

True and False Accusations of Child Sex Abuse



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looking down upon them. There are, however, people who will pity others as a manifestation of self-aggrandizement and the need to consider themselves superior to those who are less fortunate. Such noblesse-oblige pity is demeaning. What we want to engender in both the father and the child is a healthy sense of pity for each other's plight. The child should be able to pity the father for the curse (in our society) of having pedophilic tendencies. In other times and other places, he would be considered normal. And the father should be able to pity the child for having been a victim of his molestation, especially a victim in a society that considers his behavior a heinous crime and/or a mortal sin.

As is true for all meaningful therapy, it is preferable that much of the time *not* be spent simply focusing on the primary problem, in this case, sexual molestation. To do so may be antitherapeutic. Certainly, one must focus on the presenting problem if one is to bring about its alleviation. However, too much focus on it has negative effects. First, for children who are sexually abused, it may involve a certain amount of "muckraking," which interferes with the natural desensitization process. Also, such continual focus may have the effect of keeping the material "spinning around in the brain," when it might otherwise reduce itself. Proper attention is not given to this important negative effect of therapy. We want to help people forget about their problems. This is not going to be accomplished simply by saying, "Forget it." This is more likely to be accomplished by talking about other things that may also be therapeutically beneficial. And this should be carried out of the therapeutic situation as well, in that both father and child do well to share a wide variety of experiences that healthy fathers and children enjoy—experiences that contribute to strong bonding and healthy maturation for both.

Enhancing Self-Esteem

Most pedophiles in our society suffer with feelings of low self-esteem. They are generally viewed as pariahs and subjected to terrible scorn. It is hard to imagine pedophiles feeling good

about themselves while living in such a world. In Chapter Two I described the narcissism of many pedophiles, but I indicated, as well, that such narcissism is compensatory for feelings of low self-worth. Certainly, such feelings stem from factors that antedated and contributed to the development of the pedophilia. But such low self-esteem is intensified, as well, by society's reaction to such behavior.

The father has to be helped to appreciate that there is a certain amount of pedophilia in all of us, and that all of us, as children, are "polymorphous perverse." If he doesn't know this already, he has to be helped to appreciate that pedophilia has been considered the norm by the vast majority of individuals in the history of the world. He has to be helped to appreciate that, even today, it is a widespread and accepted practice among literally billions of people. He has to come to appreciate that in our Western society especially, we take a very punitive and moralistic attitude toward such inclinations. However, he—like the therapist, and like others in our Western society—is a product of our culture. We are brought up in a society in which pedophilia is strongly discouraged and even condemned. The question, then, for the pedophile is why he has not come to be similarly inhibited. Often there are family-life situations that have been conducive to the development of pedophilia. (In Chapter Two I have discussed these in detail.) One must explore the particular factors that were operative in the patient's own atypical development—atypical, at least, for our society. If he himself was molested as a child, then he has to come to appreciate that this probably played a role in his own pedophilic tendencies. With regard to his feelings about himself, he has to be helped to take the attitude that he, like the child he molested, is "more to be pitied than scorned." He has had a certain amount of bad luck with regard to the early childhood experiences that were conducive to the development of his pedophilia. He has also had back luck with regard to the place and time he has born with regard to social attitudes toward pedophilia. However, these are not reasons to condemn himself. They are not reasons to indulge the pedophilia either. Rather, although unlikely with regard to the

residual traumatic effects of their abuse. In other cases, there are individuals who have come to treatment for a variety of problems and never considered the possibility that they are the result of childhood sex abuse. One of the purposes of introducing them into the group is to help them uncover what they have probably repressed and, predictably, with enough group support and encouragement, they inevitably uncover this repressed unconscious material. This, of course, is another statement of the gullibility of the human being, a gullibility which is necessary for the success of these "operators."

The Assumption that a Sexual Encounter Between an Adult and a Child Is Automatically Psychologically Detrimental As mentioned earlier in this book, sexual activities between adults and children are a universal phenomenon, have been practiced all over the world, and exist even to this day to a significant degree in every culture. Although less common in countries which are part of the Judaeo-Christian ethic, the practice is still highly prevalent in these countries as well. One can view adult-child sexuality to be related to the subjugation of women which is also an ancient tradition. Women and children, being weaker than men, have been easily exploited by the more powerful. However, and this is an extremely important point, such encounters are *not* necessarily traumatic. The determinant as to whether the experience will be traumatic is the social attitude toward these encounters. As Hamlet said: "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." In Chapter One I have given examples of societies in which such experiences were not traumatic and, even in our society, not all adult-child sexual encounters are psychological damaging. Studies of our culture—which do not start with the bias that they must be psychologically damaging—provide clear demonstration of this. In short, there are many women who have had sexual encounters with their fathers who do not consider them to have affected their lives detrimentally. There are others, however, who have been seriously damaged by these encounters. Again, I am not recommending the practice; I am only describing the reality of the world. Of relevance here is the

belief by many of these therapists that a sexual encounter between an adult and a child—no matter how short, no matter how tender, loving, and non-painful—automatically and predictably *must* be psychologically traumatic to the child. This belief, of course, justifies the ongoing therapy (“No one knows how long it will take. It will certainly take many years.”). Obviously, if the therapist did not take this position, then she would not be able to enjoy the financial rewards attendant to this conviction. A derivative of this is the encouragement of lawsuits, the purpose of which is to extract as much money as possible from the father, money which will presumably allow vengeance gratification, but which will also pay for the treatment.

THE “ENABLERS”

Alcoholics Anonymous uses the term “enablers” to refer to those individuals with whom alcoholics involve themselves—individuals who contribute to the promulgation of the drinking problem. They are also referred to as “codependants.” These are people who have a vested interest in the maintenance of the problem because it feeds into their own psychopathology in some morbid way. Women who promulgate false accusations of sex abuse against their fathers typically surround themselves with enablers. I have already mentioned the process by which those who support the father are rejected and are removed entirely from the life of the mother and her children. This is part of the process by which these women acquire their enablers and weed out those who will not provide support. Often the accusing woman is married to a man who passively goes along with his wife’s accusation. My experience with these men is that they suffer with one or more of the following defects: passivity, limited intelligence, fear of asserting themselves against their wives, defective independent thinking, and shared paranoia. In some cases they have involved themselves in a folie-à-deux relationship with their wives. They know, however, that if they were to actively claim that the sex-abuse accusation sounds “hokey,” they may very well find themselves divorced. They have been observer to the quick rejection of all those