

### Session overview

This session gives the young person opportunity to consider scenarios where we may blame ourselves or feel complicit in what has happened, but where we need to look at the context of a situation in order to reframe our thinking – preventing us from blaming ourselves.

#### Resources needed for this session

- Statements sheets

### Information for practitioner

The emotions a person feels after being harmed can be powerful and often include wishing it had never happened. It's hard to remember that decisions are not always as clear cut as they look when we look back after the event.

Because of this we can end up blaming ourselves, usually by questioning our actions and wishing 'if only I had done...' We may even feel complicit in what happened, blaming ourselves for our actions and decisions, even though the reality is that we were manipulated into those actions. Those who care about us can also blame themselves and think their own 'if only' thoughts.

What frequently happens is a failure to blame the person who caused the harm. We don't see that someone else is to blame and is putting us in a position where there is little or no choice.



Practitioner to check with the young person their understanding of the word complicit to ensure that when behaviours are discussed, this can be explored.

There is a misconception that young people don't look at risk in their decision making. They do, although their risk assessment skills are still developing. As human beings we take calculated risks every day and sometimes those decisions don't work out how we hoped. Just because we made a decision that had a bad outcome does not mean that we were responsible in any way or that we deserved to be harmed, abused or manipulated. It's really important not to conflate a **decision** (for which we are all responsible) with an **outcome** of being a victim of abuse or manipulation (for which we are not responsible).

When thinking about Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse (TACSA), the victim may feel complicit in the abuse/harm because they engaged in conversation, or encouraged conversation, or because they wanted to engage with the perpetrator and even enjoyed their attention, or sent 'normal' pictures.



**We must reiterate to the young person that just because you engage in some way doesn't mean the other person (perpetrator) has a right to harm you in ANY way.**



Be aware that you may be dealing with a young person who believes that they are to blame or what has happened. **The point to emphasise is that perpetrators are entirely to blame.**



Practitioner must be mindful of the young person's level of understanding in talking about blame and self-blame and this may depend upon the level of understanding they have about the TACSA harm.



Be mindful that the young person might share examples that are personal to them and that may include harm.

### Pre-session action

Select a "*Looking after yourself*" exercise in advance for the close of the session.

## Session

Check in with the young person as to how they have been since your last session together. Are there any thoughts or feelings that you may need to reflect on and address before you begin this session?

Inform the young person what we are going to do in this session, sharing the overview.



Statements  
sheet

### Activity

Look at the statements and read across the self-blame brain and the reality brain explanations.



Discuss the statements and then together come up with more situations where a person may blame themselves – and fill in the self-blame brain and the reality brain. As you do this look at how you can encourage the reality brain to be louder than the self-blame brain.



### Reflection on this session

Even though the young person may have felt they had to – or even at the time wanted to – ‘go along with’ what was happening, this does not mean they are to blame for what ultimately happened, as the situation had been manipulated to remove or limit their choices.



### Closing activity

Looking after yourself exercise to close

INCIDENT	SELF-BLAME BRAIN	REALITY BRAIN
After being at my friend's house, the bus home was late and I couldn't let my parents know as my phone died.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I should have left earlier.</li> <li>• I should have charged my phone.</li> <li>• I should have asked to borrow someone's phone to call home.</li> <li>• This is all my fault.</li> </ul>	This is not my fault, these things happen. I can't control a bus being late. I can understand why my parents were worried but there was nothing I could do at that time. I'd like to get in the habit of checking my phone battery before I set off.
I sent an intimate image to my boyfriend/girlfriend/partner and they shared it with someone else.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I shouldn't have sent the picture.</li> <li>• I shouldn't have trusted them.</li> <li>• I should have just said no when they asked for it.</li> <li>• I should have explained more clearly why I didn't want to.</li> </ul>	They put pressure on me to send that picture. They said if I loved them I would send it. I did try to explain but I was worried they would break up with me. I trusted them and they have broken my trust. They are in the wrong. No image should be shared without permission (consent).
I was asked to a party that my parents said I wasn't allowed to go to. I went anyway with my friend. I met a boy/girl who I talked to lots during the night. They started to touch me. I was really uncomfortable but didn't know what to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I shouldn't have gone to the party.</li> <li>• I shouldn't have lied to my parents.</li> <li>• I should have said I didn't like them touching me.</li> <li>• I should have said no and walked away.</li> <li>• I shouldn't have led them on.</li> </ul>	I should be able to talk to someone and like them without them making me feel uncomfortable. And I definitely should be able to talk to someone without them touching me without permission. I can accept that lying to my parents might not have been a good idea but that doesn't mean that this was ok. No one deserves for this to happen, it is unacceptable behaviour.

## Self-blame statements

Your examples could include peer pressure, knowing something worrying but not telling anyone, meeting someone.



INCIDENT	SELF-BLAME BRAIN	REALITY BRAIN