


Assessment of Nonoffending Partners in Child Sexual Abuse Cases for Parenting and Protective Capacities



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Common Reactions

Numbness- inability to feel anything

Distance- feeling separated from people and events around them

Anger- toward everyone around them

Disbelief- “Maybe my child dreamed this”

Denial- not accepting that the abuse happened, especially when the offender denies the accusations

Mothers of Incest Victims (James and Nasjleti 1983)

1. The Passive Child-Woman Mother
2. The Intelligent, Competent, Distant Mother
3. The Rejecting, Vindictive Mother
4. The Psychotic or Severely Retarded Mother

Cautions Regarding The Issue of Denial

- Most Nonoffending mothers believe their children
- Belief that the abuse occurred does not mean the mother will support and/or protect her children

Common Thoughts of Nonoffenders Who are Not in Denial

Why did this happen?

How could I not know this was happening?

I am a terrible parent.

Common Thoughts of Nonoffenders Who are Not in Denial

I should have prevented this from happening.

This was all my fault.

I can never trust men again!

Thoughts of Mothers in Denial

- My child should have known better (depending on the child's age)
- My child has a history of not being truthful
- I'm not saying it didn't happen, but I don't think that it did
- My child shares some of the blame
- If it happened, why didn't my child tell me?
- This is attention-seeking behavior

Sample Statements of Nonoffenders in Denial

- ▶ I'm not saying he did it but I'm not saying he didn't do it
- ▶ If "they" have proof, I will believe it happened
- ▶ I have not talked to him/her (perpetrator) about the allegations because I don't want to hurt his/her feelings

Reasons for Denial

- Forced to choose between the child and their partner
- Concern about financial support
- Does not want to question her choice of partners

Why a Formal Assessment?

- Provides a structured evaluation of the Nonoffender's attitudes regarding sexual abuse
- Provides a structured evaluation of their attitude towards parenting
- Assists in determining their emotional needs
- Determines their attitude towards sexual abuse
- May reveal their own physical and/or sexual abuse
- Assist in determining their desire/ability to support and protect their children

Techniques Included in a Nonoffender Assessment

- ❖ Clinical Interview – This is the most important part of the assessment
- ❖ Official Documentation – Reason for case opening
 - Family History
 - Case History
 - Prior Family Contact

Techniques Included in a Nonoffender Assessment

- ❖ Suggested Assessment Instruments
 - Personality Inventories
 - Depression Instruments
 - Anger Instruments
 - Parenting Instruments – measuring attitudes and stress

Questions to be Answered to Determine Risk and Ability to Protect

HANDOUT

*Assessing Risk – Nonoffending
Caregivers*

QUESTIONS
AND
CLOSING REMARKS