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“BUT I LOVE HIM....”
**INTERVIEWING SEXUAL ABUSE
VICTIMS WHO ARE IN LOVE THEIR
WITH THEIR OFFENDER
(OR THINK THEY ARE)**

Carrie Paschall, Chief Investigative and Support Services Officer
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Course Objectives

- Victim Dynamics / Offender Characteristics
- Disclosure Issues / Interview Techniques
- Case Studies / Video Examples
- Treatment / Stages of Change

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What are we talking about?

- Younger children who don't say no, yell, tell or run away
- **Children who think they are in a relationship**

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Victim Dynamics Offender Characteristics

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Who are we talking to?

Usually Pre-teen or Teen

- What we know about this age group
 - Poor relationships with parents /caregivers
 - Insecure
 - Misunderstood
 - Risk takers
 - Emotionally vulnerable
 - Lonely
 - Depressed

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"Exploring Sex Offender Grooming"

Jim Tanner, Ph.D. KBSolutions, Inc. www.kbsolutions.com	Stephen Brake, Ph.D. Stephen Brake Associates www.stephenbrakeassociates.com
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What is Grooming?

Refined behavior designed to increase opportunity, minimize victim resistance or withdrawal, reduce disclosure or belief

- Environmental Grooming
 - Parents
 - Family Members
 - School
 - Peers/Friends
 - Social Organizations
 - Significant Others
- Victim Grooming



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Questions that elicit grooming behavior details....

- Tell me where/when how you first met this person.....
- Tell me how your relationship started/evolved/changed.....
- Who all knows about this relationship?
- How would you spend your time together/communicate?



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**Disclosure Issues
And
Interview Techniques**



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Disclosure

There are two ways child sexual abuse is discovered:

- Purposeful Disclosures
- **Accidental Discovery Disclosures**
A lot of these cases will be discovered accidentally which will likely complicate the investigative interview

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Tentative Disclosure

Blocks to Disclosure

- **Forgetting**
 - "I can't remember"; "I don't know"; "I forgot, it was a long time ago"
- Distancing
 - "He did it to my sister, but not me"
- **Minimizing**
 - "It only happened one time"; "It was my fault"
- Empowerment
 - "He tried but I wouldn't let him"
- Dissociation
 - "I was asleep"; "I blocked out"
- **Discounting**
 - "It's not a big deal"; "I've moved on"

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"Compliant Child Victims: Confronting an Uncomfortable reality"

Kenneth V. Lanning
Retired FBI

- Compliant means:
 - The word used to describe children who "cooperate" or "consent" to the sexual abuse
 - Used for lack of a better word
- Compliant **DOES NOT** mean:
 - That the child is **NOT** a victim
- Compliant **DOES NOT** mean:
 - Legal consent was given

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The Effects on Disclosures



- Failing to disclose or deny victimization when directly asked
- Incomplete, inaccurate, distorted disclosures
- Lifetime of embarrassment, shame and guilt
- Offenders being able to have numerous victims over time
- Ineffective prevention programs

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The Effects on Disclosures



- Children may "fabricate" elements to make their disclosure more accepting to society
- May maximize offender's role while minimizing their role
- May protect the offender so as to protect themselves
- May have "real" feelings for the offender

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Interview Techniques

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Using Evidence



- Prepare and Predict
 - Tell child you have photos, statements etc. right at the beginning of the interview
 - Tell them what you are about to show them, read to them etc.

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Barriers / Blocks to Disclosure



- May not see themselves as a victim
- Mad that others do see them as a victim
- May feel responsible, to blame, guilty
- May have a sense of loyalty or affection for offender
- May like aspects of what they've experienced (or pretend to)
 - Stability
 - Sense of importance
 - Attention
 - Sexual activity

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OR



- May feel very much like a victim
- May feel helpless, scared or trapped
- May feel relieved to get out of the relationship

Get a sense of what the victim feels, may have to ask them directly and tailor your questions as needed – similar to an interrogation

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Block Removal Techniques 

- Safe room / Safe place to talk about anything – even illegal things
- Not concerned about perceived or actual wrong doings committed by the child
- Not judging anyone, or any decisions made – just need the facts
- I wasn't there – I don't know it all
- Demonstrating an understanding of the feelings involved

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Decide whether to ask questions that eliminate or maximize culpability 

- Did you guys have a sexual relationship?
- Did he ever make you do sexual things with him?
- Whose idea was it to have sex?
- Did he ever make you do something sexual?
- What did he say about telling...?
- Did he threaten you in any way?

