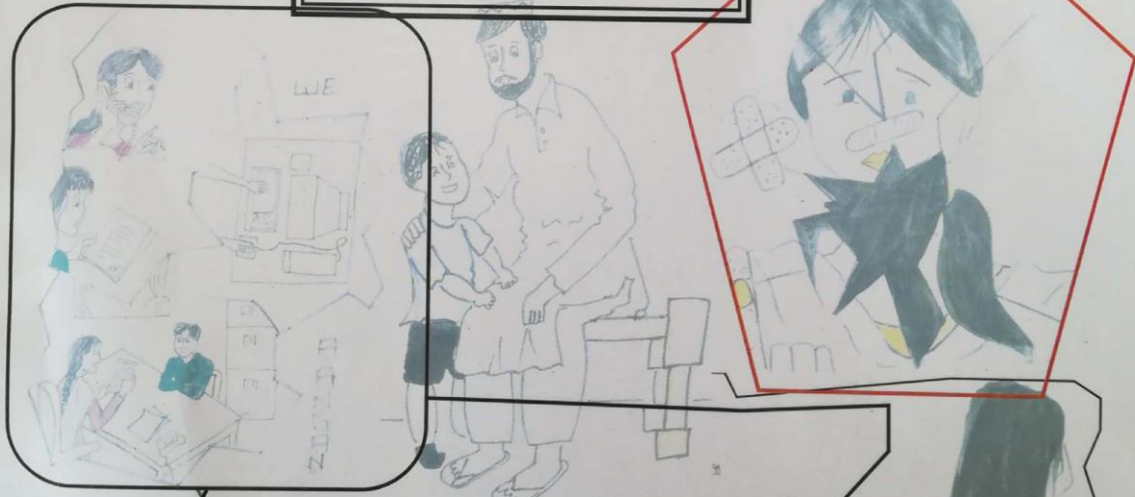
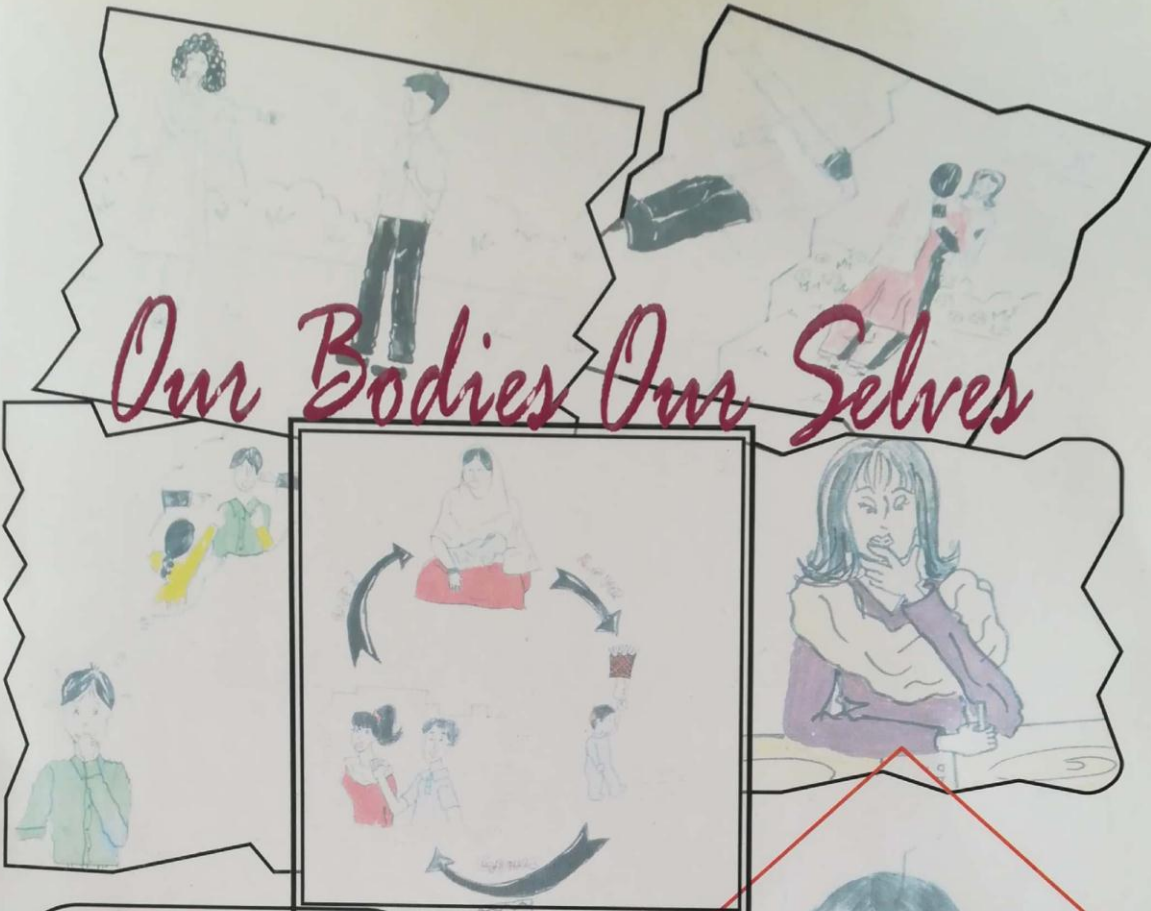


Our Bodies Our Selves



Aangan, Rozan's Programme working against Child Sexual Abuse



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Aangan team (especially Yabqua Anwar, Maria Rashid, Zehra Kamal and Asha Bedar) for writing these articles. We would also like to thank Dr. Ambreen Ahmad for her input and feedback along the way.

A very special thanks to Muneeza Kidwai, (ex editor of the US magazine, The News) for taking the bold initiative of printing these articles in the magazine. A special thanks to Sheema Tariq for the illustrations.

In the end, we would like to thank all the survivors of abuse who have written to or come to Aangan and shared their stories with us. We owe much of our knowledge and information to them.

INTRODUCTION

Aangan is a programme of Rozan, working (for the last 7 years) on the emotional health of children in general and on the issue of child sexual abuse in particular.

This book is a compilation of a series of articles on child sexual abuse that were printed in 1998 in the children's magazine "US" of an English Daily "The News".

