



“6 Ways Parents Can Help Their Child’s Recovery from Sexual Violation, plus a Bonus”

By Mary Ellen Mann, LCSW

The stunned horror many parents feel when they learn that their child was sexually violated can be the toughest emotion they have to overcome. I have interviewed numerous parents who need their own support. However, people in their community often have treated the parent with suspicion, especially if the violation took place at the hands of an adult or a sibling in their home.

If such violation occurred within your family, make every effort to end all contact with the perpetrator, and call the authorities to report the crime, no matter how long ago the incident occurred. Notify others within the family that the person violated your child so they can talk to their children about possibly having been violated. If this was someone outside of the family system, the same response holds true.

Here are some things you can do: *(For a complete list, read From Pain to Power, Chapter 14 “Help for Those Who Help the Overcomers;” more practical parenting ideas are offered for Princess Warriors (survivors) in Chapter 13 “Your Legacy.”)*

1. Share with your child your outrage over what has happened, and strongly support your child’s battle to heal.
2. Never challenge the veracity of his/her claims.
3. Never ask your child to reconcile with the family member in question.
4. Never talk with your child about how you are torn by your loyalties.
5. Do not share your child’s story with anyone s/he has not given you permission to tell.
6. Your power over your child’s healing never ends, and it’s never too late to do this.

Bonus

When in doubt, employ The Magic Love Formula I have developed. It describes my husband’s love for me, and it’s used in my “clinical” description of trust-love that provided my foundation to heal.

1. Have your child’s back around others (especially when she’s not present).
2. Protect your child’s long-term best interests.
3. Give your child the benefit of the doubt.