



Honor Thy Children

Archdiocese of Louisville continuing education for the awareness and prevention of child abuse

A HOLIDAY GUIDE FOR ABUSE SURVIVORS

Sarah Newman, MA, MFA (psychcentral.com)
Hardly anyone would claim to be a stranger to holiday stress. From money woes to holiday travel, traditions, and family tension, at some point everyone has struggled to make it to January. But the holidays can be a particularly tough time of year for anyone with a family history of abuse, whether it's emotional or physical. The idea that one shouldn't be alone during the holiday season is drilled into our heads and we want familiar people near, even if those people can be toxic to us.

Memories of trauma may become more salient. Some holiday encounters could open old wounds. You're not just trying to make it to January — you're trying to avoid being retraumatized.

Stay on the healing path
You've already done the hardest part; you survived the trauma. You are much stronger than you think you are. You are solely responsible for your survival, your endurance, your courage. Give yourself the credit and respect you deserve. You've done the impossible and you can do the holidays, too.

It's normal to feel this way

Stress, fear, anger, panic, and disgust are all normal emotions right now. You're not crazy and you're not overreacting. You are the only authority on your experience, and you have a right to your feelings.

The holidays are always a stressful time of year. Add trauma to the mix and it can seem insurmountable. You must make yourself the top priority. You must learn to be "selfish."

Maintain your routine

Now is not the time to dive into fatty foods or increase your alcohol intake. Don't stock up on holiday junk food with the intent to binge and don't buy extra spirits for holiday parties. Don't shop til you drop thinking that holiday bargains will be soothing. Stick to your normal routine. If you ever needed it, you need it now.

Stable moods like stable routines. When we get off track, more than just our waistlines and pocketbooks suffer. "Unhealthy or emotional eating and excessive drinking at this time of year can exacerbate depression,



trauma, and other health problems," according to the California Black Women's Health Project (CBWHP). Fight the desire to throw caution to the wind.

Reinforce your boundaries

Maintain your boundaries throughout the holiday season and know your own limitations. Don't do something just because it's tradition. Listen to your feelings. Honor them. "One of the significant stressors for survivors at the holidays is having to see family members or others who abused you, or unsupportive family who blamed you or did not

See "A Holiday Guide" (page 2)

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If you need support or someone to talk to:

- ☺ Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana:
800.CHILDREN/
800.422.4453
www.pcaky.org
www.pcaain.org
- ☺ Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline
800.4.A.CHILD
800.422.4453
www.childhelp.org

Are You Safe Environment Compliant?

Are you working regularly with children?

If so you must have attended an Archdiocese of Louisville Safe Environment Training.

You must also have a satisfactory background check not older than 5 years.

See your Safe Environment Coordinator today to verify your compliance!

A HOLIDAY GUIDE...cont.

protect you from the abuse or assault," writes the CBWHP. If spending Christmas eve at your aunt's sounds too stressful, don't do it. If traveling across country to spend New Year's with family in Florida doesn't fit into your comfort zone, take a raincheck. If someone thinks you're being dramatic or selfish, then they obviously haven't walked a mile in your shoes. It's not important for you to explain yourself. You get a pass here. Don't let anyone else try to saddle you with guilt or shame. If you need your space, take it. Don't be drawn into ancient dysfunction, old arguments, or the same tedious and detrimental ways of dealing with relatives. Every family has a little of this here and there, but this year you're definitely taking a pass.

Maybe you feel seeing your abusive or enabling family members is just too toxic but you're afraid to turn them away. In a recent post, I wrote about how "You Have Permission to Cut Off Your Abuser." Don't be afraid to ask for support. Nobody wants to be in the abuse survivor's club — I know I didn't. I lived in denial of the sexual abuse I suffered as a child until I was 31 years old. I was afraid to bring up the abuse in therapy and horrified at the thought of participating in trauma group. In the end, what I was most afraid of — group therapy — has helped me the most. Do not be afraid to reach out for help. There are many people out there just like you.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

A current list of trainings is always available at www.archlou.org/safe
All trainings are at 6:30p unless otherwise indicated.

