

The background of the slide is a light gray gradient with several realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across it. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

KNOWING WHEN AND HOW TO INVITE A DISCLOSURE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY

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**SAFEGUARDING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE EXPOSED TO
SEXUAL HARM**

MINIMISING RISK AND MAXIMISING SUPPORT BOTH ON AND OFFLINE

OXFORD

6TH NOVEMBER 2016

OVERVIEW

- BACKGROUND TO THIS TALK...THE STUDY ...
- THE LITERATURE:
 - WHY ARE TIMELY DISCLOSURES SO IMPORTANT?
 - HOW MIGHT DISCLOSING HELP A CHILD?
 - SO WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT DISCLOSURE?
- THIS PART OF THE STUDY – AIM, METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS
- THE FINDINGS:
 - REASONS FOR NON-DISCLOSURE
 - RESPONSES TO DISCLOSURES
- THE IMPLICATIONS
 - HOW TO INVITE A DISCLOSURE
 - HOW TO (NOT) RESPOND TO A DISCLOSURE

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF TIMELY DISCLOSURES?

A CHILD'S INFORMAL DISCLOSURE OR AN ADULT'S DISCOVERY OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA) IS A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE TO THE:

- FORESHORTENING OF THE DURATION OF THE ABUSE,
- ACCESSING CHILD PROTECTION OR TRAUMA-RELATED SERVICES WHICH AIM TO SERVE THE CHILD'S/FAMILY'S JUSTICE AND THERAPEUTIC NEEDS
- PROTECTION AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING LONG-TERM OUTCOMES THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH COMPROMISED BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL FUNCTIONING.
- PROSECUTION, PUNISHMENT AND TREATMENT OF THE OFFENDER WHICH COULD REDUCE THE RISK HE/SHE POSES TO OTHER POTENTIAL VICTIMS

HOW DOES A DISCLOSURE HELP THE CHILD?

THE POTENTIAL MEDIATING EFFECTS OF A DISCLOSURE UPON THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CSA ARE MULTIFARIOUS AND INCLUDE;

- CATHARSIS,
- ACCESS TO EMOTIONAL, INFORMATIONAL AND TANGIBLE SUPPORT (LAMB & EDGAR-SMITH, 1994),
- THE FACILITATION OF MEANING-MAKING (PARK & BLUMBERG, 2002),
- THE RESOLUTION OF SENSE OF ABANDONMENT,
- AMELIORATION OF FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH ANGER
- FOSTERING A RENEWED SENSE OF HOPE AND TRUST WHICH ENABLES THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS (ISLEY, 1992).

- HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT A DISCLOSURE OF CSA AUTOMATICALLY CONFERS ANY OF THESE THE BENEFITS (ALAGGIA & KIRSTENBAUM, 2005).
- IT WOULD APPEAR THAT MANY DISCLOSURES 'FALL ON DEAF EARS', ARE 'SWEPT UNDER THE CARPET' OR IGNITE A TYRANNY OF ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE CHILD (E.G. OF LYING OR OF BEING COMPLICIT IN THE ABUSE).
- THIS IS UNFORTUNATE SINCE RESEARCH FINDINGS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT IT IS THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO A DISCLOSURE RATHER THAN THE ABUSE PER SE THAT IS ASSOCIATED WITH LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM (JONZON & LINDBLAD, 2005).
- CONSEQUENTLY, THEY DO NOT RESULT IN THE PROVISION OF EITHER PROTECTIVE ACTION OR OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE CHILD.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDHOOD DISCLOSURES?

- ONLY A MINORITY OF CHILDREN TELL SOMEONE OF THEIR ABUSE AND EVEN FEWER DO SO AT THE TIME THAT THE ABUSE IS HAPPENING.
- ACCORDING HÉBERT ET AL. (2009) BETWEEN 20% AND 40% OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY CSA CONFIDE IN SOMEONE. THE MEAN LATENCY PERIOD BETWEEN THE ABUSE AND DISCLOSING WAS BETWEEN 3 AND 18 YEARS, WITH ONLY 42% OF THE DISCLOSURES BEING MADE WITHIN FIVE YEARS OF THE ABUSE.
- THE DURATION OF THE LATENCY PERIOD IS MODERATED BY FACTORS SUCH AS:
 - THE NATURE OF THE ABUSE - PENETRATIVE, SINGLE INCIDENT CSA IS MORE LIKELY TO BE DISCLOSED.
 - RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERPETRATOR - FATHER–DAUGHTER INCEST IS LEAST LIKELY AND STRANGERS MOST TO BE DISCLOSED

MY STUDY

EXPLORING THE MECHANISMS THAT POTENTIATE RISK FOR SEXUAL REVICTIMISATION.