In response to these articles Aangan received an overwhelming response (approx. 500 letters) from not only survivors of sexual abuse but also numerous concerned and appreciative parents, children and adults. We are printing these articles as a compilation once again in the hope that we may reach out and touch more lives affected by this problem as well as "arm" more children and parents with the essential knowledge so that they can protect themselves and their loved ones.

This book is for children, for parents and for survivors. The book is divided into 10 chapters because this information can be difficult to digest in one go. We suggest that you take one chapter at a time.

Note for concerned parents/teachers:-

This book is suitable reading for children aged 8 and above. These articles contain no explicit information and have been carefully packaged to help the child go through a gradual step by step learning process so as not to overwhelm or frighten the child. It would be ideal if you read the articles along with the child and it might just help you in addressing this sensitive often embarrassing but essential topic with the child. In case you do not feel comfortable you can also let the child read this by himself or herself.

And

Remember, this knowledge is important.

Chapter 1

STARTING OUT

A lot of 'us' go through life unarmed with precious knowledge that concerns us closely, and sometimes the result of this ignorance of facts creates situations that sometimes do much harm. To avoid such confrontations, we will now strive to turn back the clock and try, if we may, to understand ourselves first, what we actually are, what makes us tick and how we can better look after ourselves and others. Let us start by thinking that we are all toddlers and trace our growth from there. Maybe your parents/guardians will closely follow your footsteps, so let's take the first step, shall we? (Editor, "Us" Magazine, the News. 1997)

Do you ever wonder how we grow up? How, from a tiny infant we grow into mature adults? This, for sure, does not happen overnight. Come to think of it, growing up is a very interesting journey. For each of us, the journey is full of surprises, and each of us has his or her own experiences to tell. All these experiences, good or bad, contribute to the whole person we grow into.

Have you ever noticed how our baby brother or sister starts to notice itself and others? It learns that it has a mouth that it can use to beguile us by its toothless smile. It also uses it most effectively to tell us of its displeasure at something or the other. The baby notices that it has two tiny little

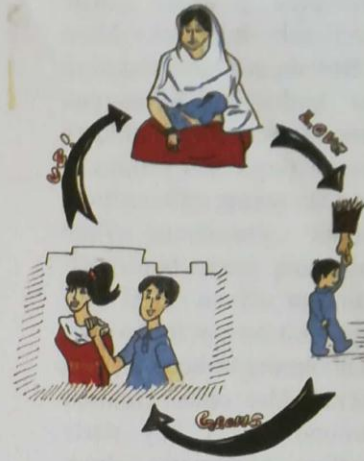
hands with which it can grab hold of our finger and never let go. Similarly as time passes, the baby also notices its tiny little feet with which it can lead us a merry chase, sometimes all around our mother's precious little object d'art. Growing up is a delightful and wondrous experience, each new discovery of our own capabilities thus adding to our power to do something new.

We keep growing and learning new things about ourselves and our bodies. We learn that some of us are boys and some of us girls. This happens at a very early stage in our learning. Along with this, we learn a concept of modesty. Although we never hide our elbows, knees and, above all, our cute little noses, there are

certain parts of the body that we feel embarrassed to reveal or even mention.

As we enter school, we learn how to interact with other children, girls play with girls and boys with boys. Although by this time we have known for a while that we belong to different genders, this concept is drummed into us rather forcefully by people around us as well. People start giving us direct and not so direct messages, quite a few of which have to do with how girls are supposed to look a certain way and boys another, how a doll has nothing to do with a boy, and a sling-shot nothing to do with a girl!

While we are being bombarded with all these messages, it is no wonder that we become self-



conscious. Girls and boys become rather pre-occupied with their physical attributes. How often do we have the urge to look like a famous movie star or an athlete? Some times this results in our becoming quite critical about ourselves. Peer pressure and our own concept of an ideal self makes it certain that we try our utmost to keep abreast of all the other children around us. A boy starts getting nightmares about the fact that all the other boys in the class are suddenly touching the ceiling when he still has a long way to go, or while the others are still the same height, he starts resembling a beanstalk. Nobody needs to be told what happens when, in the same class a boy's voice breaks for the first time.....nightmares galore!

Adolescence brings its own problems for girls, a lot of awkwardness is associated with the time when their bodies start developing. A girl suddenly becomes very

concerned with the fact that she has been left flat-chested, while all the others in the class are blooming nicely or vice versa.

Many of these changes in our bodies and in the attitudes of people around us are puzzling at times. We may find ourselves quite embarrassed with the fact that our bodies have suddenly developed minds of their own. It is as if they are charging ahead while we are left floundering behind.

How do we feel then? Should our feelings be necessarily negative or is it all right to acknowledge and welcome these changes and feel proud of their specialness?

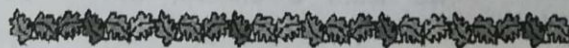
The way we feel about our own unique bodies affects the way we feel about ourselves as individuals. Our behaviour reflects this as well. For example, sometimes an awkward walk is an indication of how under-confident we feel about our growing body.

Feelings regarding our body should include all

parts of our body, whether it is our eyes, ears or nose or the other parts of our bodies we have been taught to cover. Some times we are taught that certain parts of our body are dirty and shameful and that is why we cover them. Isn't it better to think positively; that we cover ourselves because these parts are very special and private and not for everybody to see? The result of the first kind of thinking is that we associate so much shame and embarrassment with these parts that even if someone hurts us there, we cannot talk about it and tell anyone.

Just remember to enjoy and be proud of your body because we are a part of this wonderful and mysterious process in which a little tiny baby grows up to be a man or a woman.

I think we have grown enough for now. We shall have more to say in the next chapter.



Chapter 2:

UNDERSTANDING ABUSE

Is everyone here? No, not just you, I mean, did you manage to get Ammi and Abbu to come too? Well, then, let's not waste time, okay?

In the last chapter, we talked a lot about growing up, learning new things, and feeling comfortable about ourselves and our bodies. Now we are going to talk about things that make us uncomfortable. Our body..that is, all parts of our body, belong to us and that is why it is important and natural that we feel comfortable with them. There are parts of our body that we call *private parts*. We don't like to show them or talk about them to others and that is all right. However, there are times when we may need to talk about them to some one who is close to us, and whom we trust. At those times, we must try very hard not to let embarrassment or shyness or fear come in our way.

When does this kind of need arise? We may be sick and these parts may be causing us pain, so now someone close needs to be told. This pain is quite all right to talk about. At other

times, another person's touch may cause us pain. This person could be much older, and talking about this pain may make us feel scared or ashamed.

