

Sample Gradual Exposure Hierarchy

Here is a sample hierarchy of topics to be used with a child who experienced multiple episodes of abuse. A hierarchy should be treated as a useful guide that can be modified to reflect new information gathered in the course of therapy. The child may be engaged in gradual exposure by drawing, discussing, or writing about the topics listed below. Later in the therapy process, some of these steps may be repeated in joint sessions with non-offending parents.

1. General information about child sexual abuse.
2. Nonabusive interactions with the offender.
3. The disclosure and resulting investigation.
4. The first episode of abuse.
5. Additional types of abusive contacts.
6. Other specific episodes of abuse (associated with special events such as holidays, birthdays, beginning or ending of school year).
7. The most disturbing or embarrassing abusive episodes.