

Counselling

The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) helps to pay for counselling for most survivors of incest and sexual abuse. There are many ACC registered counsellors throughout the Auckland region. These counsellors have various amounts of experience and different ways of working. All ACC registered counsellors are trained to work with survivors of sexual abuse.

You can access ACC subsidised counselling by contacting RPE and asking for the numbers of counsellors in your area. Your counsellor will apply to ACC for the subsidy for your counselling. It is advisable to talk to several counsellors on the phone before choosing to make an appointment with any one person.

It can be useful to ask each counsellor about their approach. Remember that you do not have to stay with a counsellor if you feel that you aren't comfortable with them. It can be useful to see a counsellor for three sessions and if you don't feel comfortable with him/ her after this time you can change therapists.

Want to find out more?

Rape Prevention Education offers a referral service which is culturally appropriate, safe and supportive. You can contact them to talk through your options and get information about what's available in your area. Call RPE on (09) 360 4004 or email info@rapecrisis.org.nz for more information.

www.rapecrisis.org.nz

INCEST



Rape Prevention Education

RAPE CRISIS AUCKLAND INCORPORATED
WHAKATU MAURI

*Supporting survivors of sexual violence & their whanau.
Working to eliminate rape and sexual abuse through
education and community work.*

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Incest

Rape Prevention Education

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What is incest?

Incest is commonly understood as any sexual contact between relatives or family members.

In New Zealand, it is illegal for anyone in your immediate family (your parents, grandparents or siblings) to have sex with you regardless of whether you consent to it. It is also illegal for anyone in your extended family (like uncles, aunts or cousins) to have sex with you without your consent; this is typically called sexual abuse. Sexual abuse laws also prevent people who are considered family members despite not being blood relatives, like close family friends who are called aunt/uncle, from having sex with you without your consent.

Offenders within families are often known to abuse more than one person, often over different generations of family members.

Incest can be particularly harmful because of the close relationship the offender often has with the person they abuse. Incest happens when the offender uses this trust, and their power, to manipulate the person they abuse.

Survivors often fear they will be disbelieved or blamed if they report the abuse, or are unaware that incest isn't something that occurs in every family and shouldn't be happening to them.

Statistics about incest

- One out of every eight NZ women has had an experience of incest (Otago Women's Health Study, 1989). Half of those women were abused by a close family member (e.g. father, brother) living in the same household.

- According to Rape Crisis Auckland Inc 2003 statistics, 43% of cases of childhood sexual abuse were perpetrated by a family member.
- Survivors of incest are less likely than survivors of non-family abuse or rape to report the offence to the Police (National Rape Crisis 1999 statistics).

Any sexual behaviour with a child (someone under 16) is illegal.

Effects

The effects of incest will vary for each person. Some long-term effects may include;

- difficulties with sexual relationships in adulthood
- depression
- self destructive behaviours (e.g. drug/alcohol abuse, suicidal behaviour)
- parenting difficulties (e.g. distress around becoming pregnant, childbirth, their children reaching the age the abuse occurred in the parent's own life)
- somatic complaints like chronic pain, headaches, or nausea
- eating difficulties

Each survivor's experience is as unique as their recovery.

Talking about incest

Rape Crisis statistics show that survivors of incest are less likely to report their abuse to the police than people who are raped by a friend, acquaintance, or stranger. Offenders within families are often known to abuse more than one person and can sometimes happen over different generations of family members.

When a family member is the offender, it can be difficult for the survivor to talk about, or even comprehend, what has happened. Incest often remains a secret and many times the perpetrator has a big investment in keeping it this way. The tactics abusers use to keep incest a secret vary, ranging from threats and coercion to abuse hidden within 'play.' The offender typically denies the behaviour or tries to blame the victim.

If the family is dependent on the offender, either financially or emotionally, the survivor will often not disclose, taking on the responsibility of the whole family at the expense of their own safety and well-being. Other reasons that prevent disclosure include expecting to be blamed, feeling embarrassed, not wanting to upset anyone, protecting the abuser, fear of the abuser, or wanting to obey adults.

Once incest is disclosed, responses may vary in families from acceptance and support to disbelief, denial, shame, grief, anger and disgust. A survivor may often feel responsible for any change or disruption in the family. The person who is always responsible for any disruption of this sort is the offender.

Recovery and support

Recovery is unique to each person. Once you decide to seek help, there are many options available. Many survivors find that seeing a counsellor to be helpful to their healing process. Counselling can help some survivors to take their personal power back. It can also offer a place to talk safely and openly with someone who can understand how you are feeling.