

## Session 2: Disclosure and Safety Skills

**NOTE:** This Help Wanted session may be useful to people of any age. However, it was originally designed with adolescents and young people in mind. When we refer to sexual interest in "younger children" we mean younger than you if you are under the age of 18. If you are 18 or older, please interpret "younger children" as referring to anyone under the age of 18.

### **Introduction**

Telling someone about your attraction to younger children is a big step. There are some good reasons to share this information with important people in your life, even though these conversations can be hard.

It is helpful to think about the pros and cons of telling people about your attraction and decide what's best for you. We want to help you with your important decision.

In the following sections we'll talk about:

- Why you might want to tell
- Who to tell
- When to tell
- Where to tell
- What to tell

Later in this session, you'll hear the experiences of others who told someone about their attraction to younger children and others who decided not to tell.

Before we get started, here's some information to protect you as you consider telling someone about your attraction.

### **Before You Tell Someone About Your Attraction**

Some people you might tell—usually a professional such as a teacher, therapist, coach, or doctor—are required to call the authorities if they believe a child has been sexually or physically abused or could be abused in the future.

Even if you have never harmed a child or looked at child pornography, someone could still decide a child in your life (perhaps a younger brother or sister) is at risk because of your attraction and call the authorities. What the authorities do with this information (for example, whether they decide to investigate you) is completely out of the hands of the person making the report.

So before you discuss your attraction with any professional, it's important to know what could happen.

You could first ask them what they would do if someone your age disclosed a sexual interest in children to them. For example, "Ms. Jones, if a teenage client told you that

they were sexually attracted to children but hadn't acted on it yet, would you be required to report that?"

If she says yes, you could say, "Thank you, that's helpful," as a way to end the conversation.

If she says no, she might be someone you could tell if you decided to do that. You can also research the reporting laws in your state online or by anonymously contacting the **Stop It Now! Helpline** (Please see our [Resources page](#) for a link to Stop It Now!)

Now let's get back to information that can help you make decisions about sharing your attraction.

### **Why?**

Why do you want to tell someone about your attraction?

Maybe you want help or guidance from a parent, friend, or counselor. Maybe you're tired of keeping a secret from people you love. Maybe you just want to know that someone loves you even when they know this about you.

It's important to remember that once you talk about your attraction to younger children, you can't control how others view or use the information.

### **Why Do You Want to Tell Someone?**

Take a minute to think about why you might or might not want to tell someone about your attraction, and write your reason below.

There are many reasons you might want to tell someone about your attraction, and only you can decide if you're ready.

But there are also some reasons not to tell:

- If telling might result in you feeling unsafe or not having a safe place to live
- If the person you're planning to tell might share this private information about you without your permission
- If you're just not ready.

### **Who?**

Who are the people in your life you think you could trust with this information?

Talking to others who have similar experiences can be a good way to start. There are online forums where people discuss their experiences with their attraction to younger children and support each other in living safely, without harming children.

Family members or friends who have helped you with other problems might also be a good place to start.

There are some counselors with special training who can try to help you make sense of your feelings, and they can help you practice telling others about your attraction. Many of these counselors belong to **ATSA, the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers** (Please see our [Resources page](#) for a link to ATSA).

### **When?**

When is the right time to tell someone about your attraction?

You want to allow time to get to know someone and determine if they're supportive, reliable, and nonjudgmental.

When you decide you're ready to tell someone, try to allow enough time to discuss and explore the topic.

### **Where?**

Where should you tell someone about your attraction?

If you tell someone about your attraction online, choose a forum where the members seem respectful and supportive. And be sure that the members support each other in living safely, without harming children.

If you tell in person or on the phone, choose a private setting where you can talk openly.

### **What?**

What is the right amount of information to share?

The information you share might be different depending on who you're telling and why you're telling them.

If you're talking to a counselor to get help understanding or managing your thoughts and feelings, it would be appropriate to share more detailed information. If you're telling a family member or friend so they can understand and support you, it might not be necessary to give them a lot of personal details.

In the following activity, choose who you think is the best person to share each type of information with.

### **What to Share?**

For each situation, consider the best option from the list below for sharing information.

#### **Situations**

- You don't want to get together with family and friends because you're feeling depressed and ashamed about your attraction.
- You're wondering how other people manage their attractions, if they tell their parents, and what strategies they use to not offend.

- You're having fantasies that concern you, and you're feeling really anxious. You could really use someone to talk to.