Okay, now let's tackle this whole business of touching. We all know that there are many kinds of 'touching'. First of all, there is that touch which makes us feel very good and happy with our lot.

which is rather difficult to understand. This is called 'secret touching'. We all know what a secret is. It is a strange and sometimes very exciting feeling. It may make our tummies do somersaults or may even give us heartburn! Some secrets are very nice, like a surprise birthday party or gift. These secrets are fun and exciting, specially when everyone gets to find out, and the secret is over.



This could be a mother hugging a son, a father patting a daughter's back or friends holding hands. Then there is the bad touch which makes us feel really angry or sad, like hurting or slapping someone. A kick, a smack, a push are all bad touches which need to be avoided as much as possible. Now we come to another kind of touching,

But some secrets are bad, like something we may have broken and we don't want our mothers to know about it. We want to keep it secret because we are sure we will get in trouble if the truth comes out but sooner or later the truth does come out and even if we get a scolding, somehow, it feels better

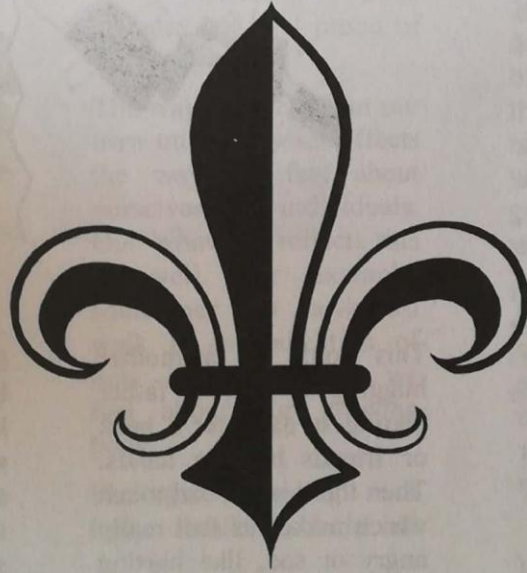
not to have to keep this secret forever.

However, there is another much worse kind of secret. It involves an older person touching a child's private parts in any way or showing his/her own private parts to the child. Very often children think that they must keep these sorts of experiences secret. There may be many reasons for this. They may be threatened that if they tell anyone, harm will come to them or their loved ones or that it may happen with someone they love a lot, someone whom

they would feel bad about getting into trouble if they told the touching secret. They may be promised treats or fun or extra love or the person may be so big and important that it becomes too difficult to tell. This kind of touching may make you feel very upset, embarrassed and confused. However, this is the sort of secret which must be talked about to someone we trust because if we don't, not only do we make the person who is hurting us, more powerful, we also end up feeling very bad about ourselves.

We may blame ourselves or feel guilty or embarrassed. This sort of touching is not okay and it is called 'Child Sexual Abuse'. But no matter what anyone tells you, we must believe that this sort of uncomfortable touching or showing of private parts is never the child's fault.

It is sad but a lot of children experience child sexual abuse and go through a lot of pain and suffering. They are afraid to talk about it for the many reasons mentioned above.



Chapter 3

THINGS WE MUST KNOW ABOUT ABUSE -I

In the last chapter we mentioned the serious problem of 'child sexual abuse'. We realize that this topic makes many people uncomfortable, but as we said the last time, it is this uncomfortable feeling that may cause a lot of children to keep quiet about it and go through a lot of pain, sometimes for many, many years. We know that it is a difficult thing to talk about, especially for a child who is being abused. In our last article when we talked about abuse we said that the best way to stop it was to tell, but most of us never tell because we are so afraid.....afraid of being punished.....afraid of being blamed, afraid of being disbelieved.

It is natural to feel afraid but talking about the abuse to a trusted adult or friend is our biggest strength against the abuser and it is our fear that gives him/her real power. Remember, the person who is hurting us does not want us to tell any one about it.

We hope very much that you will agree with us, when we say that facing the truth about problems is the only way to start

dealing with them, even if it means that facing the truth is difficult or uncomfortable. We can hide our heads in the sand and pretend that a problem is not there, or we can face it and start thinking of ways to do something about it.

This situation, that we have described, exists for the problem of child sexual abuse. Lots and lots of people have their heads in the sand when it comes to this issue. They say that it just does not exist; how can such a thing happen to children, or if it does exist, it only happens in Western countries. They close their eyes and ears and specially their minds and believe that because of our strong culture and religion, such a thing cannot happen in Pakistan. Well, unfortunately we know that what these people are doing is pretending and trying to run away. Child sexual abuse *does* happen. It happens in countries like Pakistan as well as in other countries. The reason why we know that it happens is because there are so many people, both children and grown-ups, who have come forward and talked of some very hurtful things that have happened to them. These people have been very brave, and in a way, we owe it to them as

well as ourselves, that we learn as much as we can about this problem, and in this way, we can fight against it. We are sure that if you are with us, we will be able to save hundreds and thousands of children from being victims of this horrible problem.

In this chapter we will talk about some commonly held beliefs about child sexual abuse. These beliefs are wrong and we call them 'myths'. Myths help the abuser to become more powerful and make the victims even weaker. By finding out the truth, we shatter these myths and in a way, take away some of his/her power.

Myth No. 1:

Many of us believe that child sexual abuse only occurs in uneducated classes and slum areas. Now let's shatter this myth; in order to shatter it you must know that **child sexual abuse is not the problem of a certain area or class.** It is not like poverty or illiteracy, which are the problems of a certain class. It can happen to any of us, no matter how educated or rich we are, or what our social standing is.

Myth No. 2:

A lot of us also believe that it does more harm than good if a child who

has been abused talks about his/her experience, that if we don't talk about it, it will go away and we'll forget about it and that, somehow, everything will be alright again. Let's get rid of this myth too. Nothing goes away by itself, and it is difficult for the child to forget. He/she may seem to be leading a perfectly normal life and look quite alright, but if a child is not encouraged to talk and unburden himself, he/she may grow up with a lot of suppressed pain and negative feelings which may cause him/her problems.

