

This week is sexual abuse and violence awareness week and therefore your assembly today is about sexual abuse and violence and what you need to do if you yourself have experienced it or if you know of someone who is going through this trauma.

There are many women, men and children of all ages all severely damaged due to childhood sexual abuse and violence. Mostly, it is family members of varying degrees who are committing these atrocious acts, not random strangers.

What are the signs that you are being sexually abused?

Warning signs for teens - RAINN

Sexual abuse in islam

For Victims of Sexual Assault video by Imam Navaid Aziz (4:10)

How do you take away this individual's pain?

Please, know that you are not at fault. The justice you seek is a part of coming to terms with what happened to you, as well as your struggle to heal and move on while trying to find closure through justice.

There are many kinds of justice. Often in this world the justice we envision, the justice we seek often does not occur the way we want it to. But be sure that justice will be served by Allah, for nothing goes un-noticed by Allah.

Sometimes justice can just mean healing one's self and moving forward in life and living a full and happy life.

The most common adult manifestations of childhood sexual abuse in adults. Some include:

- “Emotions such as fear, shame, humiliation, guilt, and self-blame are common and lead to depression and anxiety.

- Symptoms of posttraumatic stress

Survivors may experience intrusive or recurring thoughts of the abuse as well as nightmares or flashbacks.

- Distorted self-perception

Survivors often develop a belief that they caused the sexual

abuse and that they deserved it. These beliefs may result in self-destructive relationships.”

Get counselling as soon as possible. I'm not talking about hiring an expensive therapist, I'm talking about opening up to an adult in whom you trust.

While I understand this is hard and that sometimes there is a stigma attached, often we need to look at ourselves in the light of how we were created.

We are of mind, body, and spirit. Your suffering from your abuse is not your fault. However, it can affect your mind (**depression**, PTSD, fears, future intimacy issues, trust issues, etc.),

your body (headaches, fatigue, sweating, even burning feelings...)

and your spirit (your ability to feel worthy in front of Allah; or perhaps anger about why this happened to you). All of these things are interconnected.

When your body was abused and violated as a child, it set up a chain of events that created coping mechanisms that involved your mind, body, and spirit. Just as someone with diabetes sees a doctor for treatment, or someone who has high blood pressure seeks out a nutritionist to find remedies, so too should we seek out care when we are suffering emotionally and mentally.

The sooner you start to open and talk to somebody about it, the sooner you can begin to heal, begin to feel good and re-learn how to trust, to live and to smile. It will take dedication on your part, but aren't you worth it? Abusers take a part of people's childhood but as the victim we can't let them have the rest of our life. Sometimes the best justice (and revenge) is healing and living life fully and happily.

Support groups can also be a powerful tool for healing. Not only can you share your experiences (if you so choose) in a safe space with others who have experienced sexual trauma and

abuse as children, but you can gain useful coping tools and productive mechanisms to deal with the aftermath of what you have been through. Others will share what they have learned, how they overcame obstacles, fears, etc. and went on to develop healthy responses and diminish negative thoughts and feelings.

In a group setting such as this, you will not need to fear being judged, thought of as less nor attacked. It is a safe place to heal and learn new skills and eventually apply them to your life in general such as at a job or in a social setting because these new skills that you learn to develop will give you the confidence you need to say "I got through it!"

Insha'Allah, you will be able to put aside your fears of what others will think as well as what your family thinks and if they will "have your back".

If no one does, Allah "has your back!"

This is your life, no one else's. This journey is about you, your well-being, your healing, and your happiness. It will be difficult at first, taking the first step is always scary, but it will also be so rewarding. We tend to forget that both good and bad come from Allah (swt) and if you decide to deal with the hard tests head strong then Allah is making you stronger.