

**New Mexico Sexual Abuse Program Coordinators (Continued)**

**Roswell**

Esperanza House, Inc.  
575-625-1095  
Susan Wilson, L.I.S.W.  
575-623-9385

**Ruidoso**

La Frontera NM  
575-257-5038  
575-437-8680 crisis  
800-634-3666 crisis

**Santa Fe**

Santa Fe Community Guidance  
Center  
505-986-9633  
Solace Crisis Treatment Center  
505-988-1951 • 505-986-9111 or  
800-721-7273 crisis

**Silver City**

La Frontera NM  
575-388-2693 • 800-426-0997 crisis  
Silver Regional Sexual  
Assault Support Services  
575-388-2693 • 800-426-0997

**Socorro**

Socorro Mental Health  
575-835-2444

**Taos**

Community Against Violence  
575-758-8082 • 575-758-9888 crisis  
Tri-County Community Services, Inc.  
575-758-1125

**Truth or Consequences**

La Pinon Sexual Assault Recovery  
Services  
575-526-3437 (Las Cruces)  
Sierra Vista Hospital  
575-894-2111

**Tucumcari**

Mental Health Resources, Inc.  
575-461-3013  
800-432-2159 crisis

**New Mexico Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner's Unit**

**Alamogordo**

SANE Program of Otero and  
Lincoln County  
575-430-9485  
(Emergency and Administrative)

**Albuquerque**

Albuquerque SANE Collaborative  
505-883-8720 • 505-884-7263  
Emergency

Para Los Ninos, Pediatric Sex Abuse  
Exams

505-272-6849

**Farmington**

Sexual Assault Services of  
Northwest New Mexico  
505-325-2805 • 505-326-4700 or  
866-908-4700 Emergency

**Las Cruces**

Las Cruces La Pinon SANE Project  
575-521-5549 • 575-312-7780 or  
888-595-7273 Emergency

**Las Vegas**

Las Vegas, SANE  
Alta Vista Regional Hospital  
505-718-8215

**Portales**

Arise Sexual Assault Services  
575-226-4665 • 575-226-7263  
Emergency

**Roswell**

Esperanza House SANE Project  
575-625-1457 • 575-625-1095

**Santa Fe**

Christus St. Vincent Regional  
Medical Center SANE Program  
505-913-4999 • 505-989-5952  
Emergency

**Silver City**

Silver City/Gila Regional Medical  
Center SANE Program  
575-313-9978

**Taos**

Taos/Holy Cross Hospital SANE  
Program  
575-751-8990 • 575-758-8883  
Emergency

**Additional Brochures**

The following brochures about sexual abuse are also available from the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.:

- ☞ 'Safe, Strong and Free', for young children (Spanish and English)
- ☞ 'Top 10 Questions for Kids', for mid-school aged children
- ☞ 'Talking To Your Children About Sex': How to use open discussions about sex, privacy, respect and values to prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and teens.' A booklet for parents (Spanish and English)
- ☞ 'Incest Survivor', 'Male Victim', 'From Victim to Survivor' (Spanish and English), 'Rape in Marriage' and 'Overcoming Painful Past experiences' for adults.

Produced by:

***New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.***

3909 Juan Tabo NE, Suite 6

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87111

(505) 883-8020 within the Albuquerque area, or toll free

at 1-888-883-8020 beyond the Albuquerque area

FAX (505) 883-7530

E-mail: nmcsap@swcp.com

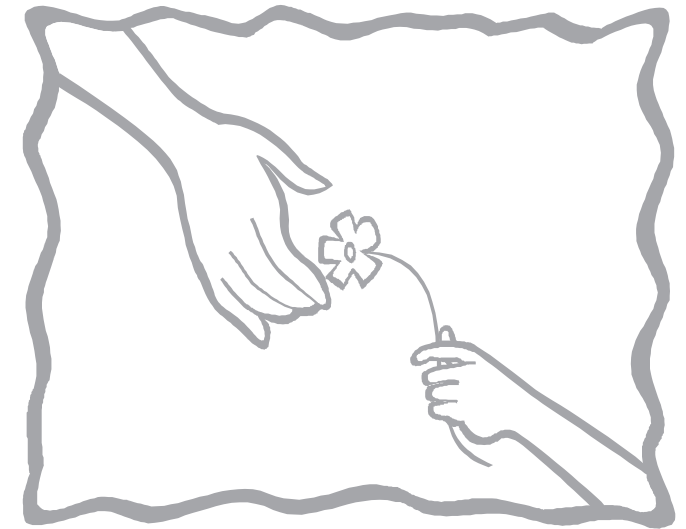
Web Site: www.nmcsap.org

# Parent Empowerment

## *A Guide to Helping Your Child in the Aftermath of Sexual Abuse*

**Gail Santilli, C.I.S.W.**

Flagstaff, Arizona  
1997



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***New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.***