AIM - TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE EFFICACIOUS INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO PREVENT SEXUAL REVICTIMISATION

METHODOLOGY: RETROSPECTIVE WEB-BASED SURVEY OF 481 ADULTS EMPLOYING A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH.

- 183 SURVIVORS OF CSA (UNDER 14 YEARS), 57 (31.1%) OF WHOM DISCLOSED TO SOMEONE AT THE TIME OF THE ABUSE

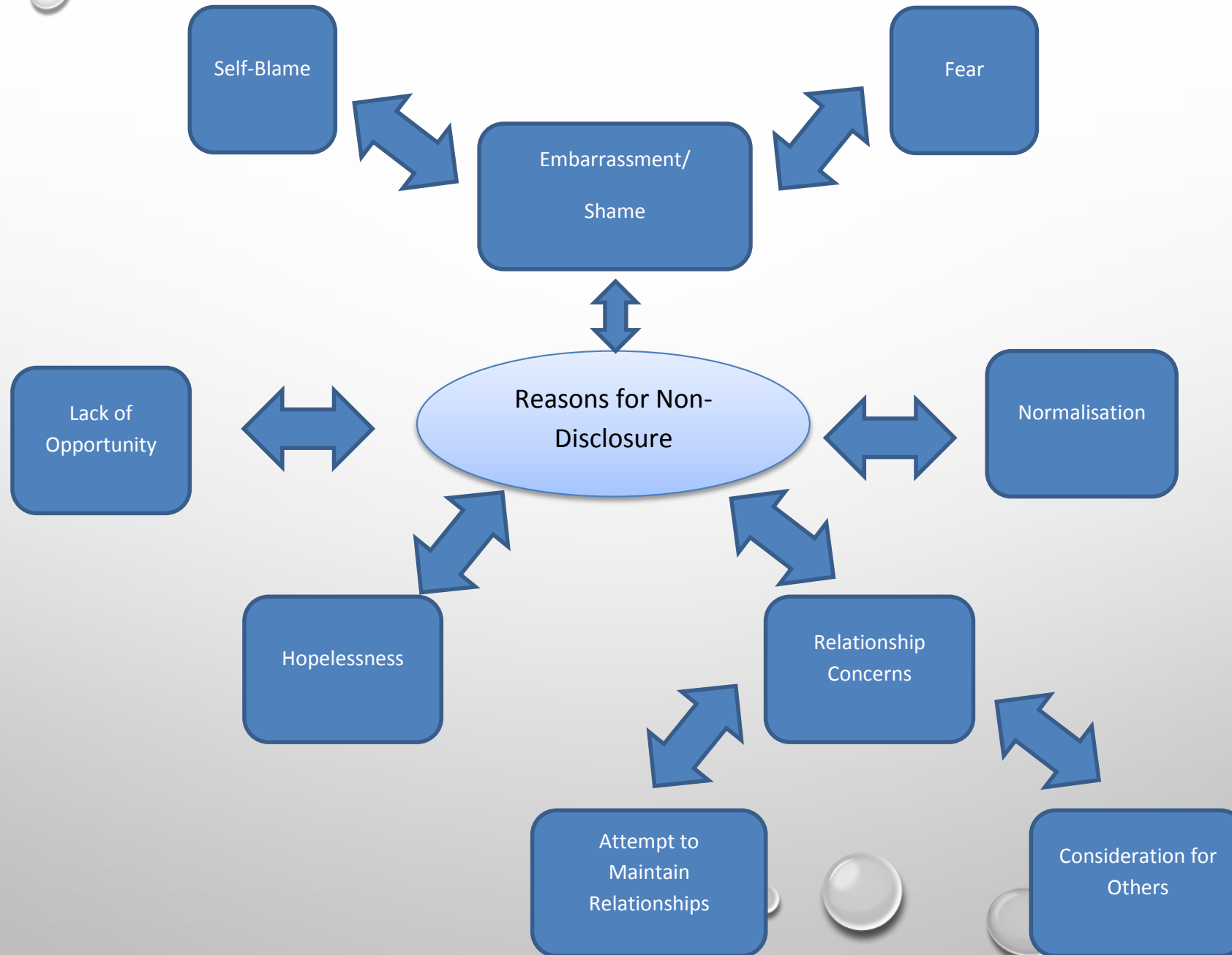
WHO DID THEY TELL?

- 42% OF THE DISCLOSURES WERE TO THE CHILD'S MOTHER,
- 14% A FRIEND,
- 9% THEIR FATHER,
- 7% A TEACHER,
- 7% A MEDICAL OR SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL
- 5% ONE OF THEIR GRANDPARENTS.
- 5% PRIEST/VICAR
- 2% POLICE

BUT WHETHER THE MOTHER IS TOLD IS DEPENDENT UPON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHILD AND PERPETRATOR

- 15.3% OF THE RESPONDENTS WHO WERE ABUSED BY A SIMILAR AGED PEER AND 13.8% OF THOSE ABUSED BY A MALE STRANGER TOLD THEIR MOTHER.
- HOWEVER, WHEN THE PERPETRATOR WAS A MALE CAREGIVER, ONLY 4.4% OF THE SURVIVORS REPORTED THAT THEY CONFIDED IN THEIR MOTHERS AT THE TIME OF THE ABUSE.

