

GIRLS AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

America's girls suffer from sexual violence, alone and in silence. The silent suffering of being violated, often by family, friends, or other persons who were to be trusted, dims girls' self-esteem and cuts down their belief in who they can become and what kind of relationships they deserve. Girls are left forever changed by the violation done to their bodies and spirits, and they are too often denied the supports needed to heal.

- 1 in 4 girls is subject to sexual violence by the time she turns 18.¹

GIRLS, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND EATING DISORDERS

There is an undeniable interrelationship between sexual violence and disordered eating among girls. Girls subject to sexual violence engage in eating disorders as an attempt to protect themselves from revictimization, and to exert agency over their bodies since the violence done to their bodies denies their sense of control and power

Eating disorders and morbid obesity are four times more frequent in childhood sexual abuse survivors than in non-abused individuals.²

Girl victims of sexual violence attempt to manipulate their bodies to be unattractive, hence preempting the possibility of repeated or future sexual transgressions and violence committed against them.³

GIRLS, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Girls hurt by sexual violence are 3 times more likely to develop psychiatric disorders or alcohol and drug abuse in adulthood, than girls who are not sexually abused.⁴
- Victims of childhood sexual violence experience more addiction issues.⁵
- 70-80% of survivors of sexual violence report substance abuse disorders.⁶

GIRLS, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY

- Women who report childhood rape are 3 times more likely to become pregnant before age 18.⁷
- An estimated 60% of teen first pregnancies are preceded by experiences of molestation, rape, or attempted rape. The average age of their offenders is 27 years.⁸

¹ <http://darkness2light.org/KnowAbout/statistics>

² Palmer, R.L., et al. *Childhood Sexual Experiences with Adults Reported by Women with Eating Disorders: An Extended Series*. *Br. Journal of Eating Disorders*, 29, 166-176, 1990.

³ Ackard, D. M. & Neumark-Sztainer, D. Date violence and date rape among adolescents: Associations with disordered eating behaviors and psychological health. Paper presented at the presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco, CA, 2001.

⁴ Day, A., Thurlow, K., & Woolliscroft, J. (2003). Working with childhood sexual abuse: A survey of mental health professionals. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 27, 191-198.

⁵ Browne, A. & Finkelhor, D. (1986). Impact of child sexual abuse: A review of the research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 99, 66-77.

⁶ Voeltanz, N., Wilsnack, S., Harris, R., Wilsnack, R., Wonderlich, S., Kristjanson, A. (1999). Prevalence and risk for childhood sexual abuse in women : National survey findings. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 23, 579-592.

⁷ http://darkness2light.org/KnowAbout/statistics_2.asp

⁸ http://darkness2light.org/KnowAbout/statistics_2.asp