**The Peace of Wild Things**

*When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

*--Wendell Berry*



**Note to parents . . .**

Both boys and girls experience sexual abuse and all sections of this informational brochure apply equally to boys and girls. In an effort to make this brochure reader friendly, the use of both genders are alternated so that one gender is used at a time per paragraph.

counselors trained to help survivors of sexual abuse. You may decide you want to talk with someone over the phone before you can go in to see them. You may want to join a group for incest survivors. Either way, find a therapist who believes your feelings and memories. Give yourself the time and compassion. You will need both.

*'No matter what is true of your past, the world is in need of your best contributions. You can only give your best by becoming your best self; and this is only possible if you consider yourself deserving of emotional healing.'* (Betty Caponera, Ph.D., *Overcoming Painful Past Experiences*)

**New Mexico Sexual Abuse Program Coordinators**

**Alamogordo**

La Frontera NM  
575-437-7404  
**Albuquerque**  
Rape Crisis Center of Central NM  
505-266-7711  
Para Los Ninos  
505-272-6849  
Agave Health  
505-338-3320  
Programs for Children &  
Adolescents  
272-2190 • 272-2800  
After 5pm  
Sequoia Adolescent  
Treatment Center  
505-344-4673

**Anthony**

Valle del Sol  
575-882-5101

**Artesia**

Counseling Associates  
575-623-1480

**Bernalillo**

Valle del Sol  
505-867-2383

**Carlsbad**

Carlsbad Mental Health  
575-885-4836

**Clayton**

Tri-County Community  
Services, Inc.  
575-374-2032

**Clovis**

Mental Health Resources, Inc.  
575-769-2345 • 800-432-2159

**Deming**

La Frontera NM  
575-546-2174  
800-426-0997 crisis

**Espanola**

Ana Guldán  
505-927-6587  
PMS Valley Community  
Health Center  
505-747-7400  
Tewa Women United  
505-747-3259

**Estancia**

Valle del Sol  
505-384-0220  
505-865-4739 crisis

**Farmington**

Desert View Family  
Counseling Center  
505-326-7878  
Farmington Community Health  
Center (PMS)  
505-566-0345  
Sexual Assault Services of  
Northwest New Mexico  
505-325-2805

**Ft. Sumner**

Mental Health Resources, Inc.  
575-769-2345  
877-579-8001 crisis

**Gallup**

Western NM Counseling Services  
505-863-3828  
800-649-0181 crisis

**Grants**

Valle del Sol  
505-287-7985 • 800-287-0212

**Hobbs**

Guidance Center of Lea County  
575-393-3168  
575-393-6633 crisis  
575-392-0966 for adolescents

**Las Cruces**

La Frontera NM  
575-647-2830  
La Piñón Sexual Assault  
Recovery Services  
575-526-3437  
888-595-7273 crisis

**Las Vegas**

NM Behavioral Health Institute at  
Las Vegas Community Based Services  
505-454-5134 • 505-425-1048

**Lordsburg**

La Frontera NM  
505-542-3304

**Los Alamos**

Los Alamos Family Council  
505-662-3264 • 505-662-4422 crisis

**Los Lunas**

Agave Health  
505-866-2300  
Valle del Sol  
505-865-3350 • 505-865-3359 crisis

**Lovington**

Guidance Center of Lea County  
575-396-3818

**Portales**

Arise Sexual Assault Services  
575-226-4665 • 575-226-7263  
Mental Health Resources, Inc.  
575-769-2345 (Clovis) • 800-432-2159  
crisis

**Raton**

Tri-County Community Services, Inc.  
Mental Health Clinic  
575-445-2754

**Reserve**

Border Area Mental Health Services,  
Inc.  
575-533-6649

**Rio Rancho**

Rio Rancho Family Health Center  
505-896-0928 • 888-920-6333 crisis  
Rio Rancho Valencia Counseling  
505-891-2990

**Roswell**

Turquoise Health and Wellness  
575-623-1480

### Normalize

*Have I ....*

- Established a routine and set of rules for behavior and expectations that is followed at our house?
- Taught my child how to make and keep friends and created a place where my child can socialize with her friends?
- Created opportunities for my child to get involved in activities outside my home that he can be successful in?
- Become involved in my child's social and school activities in a supportive way?

