



Marie Collins
Foundation

Victim Blaming Language

Victim blaming is the act of attributing responsibility, blame, fault or shame to a victim or survivor for the harm they've experienced. This is wrong and all language, both written and verbal, should instead hold the perpetrator solely accountable. Victim blaming can have a significant impact on the ability for those with lived experience to recover.

We know that victim blaming can be especially painful because it most often comes from people who are supposed to support you. Friends, family, professionals and wider society can all victim blame whether it be explicit or implicit. No matter who it comes from, it can be extremely detrimental to survivors of abuse, making them feel they are complicit in the harm they have endured.



This resource might help you to recognise and challenge some of the language you have encountered, or some of the language you use to talk about your abuse. The grid below is not an exhaustive list of the victim blaming language that survivors of Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse (TACSA) face, but they are all real-life examples of what MCF's Lived Experience Group have come up against. It's important to note that victim blaming language does not always come from a negative place. Often the person saying the statement might not realise that what they are saying is hurtful and harmful.

But regardless of whether the person intended to place blame on you, it is important for victims and survivors to feel empowered to challenge victim blaming language even if it comes from professionals.

Victim Blaming	The Truth
It's your fault	It is not your fault. Children and young people are never to blame for their abuse. The only person at fault is the person who caused the harm.
Why were you on that app? Why would you go on sites that are made for adults?	Regardless of what app, website or gaming platform you were on you did not deserve to be harmed. The choice to abuse lies solely with the perpetrator.
Why didn't you leave the chat or block them?	The power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim can make the child or young person feel as if they have no choice or control. It was also not your responsibility to stop the harm, you were a child.
Why were you watching those videos?	It is normal to be curious about sex and relationships, and this can sometimes lead children and young people to watch videos aimed at adults. Websites which host adult content should have better regulation to protect children and young people from viewing this content.
We taught you the risks	Perpetrators of child sexual abuse are highly skilled at using tactics to manipulate and control children and young people. Many victims who have been groomed as part of their abuse do not realise they are being harmed.
Why did you add/speak to a stranger?	Abusers use specific tactics to encourage children and young people to accept their friend or message requests. They are good at making themselves seem unthreatening and friendly to gain the trust of children and young people.
You've broken the law by sending that image/video.	The only person at fault is the abuser who groomed/coerced/manipulated you into sending the images or videos. You should not be prosecuted as you have done nothing wrong. If you have been wrongly criminalised for your abuse, reach out to MCF for specialist support.
How would you like it if your mum/dad/grandparent saw that picture?	Having images and videos taken of your abuse can feel extremely shameful and embarrassing but it is not your shame to carry.

Victim Blaming	The Truth
<p>Do you regret getting involved with that person?</p> <p>Do you regret sending those images?</p>	<p>Victims and survivors often say they look back at the abuse they suffered and wish they did or said something different at the time. But what was done to you was not your fault and you should not have experienced harm.</p>
<p>Why didn't you tell anyone before/sooner /when we first asked you?</p> <p>We always thought you would tell us.</p>	<p>Sexual abuse silences children and young people, there are many reasons why children and young people won't tell anyone, even when asked directly if they are being harmed. Whatever reason you had for not speaking out is valid and whenever you are ready to speak about it, there will be people who can support you.</p>
<p>Do you worry about how the photos will affect you in the future?</p>	<p>Having child sexual abuse material created of you as part of your abuse is not your fault and should not affect you in the future. There are many people who work hard to eradicate this material from online spaces.</p>
<p>You're old enough to know right from wrong.</p>	<p>Abusers will stop at nothing and use everything and anything at their disposal to target, groom and exploit children and young people online for their sexual purposes. Their tactics can skew children's perception of what is 'normal', which makes it incredibly difficult for children and young people to recognise when something is 'not right'.</p>
<p>Why don't you just forget it/move on?</p>	<p>There is no expiry date to trauma and recovery is not linear. The impact of Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse is severe and often lifelong but with the right support victims and survivors can recover and go on to live safe, fulfilling and happy lives.</p>
<p>How could you possibly think you were in love with somebody of that age?</p> <p>How could you think they loved you, you are a child.</p>	<p>Perpetrators will use specific tactics to isolate children and young people to make them feel dependent on them. This can cause the child to feel an intense mix of emotions such as admiration, love, fear and distress. It is common for children and young people to not understand that they have been harmed, and it can take a long time to understand the power imbalance and non-consensual nature of the 'relationship' between abuser and victim.</p>



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