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1. Tell Others The Facts

What are the first three facts you can tell others? Fact one: Today, 95 percent of child molestation can be prevented. We have the knowledge to stop it. Fact two: Today, living in the United States, there are 39 million adults who have survived child sexual abuse. Fact three: Today, more than three million American children are victims. Most of them are children, struggling alone, believing there is no adult who can help them. To help prevent child molestation from happening to the children closest to you, begin by telling others the basic facts.

But why you? Shouldn't stopping sexual abuse be left to professionals - physicians and therapists? Better yet, shouldn't the police and the courts take care of it?

Professionals - physicians and therapists - can *never* put an end to sexual abuse; neither can the police or the courts. Why? Because they come on the scene too late. By the time they get there, the children have already been molested. Only you can get there in time.

There's a bigger reason why the professionals and the courts can't put an end to sexual abuse. They have no permission to talk to a child about sex - unless, of course, they talk to the child after the fact, after the child has already been sexually abused or has abused another child. Only *you* can talk to your children before anything happens, before any damage is done - to anyone.

Not In My Family

What if you are certain there has never been a child molester or a molested child in your family? You are probably wrong.

Unfortunately, most of today's children will never tell. They feel ashamed that this has happened to them. They are protecting their abuser because he or she is part of their family. They are protecting other members of their family - saving them from the pain of knowing.

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In spite of the millions of victims in our families, many people stick to their mistaken belief that child molestation has nothing to do with them.

An estimated one in 20 teenage boys and adult men sexually abuse children, and an estimated one teenage girl or adult woman in every 3,300 females molests children. Although that's well over five million people, most families mistakenly believe that as far as molesters go, there has never been one in their family, and what's more, there never will be. Add together the child victims, the adult survivors, and the abusers, and that's 15 out of every 100 Americans who have been either a molested child or a molester.

To help prevent child molestation from happening to the children closest to you, begin by telling others the basic facts.

We Start By Speaking The Same Language

If we're going to work together to stop child sexual abuse, we have to speak the same language. We have to mean the same thing when we say "child molester," "child molestation," and even "child."

Moreover, all of us have to understand the basic facts: What exactly is child molestation? How many of our children are sexually abused? How seriously are they damaged? What are the characteristics of a child molester? What causes someone to sexually abuse a child? Which of our children are most at risk?

A **child molester** is any older child or adult who touches a child for his or her own sexual gratification.

Child molestation is the act of sexually touching a child.

A **child** is a girl or boy who is 13 years of age or younger.

What's the **age difference** between a molester and a child? It is five years, so a 14-year-old "older child" sexually touching a nine-year-old is an example. This is the accepted medical definition.

Sometimes, a professional will consider that a molestation act has occurred when the older child is only three years older - a sixth-grader with a third-grader, for instance. The crucial element here is the lack of equality between the two children: the sixth grader is clearly bigger, more powerful, and more

"adult-like" than the third-grader.

We avoid definitions that are ambiguous by sticking to the medical definition. *We define "child molester" as an adult or child, who is at least five years older than the child he or she has molested.*

Telling Others The Facts

If we're going to protect our children from sexual abuse, all of us have to understand exactly what we mean by the act of sexual abuse. Why? Because one of the greatest obstacles we face is people's fear of the facts about child molestation.

For instance, some people who have no idea that sexual touch is vastly different from hugging are afraid to hug a child - especially one who isn't theirs - because someone might think they are child molesters. You can calm their fears by telling them this fact: Hugging is *not* molesting. Sexual touch is when an adult fondles the child's chest, buttocks, or genitals with the direct purpose of sexually exciting himself or the child.

Can you tell your husband that fact? Can you tell your sister, your cousin, or your best friend? If you can, then you can easily tell others all the rest of the facts.

The less people know, the more anxiety they feel, and the more they want to run away or pretend that today's estimated three million sexually abused children don't exist. Every fact has a calming effect. By telling the people closest to you the facts, you can help those same people become strong adult protectors of the children closest to you.

How Many Children Are Sexually Abused?

Three million children! I don't believe it. How can you possibly know that there are *exactly* three million child victims?" As you begin to tell others the facts, this is the first question they may ask you. The answer: Of course, we don't know *exactly*.

