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Challenges and Risks To Disclosure and Reporting

While disclosing and seeking help from supportive others is essential to protect against the development of long-term trauma effects and heal the trust betrayal of relational trauma, there are many challenges and risks associated including:

- Further loss of control through disclosing/reporting including who else will be told, how people will react and what will happen.
- People questioning why they/she/he didn't disclose/report right away.
- Immediate fear, shame, self-blame heightened, along with the risks of re-traumatization and heightened crisis in present life
- Difficulty recounting the details of the assault due initial shock and the impact of stress hormones on the brain affecting both memory integration and the ability to verbalize coherently
- Embarrassment/humiliation in sharing the details of the sexualized abuse/assault or physical exams being done or pictures taken, which feels extremely exposing.
- Fear of people judging their/her/his actions prior to the assault due to the predominance of sexual assault myths causing secondary wounding. (I.E. being viewed as attention seeking or having indirectly asked for "it", teenagers and young adults being labeled a "slut" or questioned for what they were wearing, why they were there or if drinking/drug use was involved).
- People questioning their/her/his trauma reactions during and following the assault due to a lack of education regarding biologically driven trauma survival responses such as "tonic immobilization" and "dissociation".
- People not believing and siding with the assaulter(s) saying that he is a nice guy as many offenders are often in trusting relationships with those they assault and are known by their family or friends.
- People not believing because offenders often do not fit the social stereotype of a child abuser or rapist.
- Youth in particular fearing not being believed or getting into trouble due to drinking or drug use, etc.
- Fear of not being believed because of having had a prior sexual relationship with the assaulter.
- Fear of not being believed due to experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Past negative experiences with reporting/ disclosing or having heard negative stories from others or through the media.