

Ltd., Associated Book Publishers, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4B 4AB *Format: VHS, Beta or U-matic (Purchase)*

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Sexual Abuse of Children: 'The Facts'

'Investigation and procedures', 'Therapy' (UK, 1986, 30 mins each)

"We are confident that at least 10% of children have been engaged in sexual activities with adults..." opens this important trilogy of teaching videotapes on sexual abuse of children, "...and of children alive today in the UK., 1,117,000 will have been sexually abused by the age of 15".

The three half hour tapes cover: an introduction to the sexual abuse of children concentrating for the most part on the commonest offence, abuse within the family; the investigation of the suspected cases and therapy.

What we see on screen is a blend of facts, mock cases, and the opinions and experiences of a range of experts, with Michael Buchanan as anchor man linking it all together. The particular power of the tapes lies in hearing experts relate their first hand experience, which tends to overshadow the sometimes over-rehearsed quality of the mock cases. A compelling account of the problem emerges: the insidious progression of touching until boundaries are inevitably breached; the search for a person who children can tell, who will take them seriously and hear; the incompleteness of initial disclosures, often merely hints for sharp ears to pick up; and, the powerful forces of coercion within the family working against disclosure—the so called trap of secrecy that the child is often caught up in.

Again, in the later tapes on investigation and therapy it is the experts talking descriptively about their work that lodges in the memory; the necessity of action once abuse comes to light; the appalling complexity of coordinating the diverse agencies involved; the slow build-up of trust between child and investigator with practical advice like bean bag chairs for curling up in, and anatomically correct dollies for avoiding emotive words; childrens' inevitable

impulse to retract as they feel the consequences of their disclosures getting beyond their control; and, of course, the paradox of having to both punish and help the family involved.

Therapy is modestly presented, with no magical solutions. The children's sense of guilt and damaged self esteem are well described. Restoring the victim's sense of worth, helping the family members to return to appropriate roles, and working to a carefully coordinated plan between disciplines are all highlighted. And, importantly, the personal feelings of helpers working with such cases are dealt with.

The strength of these tapes is also their weakness however. Speakers do not always link together well, and sometimes what is said lacks sufficient structure so that important points get lost or jumbled together. Greater use of graphics to summarise information between discourses would have helped and given the programme better coherence. More specific reference to published information in the field would have counter-balanced the extensive use of opinions. And, step by step advice on what to do if approached by a child in confidence would also have been valuable. Oh and please, why not introduce speakers by sub-titles which state their job as well as their name?

These are relatively minor criticisms, however, since these tapes undoubtedly comprise a vivid, explicit and authoritative account of sexual abuse in children and should be viewed by all professionals coming into regular contact with children; particularly teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, and policemen. The more people who may be in a position to help the 12 year old quoted in one of the programmes, the better:

"... and I'd hear him every night, hear his footsteps on the passage, and I'd pray, please God, not again tonight".

Production: University of Leeds. Medical Adviser: Presented by Dr Michael Buchanan. Format: VHS, Betamax, U-matic. (Purchase or preview) Distributors: University of Leeds, University Audio Visual Service, Leeds LS2 9JT.

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Marilyn Monroe Children's Fund

The Tavistock Clinic, in collaboration with Victor Gollancz, has announced the establishment of the Marilyn Monroe Children's Fund which will support projects to investigate the effects of deprivation and parental emotional problems on the development of children, and new methods of attempting to ameliorate these effects.

The Tavistock Clinic is a National Health Service out-patient clinic which provides consultations and various types of psychodynamic psychotherapy for adults,

adolescents and children and their families and offers post-graduate training to a wide range of mental health professionals.

The Tavistock Clinic Foundation has been established to fund such projects as research and development in training and innovative practice (in training and in new clinical techniques) which cannot be supported by limited NHS resources.