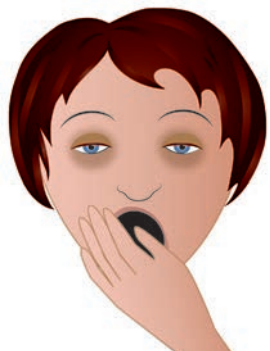
If you have been abused you might feel:



Angry



Sad



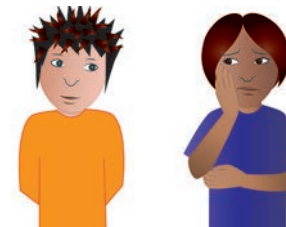
Tired



Confused



You want to stay in bed



You don't trust people



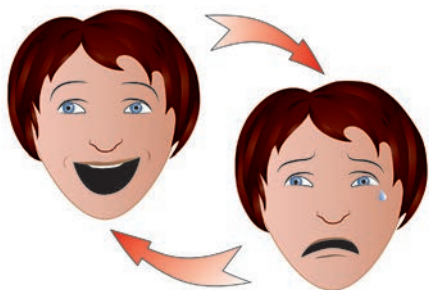
You can't relax or concentrate

Feelings

You might feel scared of things like:



- Busy places
- The dark
- Being touched



Your feelings can change. You might feel sad or scared and then okay.

If you have been abused you might feel:

- I'm bad → • You are not bad
- It's my fault → • It is not your fault



If someone hurts you they have done something wrong

Thoughts

If you have been abused you might think:



It is my fault



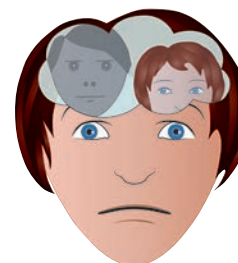
About death and dying



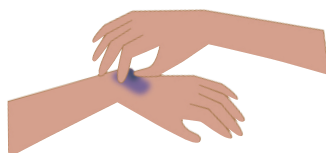
Nobody will understand or believe me



I don't like myself



About scary things



I want to hurt myself

It can be hard to make the thoughts go away.

Some of these thoughts and feelings can cause different behaviours.

Behaviours

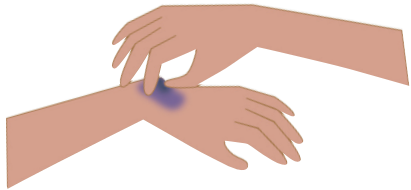
These are some common behaviours:



Eating more or less than usual



Drinking more than usual



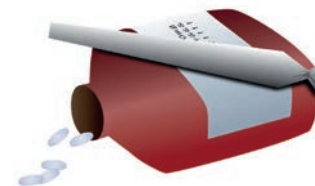
Self harm - you might want to hurt yourself



Smoking more than usual



Difficulties sleeping or having nightmares



Taking drugs

More common behaviours:



Not having sex or not wanting to be touched



Pushing people away



Having lots of sex or wanting to be touched



Not going out

Flashbacks

Lots of people who have been sexually abused have flashbacks.



Flashbacks are like having a nightmare when you are awake.

Triggers

Flashbacks are caused by triggers.



Triggers are things you might hear, see, feel or smell that makes you think of a scary memory.

Grounding can help with flashbacks. We will explain this next.

Grounding can help if you have a scary memory.

It helps you to stop thinking about the past and focus on what is happening now.

It can be done anywhere. No one needs to know you are doing it.

The more often you practice the better it will work.



We will now give you some ideas on how to stop scary memories.

You will like some of these ideas better than others. That is fine. Choose the ones that work for you.



Take some slow breaths



Think of somewhere that makes you feel safe



Think about someone you care about



Make a list of things you like

Where do you feel safe?

Can you make a list of people you trust?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Looking after yourself

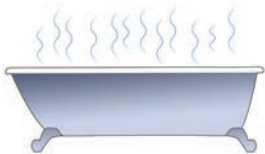
Lots of people feel unhappy after something scary has happened to them. You can feel better. Looking after yourself can help.

Treat yourself like you would treat a friend.

It can help to do nice things for yourself like:



Eat a good meal



Have a bath



Go outside in the fresh air



Exercise



Talk to a friend



Laugh



Do a drawing

Getting support

What do you do to look after yourself?
Make a list...



- It can help to talk to someone about how you are feeling
- You can talk to someone when you are ready
- Talk to someone you trust
- You won't get in trouble for talking to someone

Freephone Helpline

Women and girls

 **0808 801 0456**

Mon & Fri **11.00am - 2.00pm**

Tue, Wed & Thu **6.00pm - 8.30pm**

Men and boys

 **0808 801 0464**

Mon **11.00am - 2.00pm**

Tue **6.00pm - 8.30pm**

There is a 24 hour answering service
at all other times.

Please leave a message and one of
our support workers will contact you.

e-support



support@sarsas.org.uk