Children seldom tell. Those millions of children are a secret. They are the secret in family after family after family. Even adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse seldom tell. What we do know from studies of adult men and women is that the number is *at least* three million. At least three million children are molested before they finish their 13th year. In 1998, there were 103,000 reported *and confirmed* cases of child molestation. For comparison, at the height of the polio epidemic that struck

children in the 1950s, there were 21,000 cases reported in a year. For rubella, there were 57,000 cases reported. For child molestation, those numbers of reported and confirmed molestations are only the tip of the iceberg. For every case reported there are at least two and maybe three more cases that never get reported.

That's why we may never know the exact number of child victims. We do know that if we use the conservative estimate that two in every ten little girls and one in every ten little boys are victims (based on the population reported in the 1999 U.S. Census statistical abstract) well over three million children are victims.

Take a moment to think about that. Three million children is a staggering number of children. *That's 46 National Football League stadiums packed with children who are, today, being sexually abused, and who believe they have no adult to go to for help.*

How Severe is the Damage?

Some people will say that sexually touching a child does no harm. Some adults will even tell boy victims to "act like a man" and "stop whining." Other adults are unsympathetic about the experiences of adult survivors. They will say that, no matter what happened in childhood, that is the past. You're an adult now, so get over it.

The facts are that sexual abuse does harm the child and that the damage often carries over into the child's adult life.

Studies show that this damage can include:

- difficulty in forming long-term relationships;
- sexual risk-taking that may lead to contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS;
- physical complaints and physical symptoms;
- depression, suicidal thoughts, and suicide;
- links to failure of the immune system and to increases in illnesses, hospitalizations, and early deaths.

In addition to the tangible physical and emotional damage that sexual abuse does to the child, that terrible secret that is held so close by two or three family members can go on to tear at the fiber of the family in generation after generation.

Who Is The Child Molester? Who Causes So Much Damage To Our Children?

We want to introduce you to a sexual abuser of children. Keep in mind that far more men than women are abusers. In fact, approximately one out of 20 men, and approximately one out of 3,300 women are sexual abusers of children. Let's look at a man who has molested children. We'll call him George.

George's Story

George was a typical teenager. In his twenties, George emerged from his shell, got married, and had two sons. His parents were proud of him, of the family he had established, of the values he taught his children.

During his thirties, he was promoted to a new position in his company every two or three years. More money, more responsibility, more travel, more stress.

One day when George was on the road, his wife got a call. Her husband was three states away. He'd been arrested in that state for child molestation. By now George was 43.

His wife remembers smiling into the phone. She had a flash image - her telling the story about this mistake. "Can you imagine? Poor George, - the most conservative man in the world." - and how their friends would laugh. She repeated her husband's name, including middle name. She spelled out the first, middle, and last name. His wife was sure it was somebody else with a similar name. After she was convinced that her husband was the George in custody, her next emotion was fury. Who would falsely accuse a fine man like her husband? Would the lawyer's fees bankrupt them? What would his boss say? After 20 years of marriage she knew George, knew he was the last man in the world who would ever. . . .

But did she know George?

Like most people, George's wife, when she considered child molestation at all - thought about it *only* as a sin or a crime. Her husband was simply not a criminal. He had never even had a traffic ticket. He was a regular hardworking man with a great sense of responsibility. If anything, he was a law-and-order guy. He was, like many husbands, concerned for his family's safety. He was their protector.

His religion was an important part of his life. Their religious beliefs were important to both of them and to their children.

And besides that George couldn't be a child molester, she thought, because they had a vigorous and happy sex life.

Through the months that followed, George's wife and his parents received several shocks. He confessed. Yes, he had sexually molested the 10-year-old girl who accused him, the daughter of a man who'd been his friend since high school. Then she found out there had been other victims. He had molested 23 little girls. The number included two nieces, one the daughter of his wife's sister and, the other the daughter of his own sister. He had also molested several daughters of close friends. His two nieces he had molested over a period of years. Both nieces kept the secret from everybody in the family. In a further shock to his family, he also confessed that when he was 17 and she was in grade school, he had repeatedly molested his stepsister. She also never told.

