• **Join a group of other survivors of sexual abuse:**

In a group setting you have the opportunity to hear about the experiences of other survivors and share your experiences with them. Support groups or therapy groups can be excellent places to talk about your feelings and experiences while receiving emotional support from others.

**NOTE:** It is advisable to enter a support group only after you have progressed sufficiently in individual therapy, or are currently involved in individual therapy or group therapy.

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**Counseling Services**

Division of Student Affairs  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
Old Library 2122  
Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004  
Phone: (715) 836-5521  
Website Address: www.uwec.edu/counsel

Check out our web site virtual pamphlet collection at:

www.uwec.edu/counsel

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Derived from website publication (http://www.soa.uc.edu/psc/) developed by Cincinnati Psychological Services Center (1999).
What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is a sexual act imposed on a child who lacks emotional, maturational, physical and cognitive development. The crime of luring a child into sexual activities is sadly common, because of the powerful and dominant position of the adult or older adolescent perpetrator. This is in sharp contrast to the child's age, dependency, lack of knowledge, and subordinate position. Authority, power, corruption of affection, and (sometimes) force enable the perpetrator to easily coerce the child into sexual compliance.

How common is sexual abuse?

- 25% of all adults have been sexually abused.
- Statistics suggest that as many as 1 in 4 children becomes a victim of sexual abuse by the time they reach 18 yrs of age.
- Up to 90% of sexual abuse of children is committed by someone the child knows.
- Approximately 10% of all victims reporting sexual abuse are boys, but probably more are abused.
- A study of imprisoned sexual abusers of children revealed that, on the average, they each had molested over 230 victims. Among other things, this indicates how very easy it is for adults to molest children.

What might I experience as a survivor of sexual abuse?

- low self esteem
- inability to trust others
- exaggerated willingness to remain in dysfunctional or abusive relationships
- sexual dysfunction
- drug/alcohol abuse
- eating disorders
- distorted body image
- flashbacks of the abuse
- frequent nightmares
- intruding thoughts
- frozen or numbed emotions
- depression
- anxiety
- self abuse and self-deprivation
- difficulty experiencing pleasure

What can I do if I am a survivor of sexual abuse?

- Read self help books:
  The Courage to Heal, by Bass and Davis: This is a book and companion workbook helping survivors identify and process feelings and thoughts related to the sexual abuse. There is also a book for the partners and loved ones of survivors. These books are helpful in empowering the survivor.

- Talk to supportive others:
  Find people who will be willing to listen to your thoughts and feelings related to the sexual abuse. The supportive other should be non-judgmental (not blaming you for the abuse, or telling you what to do or how to feel), able to listen to your feelings, honest, and willing to be there for you during the "rough times".

- Begin therapy:
  Therapy can be a safe and supportive environment in which to explore your feelings and thoughts with a non-judgmental, caring person. A therapist can help you deal with the psychological effects of sexual abuse such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and flashbacks.