Figure 1: Reasons for Non-Disclosure



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCLOSURE

- NOTING AND ASKING ABOUT CHILD'S APPARENT DISTRESS, AVERSIONS OR RETICENCE TO ENGAGE IN PARTICULAR ACTIVITIES.
- LOOK OUT FOR STATEMENTS SUCH AS:
 - DO I HAVE TO?....
 - I DON'T WANT TO.....
- NEED TO ASK WHY IN A PRIVATE SPACE.... ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHILD'S CONCERNS.
 - DO NOT MINIMISE THEIR EXPERIENCE OR WISHES
- SHARED MEDIA EXPOSURE /DISCUSSION
 - SHOW COMPASSION FOR THE VICTIM, INDICATE THAT YOU WOULD PROTECT THEM, BUT **DO NOT** DENIGRATE THE OFFENDER
- TEST BALLOONS – THIS CAN BE A ONE-TIME OPPORTUNITY

OVERCOMING NORMALISATION

- GOOD TOUCH, BAD TOUCH EDUCATION (NSPCC – UNDERWEAR RULE)
- EVEN IF THE CHILDREN DO NOT FEEL ABLE OR CHOOSE NOT TO DISCLOSE, THEY MAY BE LESS ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THEIR EXPERIENCES IF THEY COME TO RECOGNISE THEIR EXPERIENCES AS ABNORMAL.
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ABUSE MIGHT BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR PREVENTING THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OR THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE; WHERE A MINORITY OF THOSE WHO ARE ABUSED MATURE TO BECOME PERPETRATORS OF SIMILAR ACTS OF ABUSE

OVERCOMING RELATIONSHIP CONCERNS

- WHEN DISCUSSING A CSA SCENARIO AS A WAY OF INVITING A POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE IT WOULD BE PERTINENT TO POINT OUT THAT CHILDREN NEVER HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE ADULTS AROUND THEM, AND TO STRESS THAT IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ADULTS TO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN ARE OKAY.



OVERCOMING BLAME AND SHAME

- CONFIDANTS AND LITERATURE ADVERTISING SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO STRESS THAT ALL VICTIMS ARE DESERVING OF SUPPORT AND ARE NEVER TO BLAME FOR THEIR VICTIMISATION EXPERIENCE, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR OWN ACTIONS AT THE TIME.
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OVERCOMING THE SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS

- A SENSE OF HOPE MIGHT BE BETTER ESTABLISHED THROUGH THE USE OF MEDIA DISSEMINATED STORIES AND ACCOUNTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD POSITIVE DISCLOSURE AND INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES. SUCH MEDIA PORTRAYALS SHOULD INCLUDE ADVICE ON WHERE TO SEEK HELP IN ORDER THAT THE SERVICES APPROACHED WILL LIVE UP TO THE EXPECTATION DEPICTED BY THE PRESENTATION.

REACTIONS TO DISCLOSURES

- OF THOSE WHO DISCLOSED:
 - 57% REPORTED A NEGATIVE RESPONSE FROM THE PERSON TO WHOM THEY DISCLOSED.
 - BLAMED, DISBELIEVED, SEXUALLY REVICTIMISED ETC.
 - 17.5% RECEIVED A NEUTRAL RESPONSE
 - DECLARED IT HAD HAPPEN TO THEM TOO
 - 25.3% RECEIVED A POSITIVE RESPONSE
 - AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND/OR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

WHAT IS A POSITIVE RESPONSE?



IMPLICATIONS

- NEED TO CREATE MILIEU WHICH FACILITATES EARLY DISCLOSURE
- NEED TO EMPOWER ADULTS TO RECOGNISE AND ACT ON IMPLICIT DISCLOSURES
- NEED TO RECOGNISE THAT TO ENCOURAGE GREATER DISCLOSURE FROM CHILDREN WITHOUT SIMULTANEOUSLY AIDING ADULTS TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY WOULD BE DANGEROUS.
- UNDERSTAND THE VITAL ROLE THAT TEACHERS HAVE – OBSERVATIONS OF PEER RELATIONSHIPS & CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR, WHERE ABUSE HAPPENS WITHIN THE HOME THE SCHOOL MAY BE SEEN AS A SAFE PLACE ETC.



THANK YOU

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO REQUEST A COPY OF THE ARTICLE WHICH RELATES TO THIS TALK.

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