

### Session overview

This session gives the young person opportunity to consider scenarios where we may blame ourselves or feel as though others blame us, but where we need to look at the context of a situation in order to see that it wasn't the victim's fault.

### 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 – or us! – 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.

Victim blaming occurs when people talk about what actions they believe a victim could/should have taken – or not taken – to avoid being harmed. The reality is that harm and abuse can happen regardless of a victim's choices and when someone is abused, groomed or otherwise pressured, the fault lies wholly with the abuser, not the victim.

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.

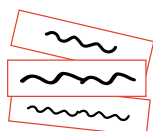
#### Resources needed for this session

- Statements cards
- Statements sheet

## 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  
cards

### Activity 1

Both the young person and practitioner to share any examples of someone who was blamed, even though what happened was not their fault.

Using the statements on the cards, discuss the victim-blaming language together.

Some are clearly about TACSA, others about bullying or other abuse.

**Discussion points might include:**

- What might be going on here?
- Why is this “victim blaming”?
- What assumptions are being made about the victim and the situation?



### Reflection on this session

Sometimes we blame people for things when actually they have been taken advantage of by others. Also, even when we make mistakes or do something that goes wrong, we don't deserve and aren't at fault for the harm that happens.



Statements  
sheet

### Activity 2

Look at the statements and read across the “It's my fault” brain and the “Seeing it clearly” brain explanations.



Discuss the statements and then together come up with more situations where a person may blame themselves – and fill in the “It's my fault” brain and the “Seeing it clearly” brain. As you do this look at how you can encourage the “Seeing it clearly” brain to be louder than the “It's my fault” 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**

## Statement cards

They were asking for it	She should have said no	He knew what he was doing
What did they expect?	I would never do anything like that	They're always doing stupid things
You should have known better	He knows not to send pictures – why did he do it?	They clearly weren't listening in our online safety lessons
If they hadn't sent a picture this wouldn't have happened	He knew you shouldn't talk to people you don't know online	They are silly like that – I'm not surprised this happened
It's not like they haven't done it before		

### INCIDENT

**At a party, my friend and I accidentally broke an ornament. My friend wanted me to hide it in the corner so no one would know it was us.**

**I sent a picture to my friend and they shared it with someone else and I wish they hadn't.**

**My friends told me to take the pens from the teacher's desk. They said if I didn't do it they wouldn't be friends with me. They said it would be funny and that I was boring if I didn't do it.**

### "IT'S MY FAULT" BRAIN

- I should have owned up.
- Shouldn't have gone along with my friend.
- I shouldn't have been playing with the ornament.
- This is all my fault.

- I shouldn't have sent the picture.
- I shouldn't have trusted them.
- I should have just said no when they asked for it.
- I should have explained more clearly why I didn't want to.

- I shouldn't have done what they wanted – I knew it was wrong.
- It was a stupid thing to do.
- My friends are right – I'm boring.

### "SEEING IT CLEARLY" BRAIN

This is not my fault, accidents happen. My friend was really insistent about hiding the pieces. I did try to suggest owning up but he said I would just get him into trouble and his parents would punish him.

They put pressure on me to send that picture. They said everyone else sent pictures. I did try to explain but I was worried they would be mean if I didn't. I trusted them and they have broken my trust. They are in the wrong. No picture should ever be shared without permission (consent).

I don't always feel comfortable with what my friends want me to do. It didn't feel as though I had much choice. I would like to find ways round being in that situation.

## Feeling like it's my fault statements

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



**INCIDENT**

**"IT'S MY FAULT" BRAIN**

**"SEEING IT CLEARLY" BRAIN**
