

## Jen Barths account

This is my personal account of CSA and a few concerns I have in regards to some of the misconceptions and misinformation that has been shared on social media in some of the groups. I'm glad to say I have not noticed this level of victim blaming here on CCF but thought I would share in the event that it might help some better understand how difficult it can be for a victim/survivor to disclose and also the risks of grooming.

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While not intentional I'm sure, I'm noticing a lot of victim blaming. Asking whether someone has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt to have assaulted someone or stating that part of the problem is the victims not reporting to law enforcement is victim blaming.

I was a victim of CSA (not within the fellowship) from the ages of 4-6. My body and brain did a marvellous thing to protect me, it repressed my memories of the trauma for years. When the memories surfaced, it took years of counselling. I'm almost 50 and I still see a counsellor regularly. I took my abuser to court. It was the scariest and bravest experience of my life but I needed many counselling sessions and the support of my family to prepare for that. First I had to disclose all the details...every single detail about the rapes to an RCMP officer. It was so humiliating. In court I had to sit in front of a room of strangers, family and friends, and my abuser and tell every single detail over again. Again, it was humiliating and I was terrified. Would these people believe me? Was this my fault? Why do I feel guilty?

Please consider the courage of victims to disclose anything as absolutely amazing and courageous. Please consider the impacts on them and their families and their friends of coming forward and sharing their stories in this fellowship that is so intertwined and connected. Consider their fear. Consider their humiliation. Consider their guilt. Consider their shame. Consider the victims who did speak up and were told to remain silent or blamed for the abuse. Consider the victims that do not have access to the resources or support systems, readily available to them in order to pursue legal action. Consider everything the victims stand to lose.

I'm sharing an article that I found is well-written and may help provide some perspective. Consider that many victims of CSA will take years just to process the memories. Therapy takes years. An investigation takes years. A trial takes years. In some countries/jurisdictions there is a statute of limitations so that victims can no longer pursue legal action.

Please get educated and informed on this topic. Stop blaming victims. Not every victim is going to report to law authorities. As much as we want justice, that is not always the best option for victims. Please learn more about this.

"Dr Cathy Kezelman, president of the Blue Knot foundation, a national organisation helping adults recover from childhood trauma, says Australia's royal commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse had found it takes an average of 24 years for people to speak about their abuse".

Please also educate yourselves on grooming. I have heard the narrative that perpetrators should be allowed fellowship because they are not going to abuse someone in meeting. You are missing the point. While it is rare for the abuses to occur in the meeting setting it has

happened before. But that is still not the point. Perpetrators will use meetings and other fellowship gatherings to build trust and relationship. Once that trust and relationship has been built it opens all sorts of windows into perpetuating abusive situations. The overseers and ministry have a key responsibility in ensuring that does not happen. I'm not saying you need to deny them fellowship but you need to take more responsibility. As workers, your role needs to be to extend fellowship to perpetrators in safe ways for them, for the victims, for the church. There are many ways to do this without allowing them to attend in home meetings, gospel meetings or conventions. You can go visit and have a weekly coffee/bible study for example. If you say you have a zero tolerance policy, then you better live by those words and not make it a lip service. Zero tolerance = zero tolerance.

Jen Barth

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jul/01/you-grow-up-hating-yourself-why-child-abuse-survivors-keep-and-break-their-silence>