### Myself

*Have I....*

- Found the help needed for myself and my family?
  - Support group
  - Counselor/therapist
- Made a plan for how I will take care of myself?
  - Friendships
  - Religious involvement
  - Physical exercise
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Committed to providing whatever is necessary to my child's recovery: transportation to services or appointments, cooperation with agencies/courts, advocacy for my child's needs?
- Laughed or smiled about something today?

# Parent Empowerment

## *A Guide to Helping Your Child in the Aftermath of Sexual Abuse*

You may be feeling as though your lives will never be the same. You may be wondering what the effect of molestation will be on your child and whether there is anything you can do to help. Parents sometimes feel left out of the recovery process. Beyond providing transportation and information to the professional agencies or helpers, parents often say they feel helpless or isolated in their desire to make things better for their child.

Parents can and should play vital roles during this time of their child's life. Parental support and involvement which acknowledges the abusive events AND participates in the healing process is crucial to a child. While many children need and benefit from therapy by a qualified professional, therapy has limitations: it occurs for an hour a week (at best), and it doesn't (or shouldn't) last forever. It is parental intervention which can provide the most powerful and lasting benefit to a child.

This booklet is intended for you to use ideally with an established professional program: either individual, family, and/or group therapies. It is a starting point for parents to begin to meet their child's needs in the aftermath of an upsetting and unique childhood experience such as sexual abuse. With guidance, information, and support, you CAN help your child.

## *Keeping Your Child Safe*

### ***Set Boundaries***

Your child has experienced a violation of her body integrity by being molested. It is important that you re-establish her sense of her body as belonging only to her, of being special and beautiful because she is special and beautiful, not because an adult is interested in her genitals. You can do this by teaching, setting an example, and creating everyday opportunities for her to experience her body as private and in her own control.

Set clear standards for modesty and privacy in areas of dressing, toileting, bathing, and general physical handling of each others' bodies in the family. Examples of this would be closed door policies, prohibitions against open nudity or underwear/skimpy clothing, careful monitoring of video and TV viewing for sexual or violent content, and rules about touching that are clear to everyone (for example, in playful situations, when someone says "Stop", it means STOP and must be respected). The adults, older siblings, and guests in the household must be expected to follow these standards as well.

Be mindful of how you handle your child's body: while closeness and affection, hugs and kisses are vital, be aware of whether you are overly physical with your child. Encourage your child to "do for himself" the things that he is capable of; as he is developmentally ready to comb his own hair, wash his body, zip his jacket -- let him! Encourage independence in daily self-care, sleeping, and activities with playmates. Your child may not let you know he is ready for these things until you send him messages that you know he can do "for himself".

Sexual abuse is only one series of events in a child's life. It is all the other experiences with loving, healthy people, a consistent environment, openness and accurate information that will be helpful to your child. Insist on competent professional helpers for both yourself and your child, and be actively involved and positive about the process.

YOU are the key player in your child's healing. Empower yourself with knowledge and healthy self-care and support: helpfulness, courage, and healing will follow.

### ***PARENTAL "TO DO" CHECKLIST***

#### **Boundaries**

##### ***Have I...***

- Explained clear rules about modesty in dressing, bathing, toileting, sleeping, and clothing?
- Thought about how we touch each other in our family, to show affection, anger, or to discipline?
- Ensured that neighbors, sitters, guests, and other family members respect my rules about modesty and touching?
- Encouraged my child to "do for himself" the things he can?
- Monitored the things my child is exposed to: TV, movies, magazines, people?
- Given my child opportunities to experience success in developing a skill or having responsibility that contributes to her sense of well being?

#### **Sex and Safety**

##### ***Have I...***

- Read sex education materials with my child?
- Educated my child about basic information about body parts/functions, and normal sexual development?
- Taught my child what to do in confusing or frightening sexual situations?
- Listened when my child gives me clues that he needs to talk about sexual or safety issues?

feeling of joy or peace -- whatever "fits" with your lifestyle and beliefs, is what you need to make time for.

Make an actual plan of how you will take care of yourself during this time of distress. Write down the top five things that help you feel a sense of contentment or enable you to relax (a hot bath, visiting friends, an evening free of responsibility, etc.) and schedule to do at least one of them each week. Often parents are so tired and busy with taking care of others and getting necessary things done, that they lose sight of what they need to sustain their own sense of well-being. Without it, parents are much less effective in their efforts to help their child.

*Make time...*

- ⚙ to be still;
- ⚙ to be active;
- ⚙ to laugh as much as possible;
- ⚙ to be around people who respect, support, and love you;
- ⚙ to respect, support, and love the people around you.

