**KEY INGREDIENTS FOR GIVING SEXUALLY ABUSED KIDS**

**THE CHOICE TO HEAL**

**HELPING “STUCK CHILDREN” GET UNSTUCK**

1. **Be STABLE and CONSISTENT when you are with them.** You may not be able to tell by looking at them, but on the inside they are unstable, like a yo-yo. Inside their minds, they are desperately hoping and looking for someone or something to latch onto. As they go through the latching onto process (we call it bonding) with a safe, caring, stable adult – they begin again their development on the inside part of them that was stuck. Stuckness occurs due to trauma, separation, fragmentation, etc. As they bond again, they actually internalize you, like a child does their mom or dad. That produces the long-term fruit of stability inside them. Be a strong, stable center post for them.
2. **You must be a 100% SAFE person**. Do not be surprised or shocked if they test this. Just handle their confusion and limit-testing with matter of fact boundaries. Their experience in the past is that there were no boundaries, no right and wrong, just being used for intimacy and attention. They may pursue your attention inappropriately while they test the relationship and your safety level.
3. **Keep them 100% SAFE**, especially in their low phases. Do not play games with this. In their low phases they may feel suicidal, crazy, like cutting, acting out, being sexual, doing an addiction, etc. Understand that they are especially susceptible to bad choices in this temporary phase. For example, for a “cutter” during a low phase, we do not allow them to touch knives even when washing dishes. Everyone in the house knows it and keeps the kid accountable. The child appreciates everyone helping them stay safe because they know they are weak at that time. They will grow stronger as they are kept safe during that phase. The child needs to know that we are always watching, always caring, we keep no secrets, and we will be all up in their business because we care. Trust your gut if you suspect something. Go check….often. Assume something is going on. Set up safeguards.
4. **Relationship, Relationship, Relationship** – They are disconnected and must learn to connect again. Over time, you teach them that real relationship is honest, vulnerable, accountable. Be brutally honest with every detail. Yes, it is uncomfortable at first. But remember, these kids are hidden, unknown to others and themselves. They need help being known.
5. **Do not allow any more manipulation.** Manipulation is no longer an acceptable way to get their needs met. Help them develop a conscience, empathy, compassion. It is highly dangerous for a child to develop a lifestyle of manipulation. Their bodies grow bigger but their consciences don’t. Be a super strong, loving teacher when you sense manipulation is happening. Go after it for their own good. Explore with them why they acted that way.
6. **Good, positive work.** As they get older, they need to be taught the value of honest work and chores. Using their body for money or pain relief is in their past. It is time to respect their body and feel positive about the work they do.
7. **Teach what to do with feelings** – Feelings threaten them. The feelings attached to the scary things that happened to them FEEL overwhelming and painful. They are now in a cycle of pain avoidance. What you see in their affect is likely a front, a mask. Be ready to receive even the smallest honest sharing of feelings. Don’t change the subject or diminish their sharing pain. Receive as they experiment with feelings. No more acting out, suppressing, or avoiding pain. When the emotions attached to those behaviors begin to be shared because you are a safe person, show them a listening ear. Ask questions. Then help them bring the pain to Jesus. Teach them how you have learned to handle your overwhelming feelings. You will be amazed at how they latch onto your words.

1. Teaching hurting kids coping mechanisms like deep breathing, relaxation, muscle tension, etc can be a great step forward for them. However, to move a person the fastest towards real heart and soul healing they must find **intimacy with Jesus**. We have found that Jesus is very, very close to these broken kids, if they will only call out to Him and share their hearts and pain with Him. They can hear Him share His love and truth in their darkest feelings. We have seen that time and time again. When Jesus talks to them they calm and change. Do not be afraid to invite a crying child to pray with you, then listen to what Jesus wants to tell them. Around this concept Dorothy has developed Prayer Pillows. This also happens during Worship if the child is open.
2. Over time, their **inner identity** begins to change. They CHOOSE to believe new things. Their core beliefs such as “I’m bad” “I’m unwanted” “I’m unworthy” “Nobody cares” are challenged. Their actions are always symptoms of their core beliefs.

10. Give them access to **Healing Activities**. Over time, they can learn to

CHOOSE the activities that help them heal and get unstuck, instead of destructing activities

they chose or were chosen for them in the past. Healing activities can include journaling,

exercising, coloring, finger painting, play dough, talking it out, writing a note to Jesus,

knitting, etc. They must find beneficial ways to release their messiness and compulsion.

1. **EVERY DAY help them practice new disciplines for them of SELF CALMING.** These include making time for Quiet Times with Jesus, taking a walk to pray and observe beauty, journaling, imagining themselves having a good day and handling situations well, relaxing, taking 20 slow deep breaths, smiling, etc. Remember, their body and mind got wired at another level of anxiety and it will take practice to calm their normal pattern. They are on constant alert, fight or flight.
2. **Medications** can sometimes be an option to help with stability if they are prescribed by a proactive medical professional the client sees regularly. For a “bipolar” or “schizophrenic” person the correct med mix can help them think more clearly and normalize their out-of-balance biochemicals. Once their thinking slows down they have more power to choose well to overcome a season of struggle. Medications must be paired with healing activities and a new healthy lifestyle to have the best effect. And remember, a child cannot clinically be diagnosed with a disorder until they are age 18. Their brains and hormones are still in development. Do not ever “label” a young person, except with the label child of God.
3. A great help can be a **Big Brother/Big Sister** if the connection is right. Only the child will be able to say if the fit is right. God wires children to want to bond with an adult they look up to. If the child internalizes the counsel of the person they look up to, their thinking and perspective changes.
4. **Get them out of all bad/using relationships.** Monitor ALL of their relationships. A tendency will be to go back to the old ways. Their loose ties are looking to connect somewhere, like an old addiction ready to be awakened by the wrong situation. Bad ties can be physical, mental and spiritual. Get them away from dark, secret relationships. Understand that the tempter wants them back and he works in the dark. It is what they knew and feels comfortable with them. Especially stay tuned into online interactions and quicky temptations.
5. **Daily dose of fun/enjoyment.** This will be a new experience for them. They were locked into survival mode, depression, hopelessness, suspicion, being used in the past. Good, wholesome fun and enjoyment must become their new normal over time. Giving them a daily dose of fun gives them something to look forward to. Hope is a new feeling. The key to success here is that the fun thing is something *they find fun*….not something that you necessarily think is fun. To be healing for them, it must be sincerely enjoyable *for them*. It is to meet their needs, not your needs. For example, if they get a kick out of playing soccer or knitting or arm-wrestling or play dough, take 20 minutes to act like you enjoy it with them! You can help them schedule a time the next day too they can look forward to.
6. **Keep experimenting to FIND THEIR GIFTED AREAS.** What is their bent? When they find those areas they are good at and can excel in, something healing happens inside their minds. There is an association that happens from being good at something to future success being possible.
7. **Realize OUR OWN BROKENNESS** and total dependence on God for real love for this child. Only God can show you the keys to entering the small, subtle openings in their wounded souls. He gives insight, creative ideas, energy, patience, love and spiritual protection in the battle for their soul. Pray…every time you are with a kid.
8. Remember to **SMILE and ENJOY THEM.** They are of eternal worth. For the short time you are with them, think of your smile as your work uniform ☺

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