Myth No. 3:

When we hear of someone being sexually abused, sometimes at the back of our minds, there is a feeling that **victims may have encouraged the abuse in some way**. Some of us may think the same when we hear of a child that has been abused. We may blame the child and assume that he/she may have acted or dressed-up in such a way which could have provoked or deserved the abuse. None of this is true. **We have to remember that it is NEVER the fault of the child and he/she is not**

responsible for the abuse. Children do not relate to any one in a sexual way unless they are made to do so or are exposed to such things. The responsibility of the abuse "always" lies with the older person, who is abusing.

Boys are vulnerable to child sexual abuse too, although girls do seem to be more vulnerable than boys. However, the important thing is that many, many boys are also sexually abused. So we will have to take care of



Myth No. 4:

Many of us assume that the victims are only girls. In fact, parents of boys often feel relieved that they do not have to bother about protecting their sons. It seems that we will have to shatter this myth too.

ourselves whether we are boys or girls.

Myth No. 5:

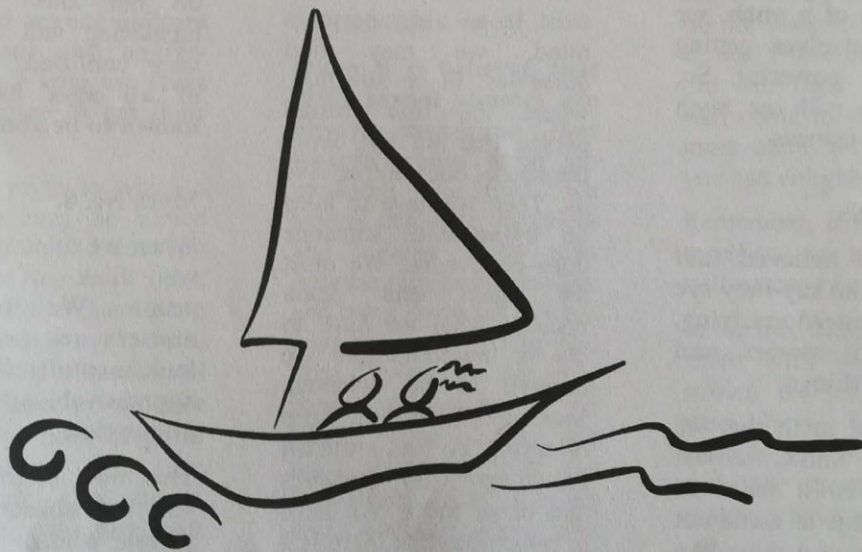
We are told, from a very early age, to keep away from strangers as they could hurt us in some way. **When it comes to child sexual abuse we naturally**

think that all abusers are strangers, and all we have to do is stay away from strangers and we'll be perfectly safe. **The reality is that abusers are seldom strangers.** They are often people children know or even people they trust and love. They can also be people our parents may trust blindly and leave us with.

We hope that some of our myths in our minds have

been cleared and we are more aware of the issue. We also know that there must still be many more questions and myths which are unanswered. In the next chapter, we shall talk some more about them. The more we talk about these things, the easier it will become and the more powerful and capable we will feel about fighting child sexual abuse. Being aware of the truth about

some of these myths is very important, in order for you to combat child sexual abuse. We understand that talking about such things can often be painful and disturbing. But we know by now, that you are a brave & special person, and that you will not only take good care of your own selves, but also help others to become aware of this serious problem.



Chapter 4

THINGS WE MUST KNOW ABOUT ABUSE II

In the last chapter we tried to clear up some of the myths surrounding the issue of child sexual abuse. We know that if we keep on shattering the myths, the truth will slowly start showing itself to us and with the power of the truth we will feel much stronger and will be able to fight this problem.

In this chapter, we have some more myths to shatter and with every fist in the face of a myth, we can see ourselves getting even more powerful. So, let's get on with our myth shattering business.

Myth No. 6:

It is often believed that children who say they are sexually abused are lying, making up stories and imagining things.

This is one myth that we should all know, is just NOT TRUE. It takes so much courage to come out and talk about a thing like abuse. Why would a child deliberately go through so much embarrassment, awkwardness and discomfort if it wasn't true? Moreover, the child knows that what he/she is saying could cause him/her or the abuser a lot of problems, so it is very unlikely that



the child would make up a story like this. Therefore, if somebody tells you that he or she is being abused or has been abused, believe it.

Due to this myth that may exist in an older person's mind, we may find ourselves in a situation, where the first trusted person that we tell about the abuse, does not believe us. Then we have to keep on trying until someone does believe us. We must try again and again because what we have to say is important and we deserve to be believed. Most people, if they keep on trying, do find a trusted grown-up who believes and helps them. We have to remember that there is a very big wall in people's mind about this issue and we have to break this wall.

Myth No. 7:

Many people believe that child sexual abuse only happens to adolescents or older children. This is a

very common and misleading myth because it makes us think that very young children are safe from the abuse. This is not so. It could happen to very young children who simply do not know what is happening and could get very confused. **Children of all ages have been known to be abused.**

Myth No. 8:

When we think of abusers, we think of abnormal people. **We think that abusers are people who look mentally ill and act aggressively or strangely all the time.**

This may surprise all of you but **abusers can be people who appear quite normal and may be living perfectly normal lives.** These people could be rich or poor, educated or uneducated. They may even be people holding important and responsible posts and such that people may trust them totally. They could be judges,

teachers, doctors, nurses or lawyers...or anyone.

It does not mean that all of these people are 'child abusers'. The point we are making is that any one of them *could* be an abuser and we should never assume that if a person has a responsible job, looks 'nice' and is respected by everyone, that he/she could never be an abuser. So it is better and safer to think that although not everybody is a child sexual abuser, anybody could be one.

Myth No. 9:

People often think and say that **child sexual abusers are violent and aggressive people who use force and violence to get their way.**

This is a myth by which a lot of us may be fooled because if a child does not seem hurt we may think that the child has taken part in it willingly. Let's try to find the truth. **Actual physical force or violence is rarely a part of child sexual abuse.** You see abusers are very clever people, they do not want anybody to know what

they are doing. In order to do that, they may bribe the child with sweets or even extra attention. They may tell him/her again and again to keep the abuse a secret. Remember, the abusers are often people the child is already familiar with. The child may be scared, confused, afraid and sometimes angry at the whole situation. He/she may be scared of the abuser and may think that if they say anything, they will never be believed, thus the child may end up feeling so helpless and weak that he/she hardly offers any resistance.