George's larger family is, of course, destroyed. Neither his sister nor his sister-in-law will ever forgive him for sexually abusing their daughters. They also shun his wife. No matter what she says about her innocence, they believe she knew all along and allowed him to molest. His parents are shocked. Both are devastated by their failure to protect George's young stepsister and their grandchild.

An Unsuccessful "Success Story"

Now that you've read about George's 26 years of molesting, what do you think? Is this a success story? His family says yes.

George's wife believes George when he says he's learned his lesson. He's glad he's going to jail. He deserved to be punished. It's as though jail will be his salvation. Now, it's over. He will never touch a little girl again. In her mind, this severe (and deserved) punishment of a flawed man with a good core is all that is needed.

His minister believes George too. He's prayed with him in his jail cell.

The judge hates these cases. Thank goodness the law is clear. He listens to the parade of character witnesses. George is a stellar employee, a person who does good work with the adults in his community, full of remorse, a changed man. The sentence is long - 20 years, to serve seven.

In George's case, in that old-era way of doing things, we used every old strategy to stop him.

George was a religious man. He knew that molesting a child was a sin. After his arrest, George's

wife found a Bible in his car's glove compartment. Sometimes, when he was fighting his strong desire to sexually touch a child, he would recite certain passages and he would use the power of his deep religious convictions to stop that desire. Religion - in George's case - saved a few little girls from being molested. Still, he molested 23 little girls.

George was arrested and sent to jail. This strategy may have prevented more little girls from becoming victims; it did protect his nieces from George molesting them again. Still, he molested 23 little girls.

Many of the people around George believe that George's case is a success. After all, George's molesting has been stopped. He's been arrested; he's been put in jail. Many of the little girls have gone into therapy. So we have punished the child molester, we've treated the victims.

At the core, sending molesters to jail as a solution will always fail our children. Why? Because in order for a molester to be jailed, the criminal justice strategy *requires* that our children be sexually abused. Without a victim, it can't make a move.

It's the same with treating the victims. As a strategy, it's ineffective until *after* our children are sexually abused.

What we find horrifying in George's case is the waiting. All the adult protectors of those 23 little girls had to wait, powerless. First, they waited while 23 little girls were sexually abused. Then they waited for a little girl to tell an adult. But that wasn't the end of the waiting. They also had to wait for one of the 23 little girls to tell an adult who was willing to report the case. While they waited, they allowed George to go on molesting little girls for 26 years.

George's family did the best they could, given their options in the old era. Today there is no reason why George's story should be repeated.

Why? Because we have new information all of us can use to stop people like George *before* he molests 23 little girls.

New Information - A Typical Child Molester

When George's neighbors heard of the first accusation, they took his side. They didn't know who this 10-year-old girl from another city was, but they knew George. Some of them knew his parents.

When he admitted that he had molested so many little girls, their shock reverberated in their stories: "He was the last person you would imagine." "A very unusual case." "I've known this guy since grade school, it's unbelievable."

Everyone who knows George is sure of one thing: George is nothing like a typical child molester.

After all, he comes from a good home. His wife comes from a good home. George and his wife, their two children, and both sets of grandparents live near each other and go to the same church. He was baptized in the church and still attends regularly. He pays close attention to the rules. He pays all his bills a week before the due date. He has a college fund for his two sons. He rotates his tires. He drives within the speed limit.

George's wife and his neighbors believe that it's impossible - or *extremely* unusual - for an ordinary man in an ordinary family, a hard working responsible, husband and father of two, a man with high moral standards to be a child molester. They mistakenly believe that his family life, his acts of responsibility, his education, his moral values *all* protect George from becoming a child molester. In fact, they believe that those same things protect his family - and their families' children - from any connection with child molestation.

Is this an unusual case? If you lived in George's community what facts could you tell? You could repeat this fact: George's case is *not* in the least unusual. George *is* the typical child molester. He's married, educated, working, and religious.

Most people will tell you that this couldn't be right.

It is.

Researchers asked the 4,000 admitted child molesters in the Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study to answer questions about their lives. These abusers were men aged 18 to 80.

How does George compare? George *is* typical.

First of all, he's married, just like 77 percent of the more than 4000 child sexual abusers in the Child Molestation Prevention Study. George is religious, like 93 percent of the abusers. He's educated. More than 46 percent had some college education and another 30 percent were high school graduates. Like 65 percent of the admitted abusers, George was working. Numerous studies of adult victims have

sought to link child molestation victims to lower social class and lower family income. All have failed. Child victims and their abusers exist equally in families of all income levels and classes. And, now from the study, we know that child molesters are as equally married, educated, employed, and religious as any other Americans.

