



TIPS FOR HEALING

What follows are helpful strategies for helping an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

- ▶ **Believe.** How you react to the survivor's disclosure can affect the survivor's recovery. Believe someone who tells you they have been sexually abuse without reservation or hesitation. **This is the most important thing you can do.**
- ▶ **Be sensitive and supportive.** Understand that the survivor has suffered tremendously and telling you may have been frightening and painful.
- ▶ **Listen without judgment.** Never question the survivor's feelings, actions or decisions. Avoid asking about details of the abuse. Allow the survivor the freedom to choose when and how to talk about their experiences.
- ▶ **"It was not your fault".** Many survivors of sexual abuse blame themselves for what occurred. It is important that you tell the survivor that what happened was in no way the survivor's fault. The fault lies with the abuser.
- ▶ **"You are not alone".** Many survivors feel isolated and alone as a result of the abuse. Your presence can reassure the survivor and allow them to work out their feelings while feeling safe.
- ▶ **Empower your loved one.** Remember, as much as you may want to, you cannot fix this. The survivor must choose his or her own path to healing. You can help by providing information, options and encouragement.
- ▶ **Be patient.** Recovery can be very slow. Let the survivor proceed at his or her own pace.
- ▶ **Take care of yourself.** Be aware that you have strong feelings about what happened. Seek out your own support network, including counseling, if needed.