

## Why this booklet?

If you're in an intimate relationship with a person who was sexually abused as a child or teen, this booklet is for you. The information can help you whether you are male or female; whether you are in a gay, lesbian or heterosexual relationship.

You and your partner are not alone. At least one in four women and one in six men were sexually abused as children. As adult survivors talk more openly about abuse and how it has affected them, their partners will come to understand how the abuse has affected their relationship.

Sexual abuse has affected your partner's entire emotional development. As a result, these aspects of a relationship can be particularly difficult for both of you:

**Note:** In this booklet we use the pronouns "she" and "her" to refer to the survivor and "he" and "him" to refer to the abuser. We have done this for two reasons: first, for ease of reading; and second, because statistics show that more often women are the abused and men are the abusers. However, the information applies to partners and survivors of both sexes.

**Trust:** A child experiences abuse as a betrayal of trust, especially if the abuser was a person she cared about. As a result, your partner might have difficulty in allowing herself to trust or in knowing who to trust.

**Power:** A child who is sexually abused feels powerless. As an adult, your partner might feel powerless at times and unable to assert herself. At other times she might try to control even the smallest detail so she'll feel safe and more powerful.

**Intimacy:** An abused child is too afraid to let anyone know her secret and too ashamed to let anyone get close. She learns how to behave as though everything is fine, while keeping her true thoughts and feelings hidden, even from herself. As an adult, that makes intimacy difficult.

**Sexuality:** Sexual abuse interferes with normal sexual development. Instead of growing up to experience her body as a source of pleasure, your partner probably experienced it as a source of pain. She may think of sex as a form of control rather than an expression of love. As a result, she might withdraw from sex. Or she might use sex as a way to get power or affection.

**Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre,  
5, Greenview Terrace, Princes Quay, Tralee**

**Freephone 1800 633 333**

**email: [krcc@eircom.net](mailto:krcc@eircom.net)**

**[www.krsac.net](http://www.krsac.net)**

**9am-5pm Monday – Friday**

Athlone Rape Crisis Centre .....	1800 306600
Carlow & South Leinster Rape Crisis & Counselling Centre .....	1800 727727
Sexual Violence Centre Cork .....	1800 496496
Donegal Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre .....	1800 448844
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre .....	1800 778888
Galway Rape Crisis Centre .....	1850 355355
Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre .....	1800 633333
Kilkenny Rape Crisis & Counselling Centre .....	1800 478478
Limerick Rape Crisis Centre .....	1800 311511
Mayo Rape Crisis Centre .....	1800 234900
Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Centre (N.E.) (Dundalk) .....	1800 212122
Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Centre (NI) (Belfast) .....	04890 329002
Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Service (Wexford) .....	1800 330033
Sligo Rape Crisis Centre .....	1800 750780
Tipperary Rape Crisis Centre .....	1800 340340
Tullamore Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Counselling Service .....	1800 323232
Waterford Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre .....	1800 296296



## INFORMATION BOOKLET

**When your partner has been  
sexually abused.**

*Your Partner can recover from sexual abuse. Understanding how  
this happens and getting support for yourself is important too.*

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2.

Although we offer a brief definition, this booklet is not meant to explain child sexual abuse. Instead it focuses on the **effects of abuse** on your partner and on your relationship. We strongly encourage you to learn as much as you can about how people recover from sexual abuse.

In this booklet we also talk about how **you** might react during your partner's recovery. Sometimes it's hard not to get caught up in your partner's issues. Try to find support for yourself outside the relationship through a friend, counsellor, or support group. This will give you a chance to focus on your own feelings and thoughts.

***Try to find some support for yourself  
outside the relationship through a friend,  
counsellor or partner's support group – or  
all three***

#### **What is child sexual abuse?**

Child sexual abuse is the deliberate misuse of power over a child by an adult or an adolescent. The abuser's power may come from being older, bigger or more sophisticated, or from being in a position of trust or authority over the child. The abuse may include inappropriate sexual remarks, fondling, and more violent assaults. Whether your partner's experience involved belittling remarks, uncomfortable sexualised interaction, one-time sexual touching, or long term abuse, the important aspect is the way in which your partner experienced and reacted to it.

As a sexual abuse survivor, your partner has probably grown up believing these things:

1. You can't trust people who are supposed to love you.
2. Affection and attention are almost always followed by sexual demands.
3. You don't have control over your body.
4. Other people's needs must come ahead of your own.
5. You are in danger if you are not in complete control.

