

The Long-Lasting Effects of Abuse

At the young age of six, Daisy was hospitalized after being sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend. She was so young that she didn't know how to express her feelings about what was happening to her. She began hitting her mother in anger. Her mother, being young herself, didn't know how to fully care for her daughter. Daisy was removed from her home and put into foster care. She went from house to house, until she ended up at the home of Kathy Harrison, who supported and loved her. One day, Kathy discovered drawings that Daisy was hiding under her bed. Daisy was drawing pictures of what Frank, her mom's boyfriend, did to her.

Daisy's story is not uncommon and, of course, isn't limited to children in the foster system. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old. This problem is widespread; it crosses socioeconomic and racial lines. New York Times columnist and sexual abuse survivor Charels M. Blow wrote, "This abuse is devastating and has long lasting effects. It can take decades, or even a lifetime, to recover, if recovery is even emotionally available for the survivor." After something as traumatic as sexual abuse, most children need therapy, but therapy is often expensive and, in many cases, health insurance doesn't cover it. This makes it hard for these kids to receive help and recover.

Our country needs to extend money and resources towards ending to the sexual abuse cycle of children. At the same time, we also need to address the healing process of children who have already been abused. When children are sexually abused they need love and support. A lot of kids think it was their fault and are ashamed about what happened, which makes healing more difficult. It's important they know it's not their fault

and that abuse doesn't define them. Mental health treatment is the best way for these children to heal. Unfortunately, not all families can afford therapy. If this country supported universal health care with complete mental health coverage, it would be easier for these children to get the help they need and begin the long process of healing. Let's start by instituting a more fair health care system for everyone.

Sources:

Blow, Charles M. "Surviving Child Sexual Abuse." *New York Times*, 1 June 2015

Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I. A., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women