Myth No.10:

Often it is believed that child sexual abusers are always men and that women would never do anything like that. We always associate harshness and cruelty with men because they seem stronger and more powerful. We are always taught to fear bad men. Women on the other hand are thought to be gentle, kind, caring and weak. However, this can be misleading as **in some cases, women have also been known to abuse**

children, although the ratio of male abusers is much higher.

We hope that reading the truth about these beliefs has helped you. We also realize that it may be scary and a little upsetting. However, as you all know by now, our reason for sharing this information with you is because we wish very much that all of us should fight this sad problem of child sexual abuse and make Pakistan a better and safer place for children. So, if you have friends, who have not read this article, do share it with them. If you feel that they do not want to know about it, don't feel bad, you still did the right thing; they will come to you to know more some time and then you can enlighten them.

Remember, if we all work together, we are sure we will succeed in our efforts.

In the next chapter, we will share with you the true stories of some children who have been brave enough to come forward and talk about the abuse that they have suffered.



Chapter 5 AHMED'S STORY

Hello every one! You already know a lot about child sexual abuse,- the truth, the reality, the reality and the myths that surround it. There are

alone, that there are others who have been through the same trauma & who understand. In this article, we are going to share a story with you. The story is about someone who was also a victim, someone who is now ready to share with you the long kept

sometimes he didn't. Like everyone else.

Just like everyone else he played with his trucks and cars in his garden, built tree houses with his father, played in the sand, liked chocolate and milk, just like everyone else. Then



children who have been brave enough to tell us their experiences & they deserve our respect & admiration. There are others who have not been able to, for different reasons, to tell anyone. We want these children to know that they are not

secret that had given him so much pain for so many years.

Ahmed was six years old, a bright cheerful child, a good student. He went to school just like everyone else, he did his homework...mostly, and

one day it all changed. He was no longer like anyone else. The earliest memory of that strange day when Uncle Jamal, the nice Uncle next door did those things to him, things that didn't feel right, is vague. It didn't just happen once and always left Ahmed

with an uneasy feeling, like he was dirty. He knew it wasn't right and that it should not be happening. He started to believe that it must be all his fault. Why else was he the only one Uncle Jamal took out in the evenings for long drives in his car and touched parts of him that were private? "He's my special little boy" he would say to Ahmed's mother. But if he was the special one and if what he was doing was so special, then why did it have to be a secret? Why did Uncle Jamal insist that no one know about it? And why, if it was a special secret, did Ahmed not feel good about it? Weren't secrets meant to make one happy and excited?

All those evenings in the car, his heart beating fast, his body tense and scared, Ahmed wondered and wondered. He wondered why Uncle Jamal always bought him icecream afterwards. If he was really a friend, should he be doing these things that made him feel uncomfortable? At other times, he felt like the whole thing was a dream..... a night mare..... that it was not really happening.

There were times when Ahmed would be sitting

with his family and suddenly images of those moments with Uncle Jamal, and the confusion inside him, would take over his mind. Didn't his family notice the red in his cheeks at those times? The embarrassment would make him restless and fidgety and nervous. "Why?", he often asked himself. "What did I do?"

Was it because he had fought with his brother the other day? Was it because of the school book he had lost and not told anyone? Did Uncle Jamal somehow know all the naughty things Ahmed had done and was now punishing him?

Sometimes the embarrassing feelings and confusion and uneasiness got so bad that Ahmed longed to talk to someone, but the words refused to come out. It was as though he had suddenly been struck mute. Would his mother believe him, would she be angry at him? And besides, Uncle Jamal had said that it was a secret.

Uncle Jamal moved away after two years, but the hurtful memories never did. Ahmed was still scared and embarrassed. He believed inside of him that each time his mother spanked him or his teacher

scolded him, it was because of that strange thing that had happened between him and Uncle Jamal, although that too had been a punishment. He believed that he would have to be punished for the rest of his life. He often felt that he deserved all the wrong that came his way, like he was not good, not worth loving.

And yet there were days, perhaps months, when he was able to forget it all, like a bad dream. Then suddenly, out of no where it seemed a little word, a thought, a gesture, a feeling, would bring it all back to him and haunt him.

In the loneliness of his room, as he grew older, Ahmed hated himself more and more. His body was changing and growing and so was his hatred for it. He had friends but no one to whom he could talk to, about what he had been through as he was scared that they too would hate him for it. And so he said nothing. He still wondered why it all happened and his mind filled up with a million answers but none of these answers sounded right to him. Although he looked big and healthy, inside he was still weak, and longed for sympathy and to be consoled.

When Ahmed read the story about child sexual abuse in the book it was so similar to his own that it scared him at first. But slowly came the comforting realization that he was not alone. For years he had felt so different from everyone else, so terribly lonely. And now the whole picture had changed. The feelings of the child in the story were almost identical to Ahmed's. They ached to come out, but Ahmed was still afraid. What would he say? How would he start? He knew it wouldn't be easy, but one day he spoke out.

It was to a teacher he had had, from the time he was young, his favourite teacher to whom he revealed his secret. His voice trembled at her look, half expecting to be scolded and blamed. But no! She was there for him, she listened, she understood, she cared, and she still loved him. And so the words came tumbling out. It hurt to face his

feelings, to go back and relive it all. As he talked, all those feelings of guilt, confusion, poured out of him. He talked of his pain, when he had felt so alone, helpless and confused. There was a lot of anger.....anger at the abuser who had robbed him of his childhood, anger at his parents for being ignorant, anger at himself for being so powerless, for being in some strange way evil and bad, anger at the whole world for not having been there for him, for not comforting him, for not protecting him. All these years Ahmed had blamed himself and now for the first time he realized how it had never been his fault at all. Yes, it hurt to talk and yes it was difficult, but the more he talked, the easier it became.

Ahmed was brave enough to take the first step towards finding his lost self. Talking to someone who understood gave him new courage and strength to fight his fears. He

understood at last that he was not to blame, that he had not been punished for his little mistakes. He understood that his abuser was the one at fault, the one who had taken advantage of Ahmed's innocence and helplessness. Although he now felt better and stronger, he often wished there had been someone to tell him all this before, he wished there had been someone there to just listen to him when his mind had been ready to explode. It would have saved him years of pain and guilt.

Dear Readers, you all must realize how difficult it must have been for Ahmed to come forward and talk about his experiences. Sharing his history with us and all of you, is not only Ahmed's way of dealing with his abuse, but it may also be a big source of help for all of you out there who have suffered what he did.