These are the basic legacies of a sexual abuse experience and they can profoundly affect your partner's adult relationships.

The Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre was established in 1992 to provide a free and confidential counselling and support service to victims of rape and sexual abuse. Centre staff chose to change the name to the **Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre** in February 2000. We feel this reflects more accurately the nature of our work in the centre.

**We believe** that survivors of sexual violence and abuse have the right to be treated with respect and sensitivity.

**We aim to provide** a place of help and healing for survivors of rape and sexual abuse by offering care and support in a confidential environment.

**We offer;**

- One to one counselling
- Telephone counselling
- Group counselling
- Support with medical and legal procedures
- Court accompaniment
- A 24 hr emergency service and on-call service to the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit at Kerry General Hospital
- Education and Research Programmes and Information

**Supplementary Services**

We also offer support to family and friends.

The SAYIT programme (Safety Awareness Youth Information Training) to schools and interested groups in Kerry.

**Outreach Services**

Our main centre is Tralee but our outreach endeavours to meet the needs of victims and their families throughout the county by having our offices available that meet our criterion for privacy and confidentiality in Killarney, Dingle and Listowel.

***You are not alone,  
many others have similar experiences.  
Although it is often difficult to talk,  
we promise to listen.***

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**What does it mean to be a survivor of child sexual abuse?**

Many people who are sexually victimised as children want to be referred to as “survivors” rather than victims. It reminds them that the abuse is over and they’ve survived the experience.

Often you’re unaware at the beginning of the relationship that your partner is a survivor of sexual abuse. Your partner might not have told you because she is afraid you would reject or not believe her. She might have felt too guilty and ashamed to talk about the abuse. She might have been telling herself the abuse hadn’t affected her and wasn’t worth talking about. Or it could be that she had repressed her memories when she was a child and hadn’t begun to recover them. Whatever the reason, it’s something that happened in her life that she didn’t choose, but which now profoundly affects you both.

**Can my partner recover from sexual abuse?**

YES! Your partner can recover from sexual abuse although it can take a long time. Her recovery depends on the kind of abuse she experienced, as well as the kind of support she has. There’s no “right” length of time or “right” way to recover, but most survivors go through these stages:

**The Crisis Stage**

*“The beginning of this whole thing was really hard. Annie didn’t sleep well any more and she was having nightmares. After a while she seemed to resist going to bed so I went to bed alone. She’d stay up and read. Sometimes I’d wake in the middle of the night alone and she’d be in the living room with all the lights on, wrapped up in a blanket.”*

Your partner might be thrown into a crisis when she starts to remember the abuse. Memories of the events might come in bits and pieces that won’t make sense to her. As she struggles with these new memories she might doubt the abuse happened and worry that she’s going crazy. But she isn’t. Her mind is letting the new information in little by little so she won’t be overwhelmed.

If your partner has always known about the abuse but has no feelings about it, she could experience a crisis when she starts to feel the emotional pain connected to the abuse. She might find herself crying without knowing why. She might suddenly be afraid to be alone.

The crisis stage is easier to go through if you understand what is happening. One way to find out is to call Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre Ltd.

## SOME IMPORTANT THINGS YOU CAN DO.

- Believe him or her
- Be yourself – treat the survivor just as you normally do. Try not to be overly protective.
- Express your caring and concern for the survivor.
- Allow the survivor to have her or his feelings.
- Reassure the survivor that confusing and painful feelings are to be expected.
- Let the survivor know that the assault was not her or his fault. *Do not judge or blame the survivor for his/her actions.*
- Remember that the powerlessness is a big issue. You may guide the survivor. But let the survivor have control of her or his own life and make her or his own decisions about how to proceed.
- Encourage, but do not force the survivor to talk. Listen in a caring way, but don't try to "fix".
- Help the survivor understand the importance of getting medical attention, gently encourage seeking help from those with expertise in sexual violence.
- Find healthy ways to deal with your anger, rage, and fears without further traumatising the survivor.
- Respect the confidentiality of the survivor.
- TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. Make sure YOU have emotional support, if necessary.

As a partner you'll be involved and affected by every stage of the recovery process. Knowing how recovery works can help you support your partner without feeling overwhelmed.