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Alyssa 13 yo. 

- In a "relationship" with her adult teacher and coach
 - She tells me that she is here to talk to me because she had an "inappropriate relationship" with someone
- Started off as teacher/coach and then gradually progressed into a friendship close friendship, baby-sitter and eventually into a sexual relationship
- He befriended her parents and he and his wife would go to dinner with her parents while she kept the kids
- He was going to leave his wife, marry her and they were going to have a family

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What did you hear?

- He's my best friend
- We have a lot in common
- We can talk about anything

I think this interview was the first time since this started that someone allowed her to "have feelings for Carlos"



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Stages of Change

1. Precontemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance



The Stages of Behavior Change



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What does this have to do with compliant victims?



This is what we think of when we think of Child Abuse, right?

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TF-CBT Key Components 

- • Establishing a therapeutic relationship with youth and parent
- • Use of gradual exposure throughout treatment
- PRACTICE components:
 - • Psychoeducation about child trauma and trauma reminders
 - • Parenting component including parenting skills
 - • Relaxation skills individualized to youth and parent
 - • Affective modulation skills tailored to youth, family and culture
 - • Cognitive coping: connecting thoughts, feelings and behaviors
 - • Trauma narrative and processing
 - • In vivo mastery of trauma reminders
 - • Conjoint youth-parent sessions
 - • Enhancing safety and future developmental trajectory
 - • Traumatic grief components

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Stage 1: Precontemplation 

- Child does not recognize their perpetrator's behavior as abusive.
- Child does not appear to be interested in change because they love him/her.
- Often they are unable to establish goals at this point.

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What do we do with Stage 1 compliant victims???

- We join with them....
 - It must be so hard that you really feel like you are in this relationship and you love this person and all of the adults are making decisions to keep the two of you apart! How are you dealing with this?
 - Why do you think that people are calling him a perpetrator?
 - What does abuse mean to you anyway?
 - Did he ever do any of those things?
 - Tell me more about your relationship?
 - All relationships have good and bad things, what were they in your relationship?
 - How are you coping with not being with him now?

Olga Trujillo would not have told you she was unsafe or abused. She thought this was life. What if a therapist walked in and told her that her dad was evil and she needed to not love him anymore?

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TF-CBT Components for Compliant Victims 

- Psychoeducation
- Parenting
- Relaxation
- Safety
- Conjoint Sessions and Gradual Exposure

How???? They don't even think that he/she is abusive.

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Psychoeducation with Compliant Victims 

- Talk about abuse in general terms
- Begin gathering information
 - Let the victim teach you about his or her relationship with perpetrator
 - Let the victim teach you about his or her symptoms
- Begin normalizing victim's symptoms as matching with other kids who come here who have been victims of sexual abuse
- Begin teaching grooming behaviors information to victim
- Address SAFETY through and through with other examples given (emotional and physical safety)
- Using client's examples, educate on healthy relationships
- Join join join!!!
- ALWAYS PROCESS WITH CAREGIVER

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Parenting with Compliant Victims 

- Educate caregiver about perpetrator's grooming behavior
- Normalize for victim's caregiver the client's reactions and behaviors
- Educate caregiver about sexual abuse, healthy relationships and good touch/bad touch
- Debrief each session with caregiver regarding therapist strategies and information covered in session with victim
- Educate parent on joining with victim in support without condoning the "relationship"
- Practice empathy with parent: join, join, join
- Educate caregiver on the process of change for compliant victims

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Relaxation with Compliant Victims 

This is very important for any victim, but especially compliant victims. Most often, compliant victims have not necessarily out cried about the abuse. When he or she does accept that the "relationship" was abusive, client will rely heavily on coping skills and support.