Note: For confidentiality, the names of the persons have been changed.



Chapter 6 SABA'S STORY

In our last chapter we shared with you the true story of a young boy. We are sharing these stories with you so that those of you who have gone through similar experiences, can draw strength from the courage that these children have shown. Those of you who have not experienced it, can also learn from this story by understanding what such people have been through, and maybe even help them. This is the story about a girl called Saba. This has really happened and might be happening to anyone out there.

The first few times it happened to Saba, she ignored it. After all, Lateef Baba was someone she liked and played with. He was someone whom her Mother trusted, and always left Saba with, when she went out. And there were her brothers, too. They too enjoyed playing with Lateef Baba.

Saba tried not to think about it. She tried to busy herself with her school and games, and spent as much time as she could apart from him but they were left alone time and time again. She remembered

those long, stuffy afternoons, when her mother would be out and her brothers would be playing cricket outside. Lateef Baba would open the door of her room and come in. He would ask her to come and sit on his lap saying, 'Beta, Beta come and sit with me', and then he would show her, his private parts and make her touch him.

After he left, Saba would heave a sigh of relief and go back to playing with her dolls. After all, she was only eight years old. And Lateef Baba was mostly a nice person, who would take the children's side, not tell on them, entertain them with long and funny stories. She realized that it was when she was alone with him, that he did those shameful things. Whenever she was with her mother or brothers, he was always fine, just as he used to be, kind, affectionate and normal. Therefore, she began to believe that it must be something in her that made him do it.

What used to anger Saba a lot, was the fact that even though she tried to ignore Lateef Baba, to stay out of his way, she found herself, time and time again, trying to please him and be nice to him. In a way, though she didn't know it then,

she had accepted the abuse as her punishment and was trying to appease Lateef Baba in the hope that he wouldn't do it again. Sometimes, she was nice to him because without knowing it, she was trying very hard to pretend the abuse didn't happen. If she was the way she was always with him, then it was easier for her to forget what had happened. But Saba was too young to understand all this. To her it seemed as if she was being weak, as if she was telling him that she wanted it, when deep down she wanted so much for it to stop. So she started feeling angry with herself for not being able to stop 'liking' Lateef Baba. In little ways she started to hurt herself – mostly her body because she hated it. It was where he touched her and she felt that it should be punished. She would cut herself in different places, small cuts not too noticeable but they provided the release to her anger. What she didn't realize at that point was that she was punishing herself for something that wasn't her fault.

As she grew older, she began to realize that she knew a lot of grown up stuff, that nobody in her class knew. It made her feel as if she was abnormal

or different from other



children. She longed to be like her friends, not self-conscious about themselves, their bodies, their looks. She felt self-conscious about every thing she did, whether it was speaking up in class, dressing up for a party, talking to strangers or sometimes even her friends. She tried so hard to fit in with her friends, to be like everyone else but she felt she stood out painfully. Whenever anybody tried to get close to her, whether emotionally or physically, she'd always shy away because she felt they would find out, or that they couldn't really like her. After all she really believed that deep down she was a horrible person.

It all came out, one day when her mother found Lateef Baba and her younger brother in the kitchen, and Lateef Baba was told to leave the house. For the first few days, Saba and her older brother didn't find out. Her mother tried to save the children from all the unpleasant mess but her younger brother told Saba. Saba was shocked, she was angry for her brother,

how dare Lateef Baba use her younger brother like this, but it helped to know that she wasn't the only one, that her brother also felt guilty, embarrassed and lonely like her. Not that she was happy about this, she felt the pain which her brother felt at the time. But it was in a way wonderful to know that she was normal.

And because of this, Saba finally found enough courage to tell her mother, who was naturally very upset but not with Saba. It is very painful for parents to deal with the fact that their child has been used in such a way and sometimes they have difficulty accepting something so horrible, but her mother

assured Saba that she loved her and that she understood. Her mother also knew a special person, who worked with children, who have been hurt like this. Such a person is called a 'child psychologist'.

Saba, now, goes regularly to this person, who helps her deal with the pain that she feels even now about what happened to her. What Saba likes about these meetings is that she can talk about all that happened without hiding or feeling afraid that she'll be judged. She is learning now to trust again, not only her psychologist, but her friends. She's learning to love herself, to take care of herself, to think of herself as special, to take out her anger not at herself but at the person who hurt her. At least, now she is able to feel comfortable with herself, like she never felt before.

Saba has been a very brave girl. Sadly she was forced to grow up too fast but she is now allowing herself to feel like other children again.

Note: For confidentiality, the names of the persons have been changed.

Chapter 7

A QUIZ

Here's a little quiz for you. This will help you test your own knowledge about the serious issues which we have been discussing with you in our previous chapters. Tick any one of the answers i.e. a, b or c for each statement. The answers to the statements are given at the end. Compare your answers with the ones given, add the score depending upon the number of correct answers that you have given, see what category you lie in. Best of luck!



1. **Child Sexual Abuse occurs only in _____.**
a) Asia b) all over the world c) Pakistan.
2. _____ **are sexually abused.**
a) Only very young children b) Only adolescents c) Children of all ages
3. **Your friends tell you that he/she was sexually abused by a relative. You _____.**
a) don't believe him/her b) listen to him/her c) tell him/her to forget it
4. **Most abusers appear _____.**
a) normal b) strange c) abnormal
5. **We can try to overcome the problem of 'Child Sexual Abuse' if we _____.**
a) raise awareness b) hide the issue c) pretend it doesn't exist
6. **Children who are sexually abused belong to the _____.**
a) uneducated class b) any class c) poor class
7. **Child Sexual Abuse happens _____.**
a) to children who are naughty b) to children who are weak and helpless c) through no fault of the child
8. _____ **can be an abuser.**
a) Only a stranger b) Only a poor and uneducated person c) Anyone
9. **Talking about abuse to someone who understands and cares is _____.**
a) shameful b) useless c) helpful
10. _____ **are sexually abused.**
a) Only girls b) Only boys c) Both boys & girls
11. _____ **are effected if sexually abused.**
a) Only girls b) Only boys c) Both boys and girls

12. 'Child Sexual Abuse' is the fault of the _____ .
 a) abuser b) child c) parents
13. Children can take away the strength of the abuser by _____ .
 a) being nice to the abuser b) keeping the abuse a secret c) telling a trustworthy person

ANSWERS

No. 1.....b
 No. 2.....c
 No. 3.....b
 No. 4.....a
 No. 5.....a
 No. 6.....b

No. 7.....c
 No. 8.....c
 No. 9.....c
 No. 10.....c
 No. 11.....c
 No. 12.....a
 No. 13.....c

Scores: 1-4: You need to learn more about this serious issue, so you can protect yourself.