## "The abuse is no longer the centre of our lives. And what a relief that is!"

### Do other partners react the way I am reacting?

*"I just can't believe her big brother did all those things to her. I've played football with him. I've drunk beer with him, and we've swapped jokes. To me he just seems like a regular guy. Maybe somebody else did it, and she just imagines it was her brother."*

**Disbelief** is a common reaction to a sexual abuse disclosure. If you're having a hard time believing your partner, the statistics on sexual abuse should convince you. The most recent studies show that one out of four women and one of six men are survivors of sexual abuse. Because of the shame attached to sexual abuse, false allegations are extremely rare.

You may feel repelled by the thought that your partner has been sexually abused, and you may want to deny it. However, your partner has struggled to remember what she feels are shameful events in her life. Your belief will support her first step towards healing. Your denial, on the other hand, could increase her sense of shame.

*"Okay, I believe it, but enough's enough. If she could just put it aside, and get on with her life, we'd both be better off. You can't undo the past, and crying over spilled milk only makes things worse. We can both go ahead from here and have a wonderful life together".*

**Minimizing** the abuse and its impact is tempting, but it doesn't help. Remembering the abuse and telling you about it is only the first step towards recovery for your partner. Now she needs to re-experience her buried emotions and make sense of her conflicting feelings. To do this she'll probably need help from a trained sexual abuse counsellor. She'll need patience, understanding and love from you. *'Patience and understanding are one thing, but let's get at the source of the problem and do something. Her brother has wrecked her life, and now he's wrecking mine. It's time for him to face a little reality, preferably in a dark alley.'*

Your **anger at the offender** is understandable, but violence wouldn't help your partner.

While was being abused she was powerless, and if you try to call the shots, you're taking her power away again. However, there are constructive ways for you to channel your anger. One way is to support your partner in making her own decisions; another is to support her preparing for a court case against the offender.

*“Everything was going fine until she watched that TV show. She wasn't even thinking about sexual abuse until she saw all those other women talking about it. Now she won't leave the subject alone.”*

You might feel **angry at your partner** for talking about the abuse, and then guilty for feeling angry. However, try to direct your anger where it belongs – towards the abuser.

**“I knew something was wrong in our relationship, but I just couldn't figure it out. Sometimes she didn't want sex, and sometimes she wanted it all the time. It seems like we couldn't just relax and enjoy it. Then she started accusing me of having affairs if I even talked to another woman. And then she kept telling me I'd probably walk out on her. It was driving me crazy. Thank God she finally remembered the abuse. All that weird behaviour is starting to make sense to me now.”**

You might feel **relief** after your partner starts talking about her sexual abuse. It helps you understand behaviours that may have baffled you for years. Problems with sexuality, intimacy, and trust are often the result of childhood sexual abuse.

**“I'm glad she's talking about it, and I'm glad I understand her behaviour a little better, where does that leave me now? I don't have a degree in psychology, and I'm afraid something I do or say could make things worse for her. And what if I do or say something in bed that really upsets her?”**

You might feel **inadequate** as the partner of a sexual abuse survivor. Once your partner is on the road to recovery, you could see changes in her personality and in her sexual response. Remind yourself you're not the cause of these changes, and you shouldn't take them personally.

**“Why am I in so much pain? She looks like the same person, and I'm still in love with her, but she seems so different. It's like living with a stranger, and I really miss the old person. I know she's getting better, but where does that leave me?”**

5. Spend time that's not related to sexual abuse with each other.
6. Have fun and remember why you choose to be together in the first place.

**FOR LIFE AFTER RECOVERY, REMIND YOURSELF TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER THAT'S NOT RELATED TO SEXUAL ABUSE. HAVE FUN AND REMEMBER WHY YOU CHOSE TO BE TOGETHER IN THE FIRST PLACE.**

1. **Recognise and assert your own needs.** Respect your own boundaries and set limits if your partner's behaviour becomes abusive. Placing what you see as your partner's needs ahead of your own is called *co-dependency*. This stands in the way of her recovery and your own emotional well-being.
2. **Look at the role you played in your own family.** If you were the one who "took care of everything" in your family, you run the risk of carrying that role into your relationship. It may feel good but it isn't healthy.
3. **Make sure you have support outside your relationship.** This support may be a counsellor, a friend, or a support group, or all three.
4. **Try not to make assumptions** about your partner and yourself, and don't make assumptions based on stereotypes. Ask questions to see if assumptions are true.
5. **Enjoy your relationship for what it really is**, and try not to make it conform to some idealised model. Your own family may have created a false picture of what family life is, and TV sitcoms are notorious for creating unrealistic expectations of what family life should be.

### **What if I am a survivor myself?**

#### **Jill's Story**

**Both my parents drank a lot. As the oldest kid I took care of everyone in my family. I did what I was supposed to and never asked for anything. I felt invisible. After I finished school, I fell madly in love with Jack. No one had ever wanted me like he did. After a wonderful year together Jack began to remember being sexually abused as a child. I tried to help but I was angry. It seemed unfair that I'd finally found someone who loved me and now we had to deal with such a big issue. His family tried to be supportive but I was the only one he talked to about the abuse. Listening to him exhausted me and after six months, I was completely drained. Then my own sexual abuse memories started to surface. I was frightened, knowing how much support Jack had needed. I wondered who was going to take care of me the way I was taking care of him. Certainly not my family! I felt like Humpty Dumpty, about to fall apart with no one to put me together again. I couldn't tell anyone: I kept it all inside. I was sick all of the time. Finally I had to tell my doctor and she was great! She helped me get the support and counselling**

**I needed, and I started feeling better right away.**

**I began to see how hard the last year had been. I had managed without asking for help, because that's what I had to do as a kid. No one ever cared about how I was doing and I thought that's how it always had to be. Now I know it isn't. I've had help from my doctor, my counsellor, my friends and my partner. It was a relief to tell Jack about it and he was shocked to realise I had the same needs he had. I guess we'd been going along almost like a parent and a child. Now I've learned how to ask for support and he's learned he has something to give me.**

If your partner's recovery process has triggered memories of your own sexual abuse, you might have these reactions: *anger* that your partner's experience has triggered your memories; *fear* that you can't continue to support your partner in the same way; and *panic* at the thought of going through what your partner has gone through.

If you tell yourself your abuse was less serious and your needs can wait, you'll create a major problem in your relationship. Your partner's recovery could take a long time and you'll become angry and resentful if you put your own needs on hold. Remember, your first responsibility is to yourself. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't support your partner of the relationship.

Since each of you is both a survivor and a partner of a survivor, you'll have to take turns giving and receiving support. Also you'll need support outside the relationship from friends and a counsellor.

### **What if my partner and I are a same sex couple?**

If you and your partner are both male or both female, the issues are similar, the recovery process is similar, and the principles for supporting your partner are the same. The pressures on your relationship are the same, providing your families and friends support your relationship in the first place. The stories in this book are about a female survivor with a male partner and a male survivor with a female partner. We've chosen them because these combinations occur more frequently in our society not because they constitute some kind of 'norm'.

Whether one or both partners are sexual abuse survivors, this basic principle still applies.

**1. Be a trusted friend.**

This means being there for your partner when she wants to talk, providing company when she wants it, and respecting her privacy when she wants it. It means being patient, especially when she wants to repeat the story of her abuse. Survivors often need to re-tell their story several times before they feel free of it.

**2. Cooperate with your partner's requests around sexual activity.**

She may want to avoid sexual activity or even ask for temporary sexual abstinence. If she makes this request, it's probably because sexual activity is triggering painful memories of sexual abuse. Temporary abstinence may seem difficult, but you can treat it as an opportunity to express your loving feelings with affectionate touching and non-sexual intimacy.

**What about me? How can I look after my own needs?**

Being the partner of a sexual abuse survivor can be both an ordeal and a rewarding experience. Greg's story illustrates some of the things that can happen to you as your partner recovers:

**Greg's Story**

**When Greg met his wife, Linda, she was in counselling because of sexual abuse by her grandfather. When they began a sexual relationship, Greg noticed that she resisted intimacy. She would always wear pyjamas to bed and never let him see her naked. Greg thought this meant that she was modest. Linda owned a successful computer software business and Greg worked as a journeyman welder. He was flattered that a 'professional' woman was interested in a 'working class' man like himself, and was even more flattered when she agreed to marry him. Linda told Greg about her grandfather after they were married. Greg supported her counselling and made a lot of aggressive comments about her grandfather. He saw himself as a 'white knight' who had rescued her from an evil family. As Linda's counselling progressed, the relationship deteriorated. Instead of becoming more comfortable with her body, she still wore pyjamas to bed, and frequently resisted Greg's sexual overtures. When he persisted she told him that he was a "sex fiend".**

*All relationships have rocky periods. What makes the difference is whether you work on the problems together.*

**How will recovery affect our family?**

**Parenting:**

Your children might suffer at first from your partner's recovery. They will probably sense the stress, and wonder whether they are causing it. You can help your children by explaining to them that their mom/dad is upset by childhood memories that make them sad or angry, and those feelings sometimes make them impatient or cranky. Keep the explanation short and simple and reassure them that they're not responsible for their parent's feelings.

Your partner could be under additional stress if, when she was abused, she was the same age as one of your children. Be aware of this possible connection, though you may not want to explain it to your children as it may be very confusing for them.

If your partner is putting a lot of effort into recovery, and is sometimes exhausted from it, you can help by taking on extra responsibility for the children. Plan to have fun with them while you give your partner time to rest.

**Family:**

Your partner's recovery will affect the way you relate to your family, especially if the abuser was a family member. If the family failed to protect her in the past, or disbelieves her now, they'll probably want her to keep quiet about it. In that case your task is to support her especially if they pressure her to retract the story.


## How will recovery affect our relationship?

The recovery will profoundly affect your relationship. Once your partner remembers the abuse and then tries to remember the surrounding details, she/he may suffer from “flashbacks”; that is, sudden, unexpected, vivid memories.

Flashbacks frequently occur during sexual activity, and may cause her/him to back away from sexual activities he/she had previously enjoyed. This happens because sexual activity often resembles some aspect of the abuse.

Your partner might resist your attempts at intimacy as well as your sexual overtures. If the sexual abuse was accompanied by intimacy, your partner could see attempted intimacy as a threat. Your partner might panic and try to leave the relationship, or might even start an affair with someone who will make no demands for intimacy.

Your partner might become irritable, and criticise your behaviour for no reason. If you’re a man and the abuser was a man, you could become the object of a “transference”; that is, your partner will unconsciously see you doing the same thing as the abuser.

Your partner might try to control your relationship to compensate for the lack of control she experienced while the abuse was taking place. The old adage “it has to get worse before it gets better” often applies to recovery from sexual abuse.

Recovery is often most painful in the beginning stages, and that’s when your relationship will be most sorely tested. Recovery from sexual abuse can take years; however the human psyche has marvellous self-healing powers, and you could experience some of the rewards from your partner’s recovery in a relatively short time.

Some of the potential rewards for the relationship are that you’ll both be able to trust more, to experience and express feelings more, to have a renewed interest in sex, and to discover your true self or “inner child”.

**Then Linda accused Greg of attempting to control her, of being a chauvinist, and of flirting with other women. Finally Greg lost patience. He told her to get on with her counselling so they could have a normal sex life. She accused him of emotional violence. In desperation Greg made an appointment to see a counsellor himself.**

**The counsellor asked Greg to look at some of the assumptions he had made about Linda. Greg found that Linda’s ‘modesty’ was in fact, a reaction to being sexually abused by her grandfather. The counsellor also helped Greg separate what was true about Linda’s accusations, from her perceptions of him that were distorted by the abuse. He had to acknowledge, for example, that his aggressive “white knight” approach was chauvinistic and controlling, but that Linda’s perception of him as a “sex fiend” wasn’t valid.**

**The counsellor also helped Greg see that he had idealised Linda as a middle-class achiever who had done him a favour by marrying him, and that this was quite unrealistic. This in turn led Greg to see how his self-esteem had been stunted by his own upbringing. Eventually he was able to be more supportive of Linda because he had a better sense of his own self-worth.**

**He learned not to assume that he was automatically wrong when Linda attacked him. As Greg became more realistic about her, he gave up playing the “white knight”. When Linda felt more in control of her recovery, she stopped her verbal attacks. Greg also learned how to build greater non-sexual intimacy into their relationship. They both benefited in many ways from Greg’s counselling.**

Respect your own  
boundaries  
and set limits if your  
partner's behaviour

If your partner was abused by a family member, probably other family members have been abused as well. When your partner discloses her sexual abuse to one family member, there could be a 'snow-ball' effect with several family members disclosing their abuse as well. If your partner's grandfather was the abuser, for example, and the family secret is that he had abused several of his children, your partner's disclosure could set the stage for disclosures by several family members, including her own parent.

Whether your partner tells her family about the abuse or not should be entirely her choice. It depends on a number of circumstances, but both of you should be aware of how families could react. Your job is to support your partner, whatever her choice may be, not to play avenging angel or rescuer.

You'll also have to decide whether or not to tell your own family about your partner's abuse. To make that choice, you'll have to ask your partner whether she wants to talk about it. Then you'll have to think about the effect this will have on your family. If you think they'll support both you and your partner, tell them. If you think they'll respond in negative way, don't. You don't owe your family or anyone else an explanation.

### **Is there life after recovery?**

YES! All relationships have rocky periods when one or both partners have problems. What makes a difference is whether you work on the problems together. The abuse might affect a relationship right from the start, even when you know nothing about it. When you find out about the abuse, then you know what you're dealing with and have a better chance of solving the problems as they come up.

The communication and support you develop while you do this will establish a sense of trust so that you'll be able to talk safely about the most sensitive, vulnerable issues. That's a sound foundation for any relationship.

For life after recovery, remind yourself of these guidelines:

1. Continue to communicate your love
2. Be caring in your actions
3. Be aware of your own needs and limits
4. Communicate your needs and limits to your partner

becomes abusive.

**Greg's Story contains several important principles for the partner of a survivor to learn and practise. They are;**

You might experience **grief** as you see your partner change. Remind yourself that her core personality is still the same. Experiencing her personal changes can be as exciting for you as it is for her. You have to trust and be patient with her healing process.

### **As the survivor's partner, what can I do to help?**

Any loving relationship needs the ongoing support and understanding of both partners. However, to be the partner of a survivor takes extra understanding and patience. Here's what you can do to help:

1. **Believe** your partner and resist the temptation to minimise the abuse when the reality is ugly. Survivors of sexual abuse feel ashamed and confused when their perceptions are challenged.
2. **Listen** to your partner, and don't make moral judgements. If the abuser was a close relative, the survivor may have loving feelings for him as well as angry feelings. She needs to be able to form her own opinions without your attempts to influence them.
3. **Support** your partner's plans to deal with the abuse, but don't try to control what she does. Your partner has to decide such things as whether to take some kind of action against the abuser. Your task is to support these important decisions whatever they might be. If you try to interfere, she'll feel that once again someone is trying to control her life. If her family tries to influence what she does, you can help by supporting her

and talk to a counsellor. They can explain more about what your partner is going through and will give you ideas on how to handle it.

**Yes! Your partner can recover from sexual abuse although it can take a long time.**

### **The Middle Stage**

**“she kept digging into her past. I thought it would never stop. It was as if she had to go back to the important times and people in her life and look at them again and again. She had to see what her childhood was really like; what her family was really like.”**

When your partner decides to deal with abuse, she'll enter a stage of hard emotional work. She'll struggle to remember details of the abuse, to express her feelings about it, and to integrate memories. This means she had to acknowledge how deeply she's been affected by the abuse. She'll experience tremendous emotional upheaval, which will include grief and anger. However, she'll probably be relieved too, when some of her feelings and behaviours start making sense to her.

Although you might wish your partner would hurry and get on with her recovery, she can do it only when she is ready. If she is worried about whether she can do it, encourage her to talk to other survivors, or to read about them. If your partner is anxious about how it will affect your relationship, you could talk to a counsellor together about her concerns and about what you might do to help her. Don't pressure your partner. The decisions along the way aren't easy and your partner must make them for her own reasons, not to please you. If you feel impatient and frustrated, talk to a counsellor or find a support group.

### **Resolution**

*“We've had quite a time, but its easier now. The abuse still comes up but its not the centre of her life or mine. And what a relief that is!”*

After much hard work, your partner will resolve many of the major issues. This doesn't mean she'll never think about the abuse again. It doesn't mean everything is sorted out. However, it does mean she'll be free to concentrate on what's happening in her life now. When problems related to abuse do come up, she'll feel more confident about handling them.

decisions.

**4. Maintain a separate identity.** You'll help your partner if you focus on your own needs as well as hers. In any healthy relationship both partners make sure that their own needs are not sacrificed to the others'.

### **What is Counselling?**

Counselling can be described as a process which provides help & support and an understanding listener. Counselling helps clients to gain clearer insight into themselves and their situation so that they are better able to draw on their own resources to help themselves, by creating a place of acceptance.

The main focus of the counselling provided by the Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre is non-directive – this means that the counsellor will not offer advice on what you should do. Often people come to counselling wanting someone to take control of the situation but in reality you as the client, already have the answers, you might just need to talk it through in an environment where you feel accepted and respected.

### **Counselling and Confidentiality.**

Everything that is said between the client and the counsellor is treated in total confidence. Confidentiality will only be limited in exceptional circumstances, i.e. confidentiality will be limited if there is a concern regarding the sexual abuse of a minor (under 18 years). If confidentiality is to be limited it will be talked through with the client in advance.

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