

INTRODUCTION

Most abuse is ritualised in some way and generally people accept that children can be subjected to a range of terrifying and repetitive abusive experiences. One definition of ritual abuse is when one or more children are abused in a highly organized way, by a group of people who have come together and subscribe to a belief system that, for them, justifies their actions towards that child. This usually extends into family involvement and may have been practiced as a religion or a way of life for years. Although survivors speak of differing experiences, many elements are common:

- Elaborate rituals, 'games' set ups and 'ceremonies'
- Systematic emotional, physical and sexual abuse
- Being used in child pornography and prostitution
- Being forced to take drugs and alcohol
- Being tortured almost to the point of death
- Being forced to participate in the abuse of others

IF YOU ARE A SURVIVOR OF RITUAL ABUSE YOU MAY FEEL

Trapped - you may feel that you cannot escape. Although it can be difficult to get away from such abuse, it can be done. Many survivors have successfully escaped and lead normal lives.

Fear - that you or someone else may be killed, that you may be re-involved, fear of talking, of reprisals, fear that they have power over you, loneliness, disbelief, etc. These fears are understandable and are based on past or present experiences. It is possible to overcome this though it takes time and courage.

Distrust - You may feel that you can trust no one at all. This is completely reasonable given that you have never had someone trustworthy in your life. Trust has to be earned by people and in time you may feel that someone has earned it enough to be trusted a little.

IF YOU ARE SUPPORTING A SURVIVOR OF RITUAL ABUSE

Believe - Why would she lie? Only two parties know what happened, the abusers and the survivors. Survivors must be allowed to tell and be believed. Believe what she is saying, even though you may find it difficult especially as the memories she is telling may at first be fragmented and confusing.

Listen - To what she has to say and let her take her time, it will not be easy for her to start talking about events that she has kept silent about for a long time. It may be difficult for her to begin to feel trust in you or safe enough to talk to you.

Respect - Both her feelings and decisions. Remember she has her own coping mechanisms that have helped her survive the abuse. She may still need these.

Remember - It is not her fault - No-one asks to be abused and she cannot be blamed for any part of it. She cannot be blamed for participating in an act that she did not understand, was forced into, or in which she had no choices that weren't abusive. The blame lies only with the abusers.

Recognise - The courage it takes for a survivor to speak must be recognised. It takes a great deal of courage to face fears and also to talk about the abuse particularly in a climate of disbelief. You must recognise that this abuse really does happen.

WHAT ABOUT MY FEELINGS?

You may feel shocked, horrified, upset, sick, etc. by what you are hearing. The feelings you are experiencing are justified, but may add to the upset for the survivor. She may feel responsible for upsetting you and you must remember that you are hearing this but she has lived through it and survived. It is important to seek support for yourself and further support for her if required.

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

SAFE (for survivors):	(01722) 410889
Bristol Crisis Service for Women (Self-Harm)	(0117) 9251119
Dundee Women's Aid:	(01382) 202525
Samaritans (National)	(08457) 909090

LEAFLETS AVAILABLE:

Sexual harassment at work.
Information about the police and court.
Information for friends and family of survivors.
Information for survivors of rape or sexual assault.
Information for adult survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.
Information for women who would like to volunteer.
Information for workers.
Information on ritual abuse for survivors and supporters.
Survivors and Flashbacks.
Survivors and Self-Harm – Self-Injury.
Resources and Contacts.
W.R.A.S.A.C Service Information.

HOW TO CONTACT US

P.O. Box 83, Dundee, DD1 1YN

Helpline: (01382) 201291 **Text-phone:** (01382) 226936
Monday 12pm-2pm, Tuesday 10am-12pm, Thursday 2pm-4pm
Wednesday and Friday 7pm - 9pm, Saturday 2pm – 4pm
Answering machine at all other times

Business Line: (01382) 205556

Email: wrasac@btconnect.com

WOMEN'S RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE

A free and confidential service

INFORMATION ON RITUAL ABUSE FOR SURVIVORS AND SUPPORTERS