12.19.19
St. Margaret Mary

1.13.20
St. Gabriel

1.27.20
St. Joseph School (Bardstown)

2.24.20
St. Paul School

More trainings are being scheduled for February, March and April. They will be posted at www.archlou.org/safe

Keep checking this webpage for updates as trainings cancelled due to inclement weather will be posted here

Please note that due to the nature of material discussed at these trainings, children under 16 will not be allowed into the trainings and child care is not provided.

Also a friendly reminder that seating can fill up fast at some venues so it's recommended that you arrive about 15-20 minutes early.

If you or anyone you know is suffering post abuse stress and you'd like to talk to someone locally, feel free to reach out to

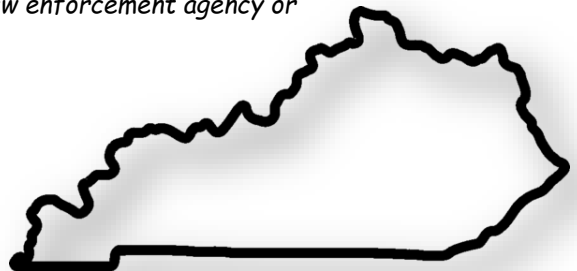
Martine Siegel
Archdiocese of Louisville
Victim Assistance Coordinator
502.636.1044 or msiegel@archlou.org

She can provide local counseling referrals to individuals, couples and families who have been victims of any type of abuse

KENTUCKY REVISED STATUTE 620.030

"Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child is dependent, neglected, or abused shall immediately cause an oral or written report to be made to a local law enforcement agency or to the Department of Kentucky State Police, the cabinet or its designated representative, the Commonwealth's attorney, or the county attorney by telephone or otherwise. Any supervisor who receives from an employee a report of suspected dependency, neglect, or abuse shall promptly make a report to the proper authorities for investigation. If the cabinet receives a report of abuse or neglect allegedly committed by a person other than a parent, guardian, fictive kin, person in a position of authority, person in a position of special trust, or person exercising custodial control or supervision, the cabinet shall refer the matter to the Commonwealth's attorney or the county attorney and the local law enforcement agency or the Department of Kentucky State Police."

BY LAW IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE,
YOU MUST REPORT IT
STATEWIDE HOTLINE: 1.877.KYSAFE.1



HOW CHILDREN ARE AFFECTED BY SEXUAL ABUSE

Children are individuals, and each is affected differently by abuse. A number of people could have the trauma of sexual abuse occur in their lives, but each individual will respond and react in varying ways according to his or her personality, family of origin, support systems, gender, age at the time of the abuse, and many other variables too numerous to list. Other factors that impact the magnitude of the damage include duration of abuse, level of intrusiveness/violation of the abuse, type and severity of threats used to maintain secrecy, relationship to the abuser, the number of perpetrators, and age at the time of disclosure as well as re-



actions to disclosure. It is never appropriate to try to predict how a child may be affected by sexual abuse. What someone may deem "mild" sexual abuse may traumatize a child the rest of his or her life. Another child that suffered from what others may describe as "severe" abuse, may, with proper care, heal and live a healthy and productive life. The effects of abuse are unpredictable, and all individuals need support and compassion as they find their unique paths to healing.

The younger the age of the child at the onset and the longer the duration of the sexual abuse, the more severe are the effects of sexual abuse.

The closer the relationship of the child to the abuser, the larger the impact on the child.

Negative and non-supportive reactions from persons to whom children disclose (disbelief, denial, making excuses) cause negative effects on how the children respond as well as on their healing process.

This is just one of many topics covered in the Archdiocese of Louisville's "Honor Thy Children" Safe Environment Training. As per the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, attendance is mandatory for anyone working regularly with children and is subject to a yearly audit.