5-8: You can learn more, keep it up!

9-13: Well done! Your knowledge about 'Child Sexual Abuse' is excellent.



Chapter 8 THE EFFECTS OF ABUSE

We hope you found the quiz interesting. We have been talking about sexual abuse in detail for some time now. You must have a fair idea of what it is and why we need to be aware of this problem. We have also shared with you some true stories of children and you have been able to see for yourself why it is very painful for the child. In this article, we will talk a bit more about the feelings of such children and some of the major effects of child abuse. It is also important to remember that all children who are sexually abused need not have all the problems mentioned below. Some may have some effects while others may react to abuse differently. Each child is different and the exact effects vary from case to case. The following are the most commonly seen effects. We will be referring to the victims as a 'she', but remember both boys and girls can be sexually abused.

One of the main things that the child has to deal with is strong feelings of **guilt**. We are told from day one that adults are always right, that we should listen to whatever they say. So

children find it hard to blame the adults for anything. And so, to find some reason for the abuse, they automatically assume that what is happening to them is because they deserve it, and that the abuser can't really be blamed because of what the child is like. It is easier for the child to blame her/himself rather than challenge an adult's authority. She thinks 'I must be bad because it is happening to me'. So, although we know that child sexual abuse is never the child's fault, many children still grow up feeling dirty and guilty. Some of them may also feel **pleasurable feelings** during abuse, which increases their guilt. This may shock some of you that the child can experience pleasure sometimes, but it is true and natural and normal. As children we are designed to be responsive to attention and special treatment and our private parts are designed to be responsive to touch especially gentle touch. It is not bad to feel

good when our private parts are touched because that is the way we are made. So, what makes child sexual abuse wrong is not that the act of



touching in itself is bad, but because **an adult's act of touching a child in that way is wrong**. So having pleasant feelings does not mean that the child is bad; it only means that his private parts are working properly. But children can't understand this and feel that if they felt any pleasure then they must be really bad or may have asked for the abuse. Thus they worry about something which they can't help.

Consider an example. If a six year old child were

shown how to drive a car by a trusted adult and, in the process of driving the car, killed someone, what or who would be to blame? Certainly not the act of driving, certainly not the child, who is too young to understand the responsibility or danger. The blame would fall on the shoulders of the adult, for introducing an adult activity to the child. Should this child never drive when he grows up? Should this child feel guilty over something that wasn't his fault for the rest of his life? Should this child feel guilty that the act of driving was nice and made him feel important? The child, of course, should drive as an adult, and enjoy driving, without guilt. If the child felt important while driving and engaging in an adult activity, that is normal too. These points are true for victims of child sexual abuse as well. Forgiving oneself and jumping over the hurdle of guilt and self-blame is not as easy as it sounds but with persistence and courage, people can get over it. The child may have to struggle with it again before he can stop blaming himself.

The effect of these feelings of guilt or badness' can be seen in the child's life. He may dislike himself, he

may let people take advantage of him, he may hurt himself as a form of punishment for his 'badness', he may feel very self-conscious with other people because he is afraid that people will find out what a 'bad' person he really is. In other words, he develops what we might call a low self-esteem. Sometimes feelings of guilt are so strong that the child may begin to hate himself. This also happens because he is unable to take out anger on the abuser and finds it safer to take out the anger on himself. He may or may not be aware of why he feels like this. In other words he may connect it with the abuse he has suffered or may not. The feeling of 'badness' remains and grows with him as he goes through life.

An essential building block for a child's emotional development, is trust. This means that as we grow up, we regard grown ups as people who care for us and protect us. As children, we first learn our concept of trust from the adults around us. They represent safety and security. Trust is a quality we are beginning to develop and when something goes wrong in this relationship, especially something like

sexual abuse, trust may be shattered. For some children this may be greater than others. The closer the relationship with the abuser, the more difficult it is for the child. As a result the person may not be able to make close friends, or if he does, is always very insecure about them. He is always afraid that somebody will take advantage of him like they did in the past. As mentioned earlier, feelings of badness also make him wary of people as he is afraid that they may find out his deep dark secrets. So even though a child likes to have friends, he is too scared to trust anyone and ends up being even lonelier.

An abuser when he/she uses a child sexually makes the child aware of the sexual functions of this body, before he is ready for it. As a result of this the child begins to take interest in sex related things. He may begin to touch himself and feel added guilt for this. A lot of children who are not abused also do this when they are growing up as this is a normal interest, but sexually abused children may be excessively interested in such things and feel that it is because they are 'dirty'. As mentioned in the earlier example of the car, the

child is helpless at that point and is not to be blamed because he had become aware of these things before time. The child can also begin to confuse normal relationships and begin to see them in a sexual light. This is because for him a non-sexual relationship has been suddenly made into a sexual one, and he feels that this is the only way to relate to people. This could also lead to the child not liking any kind of physical contact because he fears

that it will lead to sexual contact.

School grades can also be affected because the child is often so upset that she can't concentrate on studies. A child may react in an opposite way and study very hard to make up for things that are going wrong in his life. She may feel that since she can't control things that are going wrong in her life, she can at least control this part of his life. She may also do it because she then

needs to be extra good or studious to make up for her imagined badness.

As you can see that this is a very heavy burden for any child to carry. But it is important to remember that children, as well as adults, who may have grown up with this secret can heal. They can overcome their feelings and live happy lives, if they can find the courage to talk and face up to what happened to them.



Chapter 9 REACHING OUT FOR SUPPORT

A lot already has been said on child sexual abuse. You must all be very aware of the issue by now. However, it still does not make it a very easy issue to talk about. We have already talked about how it can hurt a child, often for a very, very long time. It can still be painful, still very embarrassing. Reading about it or even understanding it is not enough. It may make many of you out there, who have suffered as victims feel better, it may help you to understand that you were not to blame and that you are not alone, but believe us, talking about it is one of the best ways to deal with it.

