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## WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?



by Carolyn Spring

It's not a definition or some bullet-points on a page, a menu of things that were done or could have been done, or might yet be done. It's something to do with me as a person, the me that I'm so scared to show you, that I'm so scared to be, because of what happened, because shame like a dog's blanket has been wrapped around me and I can't get away from the grime and the stench and the yukkiness of me. Child sexual abuse is when you're powerless and betrayed, and you're all alone and you mustn't tell, and there's confusion and pain and deep down inside there's the fear that it's all your own fault, that there's something wrong with you, something terribly and toxically wrong with you, and there's nowhere to go, and no-one to run to, and no way to stop it because you're small and weak and stupid and if only!! – if only!! – if only you had known, if only you

hadn't been there, if only you hadn't said what you'd said, or done what you'd done, or felt what you'd felt.

Somehow you know that it's all your fault, that you're dirty and disgusting and naughty and bad. And different. So you hide and you don't know what to do and you don't know how to have friends and you don't trust people and you know that people don't trust you, because you're bad. Feelings like melted wax on the inside of your guts, and you don't know what they are, and you don't know what to do with them; all you know is that you hate what is happening and you don't have any choice, because you don't have any choice, because you don't deserve any choice, and the little you that is you just deserves to die. That's what child sexual abuse is.