"Bad things" happen, children get hurt, people feel pain: these are facts of life. For many children, sexual abuse is part of this reality. The challenge for a parent whose child has been molested is to sustain a sense of hopefulness in the future, and to simply "keep on going". The more successful you are in doing this, the more resilient your child will be. Remember, for your child to have that sense of security and well being that you want for him, he has to first sense that it exists within you, and see it working in your life.

As your child sees you re-gaining control over your emotions, your schedule, your everyday relationships, it will convey to her that normalcy is possible. When this is believed by your child, any stigma she feels will be minimized and she can begin to feel hopeful about her own abilities and future.

Provide her with opportunities to use her body in physical ways that emphasize its strength and power in age appropriate ways (versus age inappropriate sexual power or as an object to be dominated or used for others' needs). Examples of this would be gymnastics, martial arts, or mastery of a skill involving her hands or movement. Responsibilities for household chores, so long as the chores are age appropriate, provide opportunities for children to use their physical and mental abilities to contribute to the family well being. Care for animals or activities involving animals or plants is also a way for children to understand the way in which care giving and being in a position of responsibility over something more vulnerable can be gratifying and meaningful. Power can come from within through gentleness and nurturing and does not have to be displayed through force and physical manipulation.

### ***Sex and Safety Education***

This is one of the most powerful tools you can give your children: information about their bodies, their rights, and their responsibilities. However you do it, just do it! There are many books and resources from which to choose. Use materials that "fit" with your own values and beliefs. Some materials are designed only to give information and it's up to you to provide the background. Other materials provide both information and their own interpretations, perhaps reflecting certain moral beliefs or standards. You would not send your children out into the world without knowing how to safely cross a street, or without accurate information about what to do if they come upon a match or a handgun. Likewise, information about sex and safety will not frighten them. Knowledge does the opposite: when they know what to do, it helps children feel secure and empowered.

Children need to know the basics of normal sexual development, along with tools to keep themselves safe. Only by discussing these things with trusted adults, can a child learn to trust



his own instincts and feelings about how to keep himself safe when you're not around. By doing this in direct ways, you are also telling your child that sexuality is a topic that can be discussed in your family. Your child is more likely to not only have a sense about uncomfortable situations, but to tell you about them when he knows this is an acceptable topic.

Sex education can begin from the earliest bath times with just naming body parts and should continue through adolescence. Find or create opportunities to bring sexuality discussions into everyday life, so that it is not seen as an unusual or tense subject. Play "what if" games with your child in which you pose situations for the child to figure out and then discuss. (For example, "What if I told you to listen to the babysitter, but she told you to keep a secret about touching?") Your child will also give you the signals about what is on his/her mind, if you are open and listening. ("There's a girl in class who thinks she's hot with the boys." "What's this?" upon discovering mother's tampons. Or, "Why was your door locked?")

There is an assumption that children who have had inappropriate sexual experiences may not need this information; or that providing it would increase their anxiety or attention to sexual matters. In fact, children who have been molested or exposed to explicit sexuality need accurate information more than ever! Discussing sexuality and safety with parents and counselors usually decreases the child's anxiety. Please ask for information to use with your child to talk about these matters.

### ***"Normalize"***

Try, as much as possible, to return to normal routines, schedules and rules. The more consistency, predictability, and structure that children have, the safer they feel to show you how they are doing emotionally.

If you do nothing else for your child, this alone will help her: Be there when you say you will; follow through on what you plan/say; make a consistent "quiet time" (even if it is for 5 minutes!) at the same time of the day to study, read, talk, or do an activity together; establish your own "normal" patterns and routines. The more predictable you and your child's environment is, the safer she will feel.

Involve your child in developmentally appropriate activities and relationships, so he can achieve a sense of competence about his ability to "fit in" and be like other children his age. Your goal as a parent, among other things, is to raise a competent and compassionate human being. Be aware of any needs you have to either "push" your child too much, or to hold him back. Encourage your child to be an active participant in his childhood through play and social activities and academic/school involvement.

### ***Keeping Yourself Healthy***

There is a strong likelihood that children will do as well as their parents do in coping with trauma. Our children "take in" our attitudes, beliefs, and feelings without us ever verbally or explicitly conveying them. Honestly assess your own coping skills and methods; if you need help in that area, get it.

Develop or re-kindle healthy friendships and support systems in your own life. As your child sees that you are competent in finding and keeping "good" love, she will be better able to discriminate between healthy and unhealthy relationships. If you surround yourself with an unhealthy lifestyle (including people, habits, outlooks) in your own life, your child won't know the difference, so cultivate the best for yourself. Support groups, friendship and religious affiliations, community involvement, counseling, physical exercise, pursuing the things that bring you a