TABLE 2

Contrasts: Admitted Molesters vs. All American Men

	Admitted Child Molesters	American Men
Married or formerly married	77%	73%
Some College	46%	49%
High School only	30%	32%
Working	69%	64%
Religious	93%	93%

Sources: The Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study and the 1999 U.S. Census Statistical Abstract

Note: All people in both groups were at least 25 years old.

Examining The Facts With Care

Is it possible that the profile of the child molester is this: a man who is married, educated, working, and religious?

Yes. However, we all have to be careful at this point. We have to ask the next question: What does this mean? To answer that we come to another finding from the Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study.

Rather than *causing* a person to molest, being married, educated, working, and religious is who we are as Americans. These are the facts. It's crucial that everyone understands them. In order for adult protectors to stand as a barrier between their children and a child sexual abuser, the protectors have to know what a sexual abuser of children looks like. *He looks like George.*

And he looks like a lot of other people you know. In analyzing the reports of the 4,000 admitted child molesters researchers found this: in their outward characteristics, matching percentages of child molesters to percentages of all American men, *the average child molester closely matched the average American man.*

They matched all the outward characteristics listed in Table 2.

Which Ethnic Groups Molest Children?

Are there ethnic groups in which child molestation does not occur? Probably not. Results from the Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study suggest that each ethnic group studied has child molesters among them. Once again, the percentages bear a resemblance to the U.S. Census. (See "The Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study" for further details about ethnic groups).

TABLE 3

Ethnic Groups: Admitted Molesters vs. All American Men

	Admitted Child Molesters	American Men
Caucasian	79%	72%
Hispanic/Latin-American	9%	11%
African-American	6%	12%
Asian	1%	4%
Native American	3%	1%

Sources: *The Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study* and the 1999 U.S. Census Statistical

Abstract

Note: 3,952 men who admitted to molesting children were compared to American men of various ethnic groups. Asians were under-represented in the complete sample of 15,508 men. They were 1.2 percent. Native Americans were over-represented in the complete sample. They were 3 percent. Both groups had child molesters in proportions equal to their percentages of representation in the complete sample.

Which Children Are Molested?

Children are most at risk from the adults in their own family, *and* from the adults who are in their parents' social circle. In fact, 90 percent of abusers target children in their own families and children who they know well. Furthermore, research suggests that the risk is across the board: Child molesters come from every part of our society, and so children from every part of our society are at risk.

TABLE 4

Which Children Do Child Molesters Target?

CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY	
Biological Child	19%
Stepchild, Adopted or Foster Child	30%
Brothers & Sisters	12%
Nieces & Nephews	18%
Grandchild	5%
CHILDREN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD	
Child Left in My Care	5%
Child of Friend or Neighbor	40%
CHILDREN WHO ARE STRANGERS	

Child Strangers	10%
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Source: The Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study.

Note: Since sexual abusers of children often molest children in more than one category, the categories total more than 100 percent. The same child molester may have molested his biological child and his stepchild, therefore, we cannot say that those two categories combined represent 49 percent, but must say that they represent a lower number.

Notice that only 10 percent of the child sexual abusers report that they molest a child who is a stranger.

Let's put the facts together:

- Child molesters exist in every part of our society.
- They molest children close to them, mainly children in their family or children in their social circle.
- Most child molesters, 90 percent, report that they know their child victims very well.

We want you to look carefully at that last fact on the list. While there are several facts that you will use as part of The Child Molestation Prevention Plan, this is the most important.

To save the greatest number of children in the shortest possible time, we must turn the current focus of our efforts upside down. Right now, 90 percent of our efforts go toward protecting our children from strangers, when what we need to do is to focus 90 percent of our efforts toward protecting children from the abusers who are not strangers - the molesters in their families and the molesters who are the friends of their families.

And we must ask the next important question: What causes the one member of the family who molests to be so different from the rest of his or her family? To end nearly all child molestation we must focus on the cause.

Back to 2. Focus on the cause: An ongoing sex drive directed toward children.

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