It may often seem that it is easier to keep all your feelings bottled up inside. A lot of victims try to deny their feelings, even to themselves. But that does not make the feelings disappear. In fact, it becomes a very heavy burden to carry alone. It always helps to lighten your load by talking about it to someone you trust and who cares about you.

Many of you out there might not be victims, but are friends of a victim. This chapter is especially for you. As friends, you are not only there to have fun with, to laugh with.



You are also there to share with – to share one's happiness, one's sorrow, one's anger, or any feelings with, for that matter. Many victims of child sexual abuse may not be able to, or want to, talk to a grown up..... at least in the beginning. Many may also not be able to go to a psychologist, but even if they are, these sessions are usually not more than once a week. But a friend is someone who can be turned to at almost any time, he or she is someone who is always there.

Many victims do not talk to their friends about the abuse because they feel ashamed and embarrassed, they feel that no one will understand them, or that they will be made fun of, or be talked about. They may even fear that their friends will stop liking them or caring about them. Often, as a friend, you may also feel helpless in such a situation. But remember that although you probably cannot solve your friend's problems, your support alone can be very comforting. This is what we shall be talking about today.....about what friends can do.

It will probably not be easy for your friend to talk about her/his experience. Remember that what a victim of sexual abuse goes through can be emotionally very painful. It will, most likely, not be easy for you either. She may laugh, may cry, may even get angry, may put up a brave front, but you must be patient and just be there for her. Maybe all your friend wants is a shoulder to cry on.

Your friend will most probably be going through a lot of mixed feelings which we talked about in the last article. You must

try to understand how difficult it is to talk about it. But remember, no matter what, where, how, when or who, *the sexual abuse is and was never the fault of your friend.* Do not blame her or ask her to forget it. That just can't happen. Encourage her to talk whenever you can, but without pushing. Pushing or probing may make your friend feel uncomfortable and awkward. It may be very, very difficult at first, and it may be a good idea to let your friend take her time. Just knowing that you're there to listen may help him/her to open up at some stage. Also, remember that it sometimes takes the victims many, many years before they talk to someone. Try not to be too disappointed if she refuses to talk to you. Just let her

know that any time she needs to talk, you'll be there.

We often find that boys tend to share their feelings with one another, even less than girls do. Girls are still sometimes able to cry, to share their painful secrets. Boys may go through the same pain and sorrow, and yet try their best not to show it. We hope that we are also reaching out to you boys. Just because you are boys, does not mean that you do not have the right to feel all your feelings, that you cannot cry, that you cannot feel pain, that you cannot show how you feel. You, as friends, also have an important part to play, just as the girls do.

Sometimes, people who have been sexually abused can also help each other. It

is good to know that you are not alone and are understood by someone so well. So even if you are a victim yourself, you can still help your friend. By doing this, you are not only making her feel better, but also yourself.

We hope that now many of you out there will find the voice to speak to someone about what you have been through. We also hope that those of you who are friends of victims, will find in themselves the care, willingness, strength and capacity to help those who need you at this moment. You all have it in you; all you have to do is look for it. A good friend is one of the best people in one's life, and sometimes this one person can make all the difference.



Chapter 10 ABOUT AANGAN

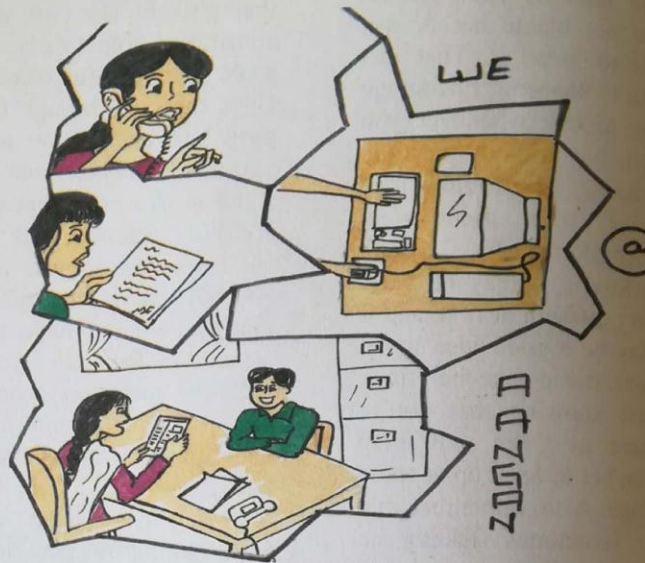
In this chapter, we thought we would tell you all a little bit about our programme, how it came into being, and what it does.

- Aangan began in 1993. and is one of the programmes of an organization called Rozan.
- Rozan is a Persian word and means an opening which lets in light and air into a dark room.
- The people who started Rozan felt that people in our country needed a place where they could develop, learn, grow and work together and do something about some of the problems that all people, especially women and children face in Pakistan. They believed that every person could make a difference.....we just have to be ready to use that power within us. So because of a strong sense of motivation to bring about change, Aangan began.
- Now Aangan focuses not only on child sexual abuse, but also children's emotional health in general so

that children are not only able to better protect themselves, but learn healthy life skills, to be able to live happy

teachers, Police and community workers.

- ❖ **counseling** for children who are having emotional difficulties



and full lives.

Today we have a lot of different activities at Aangan. These are:

- ❖ **awareness-raising** on child sexual abuse and emotional health, through seminars/orientations, articles, research and material development.
- ❖ **self-growth group workshops** with children on issues such as self-confidence and esteem, feelings, communication, self-protection, etc.
- ❖ **training professionals** such as doctors,

and for children and adults who have been sexually abused (this counseling is provided in person, through letters and on the phone).

- ❖ **developing and maintaining a resource center** (library, research material).
- ❖ **recruiting volunteers and interns** for support for project activities.

Children and grownups who are reading this today, may want to help us out and join us in our efforts to tackle this problem. Well you can! We sure need

your help. Each one of you out there, can play an important part by just sharing with others all that you have learnt in these chapters. Yes, you can help us spread awareness either informally on your own or through Aangan's LONG DISTANCE VOLUNT-

EER PROGRAMME (LDVP). You can also help us by just staying strong, protecting your self and supporting each other

We would like to end by thanking all the courageous people who have come to us for support. Aangan has been touched

and moved by countless brave children who have shared their stories with us in the hope that others may be helped. Thank you.

Please remember that you have the right to be safe, to be aware and to seek support.



For questions, suggestions, support or to know more about our LDVP Programme contact

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Rs. 50/-

