



2016

## National Child Abuse Prevention Month National Sexual Assault Awareness Month

### Childhood Trauma



Childhood trauma is an enduring and crucial issue that continues to demand our attention, especially with very young children. Early childhood trauma generally refers to the traumatic experiences that occur to children aged 0-6. The source of the trauma may be any kind of interpersonal violence (emotional, physical or sexual abuse), domestic violence, or the result of natural disaster, accidents, or war.

Sexual violence—including child sexual abuse—crosses all ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds. According to the Child Maltreatment 2014 report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, 58,105 cases of child sexual abuse were reported in the United States in 2013—8.3 percent of the total number of reported maltreatment cases that year. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center has designated April as National Sexual Assault Awareness month, in recognition of the widespread prevalence of sexual assault nationwide." (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2016)

Young children may also experience traumatic stress in response to painful medical procedures, painful medical conditions, or the loss of a parent/caregiver. Unfortunately, because infants' and young children's reactions may be different from older children's, and because they may not be able to verbalize their reactions to threatening or dangerous events, many people assume that young age protects children from the impact of traumatic experiences. When young children experience or witness a traumatic event, some well-meaning adults may say, 'They're too young to understand, so it's probably better if we don't talk to them about it.' However, young children are affected by traumatic events, even though they may not understand what happened. (NCTSN, 2016) As play therapists, we know that children do not use words as their primary means of emotional expression. Children deserve the opportunity to heal from their hurt using their own language: they deserve the opportunity to heal through play.

References [Child Maltreatment 2014 Report](#) and [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

## The Surprising Profiles Of Accused Assailants And Survivors

# 67%

of all victims of sexual assault cases reported to law enforcement agencies were under the age of 18.

# 34%

of all victims were under the age of 12.

# 1

Out of Every

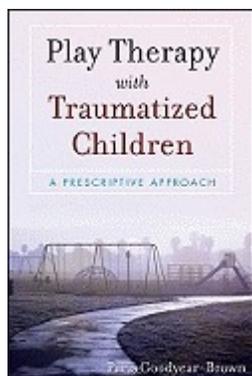
# 7

victims of sexual assault cases reported to law enforcement agencies was under the age of 6.

# 40%

of the people accused of victimizing children under age 6 and who were reported to law enforcement were under the age of 18.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics," 2000



## Resources for Parents and Professionals

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC) [The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children](#)

TLC is devoted to providing awareness, support, and resources for helping prevent and heal trauma and loss in children. In their website, they have resources for parents, professionals and more for identifying trauma in children, finding help for children, and ways that they can help children. They conduct trainings across the US and offer online courses.

## Repairing of Trust

If you have a basic knowledge of attachment, you know that the relationships of childhood affect individuals throughout their lifetimes. Reactive Attachment Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are two manifestations of traumatic events – whether a single incident or series of incidents – which can disrupt survivor’s developmental trajectory. It is crucial that children and families receive help to enhance the likelihood that they can have trust in others and positive sense of self.

Child survivors need safe and secure places with safe and secure relationships

As therapists, parents, teachers, and significant adults in children’s lives, it is not only up to us to provide restorative emotional experiences with our relationships but also to provide awareness about body safety and safe spaces in which children can freely express themselves. The NY Times has a good resource to review.

[Surviving Child Sexual Abuse: New York Times](#)

## Play Therapy with Traumatized Children by Paris Goodyear Brown

We have the exciting privilege and honor of having Paris Goodyear Brown come to this year’s Play Therapy workshop on May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. In her book, she talks about her early experience with children noting that the vast majority of at-risk and extreme behavior children had experienced trauma in their young lives. When she attended the annual international conference of the Association of Play Therapy, she started to fall in love with the field and began incorporating it into her work. As she started to thrive in the field by incorporating a mixture of directive and nondirective approaches with

traumatized children, she began to construct her own model of therapy. Flexibly Sequential Play Therapy (FSPT) was created in an attempt to integrate many different kinds of play therapy to be flexibly adjusted to the needs of any child. Some key features described in her book are creating a safe place for the child to process and cope, finding and augmenting children's positive coping strategies, and showing how parents can help in the treatment and recovery of traumatized children.

## Chapters and Chapter Chairs

- **Central Virginia VAPT** Chairperson George Enfield ghenfield@gmail.com
- **Forest VAPT** Chairperson Norma White norma.white@couplesandkids.com
- **Harrisonburg VAPT** Chairpersons Anne Stewart and Debbie Sturm sturmdc@jmu.edu
- **Northern VAPT** Chairperson Sheri Mitschelen shmitsch@gmail.com
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- **Rockbridge Area VAPT** Chairperson **Katie Masey**
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- **Southwest VAPT** Chairpersons Donna Callis dcallis@CACBWCV.ORG  
Chairperson Sydney Peltier speltier@highlandscsb.org
- **Tidewater VAPT** Chairpersons Debbie Balak and Holly Tracy dbalak@cox.net and peacebypiece@cox.net

Playfully,

Anne Stewart and VAPT Elf Joel Rittenhouse

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