- What coping does the victim already use? Draw attention to this as a way to cope when victim feels upset.
- Does he or she prefer movement or stillness?
- Introduce new ideas.
- Ask victim and caregiver to practice these at home and report back.
- Every member of the household should join in the homework.
- ALWAYS PROCESS WITH THE CAREGIVER.

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Affective Modulation Skills with Compliant Victims 

- Feelings Identification using any examples from the client's life that he or she shares.
- Rating feelings, SUDS (0-10)
 - Best you have ever felt (10)
 - Worst you have ever felt (0)
 - Feelings thermometer
 - Faces frowning to laughing
- Where do you feel the feelings in your body?
- How do you know when people are feeling what?
- How do you continue to cope with feelings?
- ALWAYS PROCESS WITH CAREGIVER

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Stage 2: Contemplation 

- Victim begins to recognize his or her perpetrator's behavior as abusive.
- He or she has an increased awareness of the pros and cons of the "relationship."
- He or she cannot fully imagine not loving this person.

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TF-CBT Component for Stage 2
Compliant Victim



- Cognitive Coping
- Safety
- Conjoint Sessions and Gradual Exposure

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Cognitive Coping with Compliant Victims



- Use the cognitive triangle with victim's own examples and examples from other kids who have been sexually abused
 - Event, thought, feelings, behaviors
- Begin processing any negative core beliefs
 - I am weak, I am defective, I am a failure, I am not safe
 - I am unlovable, I don't belong
 - I am worthless, I am bad, I am damaged

Is it true? Is it helpful?

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Stage 3: Preparation



- He or she recognizes the behavior as abusive.
- He or she intends to create change.
- He or she is developing or has developed a plan for change.
- He or she is able to better problem solve road blocks.

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TF-CBT Component with Compliant Victim



- Trauma Narrative
- Safety
- Conjoint Sessions and Gradual Exposure

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Trauma Narrative with Compliant Victim



- If victim has moved through the stages of change, this can be focused on the abuse trauma
- If victim has not moved through the stages of change, **BACK UP** and do more PRAC or do the Trauma Narrative using the experience of the worst part of this experience for client
- Use writing, comics, movies, play, sand tray, music, art, what else?
- This can take multiple sessions
- **SHARE WITH CAREGIVERS THROUGH OUT THE PROCESS**
- Victim will share the final version of the Trauma Narrative with caregiver
- Use of EMDR

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Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)



- Traumatic memory frozen in time
- Triggers create flashbacks
- Bilateral Stimulation
- Adaptation of memory
- Feelings, thoughts and body sensations
- Can be used before or after sharing Trauma Narrative
- Desensitizes negative cognitions
- Installs positive cognitions

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Stage 4: Action 

- He or she calls the perpetrator a perpetrator and calls the abuse, abuse.
- He or she is actively engaged in making changes by working toward her determined goals of safety.
- He or she is utilizing healthy support at this point.
- He or she begins to move forward in action!

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TF-CBT Component with Compliant Victim 

- In Vivo Exposure
- EMDR
- Safety
- Conjoint and Gradual Exposure

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In Vivo Exposure with Compliant Victim 

- Continue to process trauma and the experience of sharing the Trauma Narrative using EMDR
- Measure success of sharing the Trauma Narrative in the way of victim's willingness to add more details to the narrative or add additional traumas to the Trauma Narrative
- Measure success of sharing the Trauma Narrative in the way of boredom is genuine versus being avoidant
- Talk about trauma reminders/triggers and continue to create coping

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Stage 5: Maintenance 

- He or she no longer takes responsibility for perpetrator's actions.
- He or she is able to maintain her goals.
- He or she is taking steps to engage in healthy relationships.
- He or she is using healthy coping skills.
- He or she is no longer defining life as the trauma, rather a trauma that happened to him or her.

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TF-CBT Component for Stage 5
Compliant Victims 

- Safety
- Conjoint Sessions and Gradual Exposure

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What we wished it looked like.... 

1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5

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What it actually looks like... 

1 → 2 → 3 → 2 → 1 → 2 → 2 → 3 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5

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Questions