If you work regularly with children and have attended a training, see your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator to ensure your attendance has been documented.

MONTHLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT TIP

Will you be working regularly with children when you return from the holiday break?

Make plans now to attend one of the January Safe Environment Trainings at either St. Gabriel in Louisville or St. Joseph in Bardstown.

More trainings are being scheduled for February, March and in April. Once all have confirmed they will be posted at

www.archlou.org/safe

The months of January and February can prove to be inclement weather months and sometimes result in trainings being postponed to a later date.

Don't miss out on your opportunity to volunteer or head out on a field trip because you haven't attended a Safe Environment Training.

If you are unsure of your status check with your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator.

If you don't know who that is contact

Scott Fitzgerald
Archdiocese of Louisville
Coordinator of Safe
Environment Services
502.471.2132 or via email
sfitzgerald@archlou.org

"I attended the Archdiocesan Safe Environment training at Assumption High School and Wow! I was so impressed with the trainer's knowledge and the education the Archdiocese is promoting on child abuse. I feel my children are safe in their school and so appreciate all that's in place to keep them that way. Thank you to all involved in this initiative."

- Mother of two Archdiocesan grade schoolers and ER nurse

**Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment**

Martine Bacci Siegel, MSN, RN, CNS
Maloney Center
1200 South Shelby Street
Louisville, KY 40220

Phone: 502.636.1044
Fax: 502.634.3381
E-mail: msiegel@archlou.org

No child or adult should ever experience abuse by anyone, especially a church minister. We all have the right to be treated with dignity and to expect our church to reflect the goodness of God in all of its dealings.

We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. Please let us know if you need further assistance or information by calling or emailing our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org or the Pastoral Center at 502/585-3291.

We must heed God's call to care for the most vulnerable among us and to continue our efforts toward wholeness and health in dealing with sexual abuse.

RECOGNIZING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The extended holiday period will afford some the chance to be around kids more than usual.

When children are experiencing stressors such as divorce or death of a loved one, expect a change in their behavior. Children exhibit similar behavioral changes when they are being sexually abused. No one behavioral change by itself indicates a child is being sexually abused, however, a combination of symptoms should alert adults to the possibility of sexual abuse. Some of those are listed to the right.

Additionally, have you ever seen an adult interacting with a child in such a way that made you feel uncomfortable with what you observed? It is human nature to minimize or doubt these suspicious feelings and opt to believe that you are overreacting. These are "uh-oh" feelings and they should not be ignored. Also to the right, this checklist offers warning signs that encourage further inquiry when you witness an adult who displays any of the following.



Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse

- Nightmares, trouble sleeping, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems.
- Extreme fear of "monsters."
- "Spacing out" at odd times.
- Loss of appetite, or trouble eating or swallowing.
- Sudden mood swings: rage, fear, anger, or withdrawal.
- Fear of certain people or places (e.g., a child may not want to be left alone with a babysitter, a friend, a relative, or some other child or adult).
- Stomach illness with no identifiable reason.
- An older child behaving like a younger child, such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking.
- Sexual activities with toys or other children, such as simulating sex with dolls or asking other children/siblings to behave sexually.
- New words for private body parts.
- Refusing to talk about a "secret" he/she has with an adult or older child.
- Talking about a new older friend.
- Suddenly having money.
 - As an adolescent, cutting or burning herself or himself.

Adult/Child Interaction

- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits.
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with, or holding a child even when the child does not want this affection.
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks repeatedly about the child's developing body or interferes with normal teen dating).
- Manages to get time alone or insists on time alone with a child with no interruptions.
- Spends most of his/her spare time with children and has little interest in spending time with someone his or her own age.
- Regularly offers to baby-sit many different children for free or takes children on overnight outings alone.
- Buys a child expensive gifts or gives money for no apparent reason.
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom.
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors.