

Parents: Common Feelings and Thoughts About Sexual Abuse

Responsibility/Guilt

•**Thought:** “Of all the children in the world, why did this happen to my child?”

•**More helpful thinking:** The unfortunate truth is that many children are affected by sexual abuse. My child is not alone. In fact, my child was lucky that the abuse was discovered and stopped and she has parent(s) who are getting help.”

•**Thought:** “I’m a lousy, lousy parent. I could not keep my son from being sexually abused. I didn’t even know the abuse was happening!”

•**More helpful thinking** Sexual abuse is hidden, usually done in secret and that makes it very hard to detect and prevent. Children can be coaxed or threatened not to tell and there is often little physical evidence. Even sensitive and caring parents can’t always notice if their child has been abused.”

Anger at Child, Themselves, Perpetrator

Thought: “I don’t know why she got in his car. She knows better....why did she let this happen?”

Thought: “I’m mad I didn’t prepare her; If I had taught her how to protect herself, she wouldn’t have been abused.”

Thought: “I’d like to blow that scumbag away .”

More helpful thinking: “I should not waste time and effort blaming myself for my daughter’s abuse; instead I can focus on helping her learn to cope with this problem. It’s not going to help anyone if I hurt the offender and end up in jail.”