### Options for Sharing

- counselor
- family member or friend
- online forum

### Answers

- You don't want to get together with family and friends because you're feeling depressed and ashamed about your attraction (**family member or friend**).
- You're wondering how other people manage their attractions, if they tell their parents, and what strategies they use to not offend (**online forum**).
- You're having fantasies that concern you, and you're feeling really anxious. You could really use someone to talk to (**counselor**).

### Having a Difficult Conversation

It can be hard for people close to you to hear about your attraction to younger children. And you're probably nervous about telling them.

Here are some tips for having conversations about your attraction.

- Think about what you want to say and make a few notes or a "script."
- Say you have something difficult to share that you hope they can help you with.
- Tell them how you hope they can help you (for example, to give you support or to find a counselor).
- Rather than saying "I'm a pedophile," consider starting with "I'm attracted to younger children." Most people assume a pedophile has sexually abused a child.
- Consider talking about your personal commitment not to harm anyone and your desire to have what everybody wants—to live a genuine, authentic, and healthy life surrounded by people who love and accept you.
- Ask if you can share an article or video about attraction to younger people with the person you are telling. People often don't know much about attractions like yours, so giving them information could be helpful. Please see our [Resources page](#) for suggested articles and videos.

Be prepared for people to have different reactions—they might be accepting, upset, supportive, or confused. They might not know what to say when you tell them, or they might need some time to think about what you said.

### How Did It Go?

Below are personal experiences from others who decided to tell—or not tell—someone about their attraction to younger children.

### Sharing Story One

"What I did with her was I sat her down and said, "Mom, there's something I would like you to read, and I'd like to talk about it afterward." Then I opened up the [Luke Malone] article with her, then I sat in absolute hell for 10 minutes while she read through it. She got about halfway through, and she turns to me and says, "Is this about you?"

Then I pretty much just broke down. I started to cry, I said, "No, Mom, it's not about me, but it's about people like me." That was pretty much my script, and then things got a little bit crazy after that. She did take it pretty well.

With my sister, I just said that there's something I need to tell you, "That I'm a pedophile." She gave me this really weird look. "Have you ever committed a violent crime?" I'm like, "No, I haven't." She's like, "That's really good. I read this article."

I came to a point, a crisis point, where I thought I can't bottle it up anymore. I have to just be me, and if the world rejects me, then so be it. I told a good friend of mine, and he was extremely accepting and still is. Then I told four more friends, and they've all accepted me. One is a little uncomfortable with it—fair enough. One rejected me outright, which was sad, but then I guess ultimately it's good to know who your real friends are.

For whatever reason, my mom and dad can't talk about emotions, particularly sexual attraction and stuff like that. I would feel deeply uncomfortable talking to them about my attraction to a woman let alone to a girl. It's none of their business in a way and it just wouldn't be the sort of thing we would talk about in our family."

### **Sharing Story Two**

"I think I was about 14 when I came out to one of my friends. I emphasized my understanding, my feelings about it, but it was very difficult.

It actually went okay because there was a lot of preparation. There was a lot of buildup in the conversation before I actually came out with it. I really emphasized that I don't want to cause any harm to anybody, and I don't choose to be like this. They weren't massively shocked because of the way I explained it.

It's still difficult, as it's always going to be, in the sense that it's a very, very risky thing to disclose to somebody, even if you knew them your whole entire life. It has gotten a little easier because in recent years I received therapeutic work for these attractions. There are a lot of people who I've had to explain it to, so it's become a lot easier."

### **Sharing Story Three**

"I don't think I'll tell my family. I've got one person who knows about it, and I've got a mental health therapist who knows about my issue. I think that is the best way because if

I lose a friend, yeah, it'll be sad but not forever. Whereas if I lose family, I lose that support."

#### **Sharing Story Four**

"There is a little bit of a fear that people wouldn't like me if this came out. I don't want this to be just kind of general public knowledge, because even if you've never done anything, people can have a little bit of a mob mentality when it comes to pedophilia. I have considered telling my friends on an individual basis, but it's just kind of like this would be possibly a long conversation, and this is just not something they need to know. They don't need to know what I'm attracted to. This is not a major part of my life. There's no point in telling them, and it would be hard to tell them, so yeah, why would I?"

#### **Conclusion**

It's a big deal to tell someone about your attraction. We hope this information helps you with this important decision.

If you decide to tell someone, think about the appropriate information to share, choose the best time and place to talk, and prepare yourself for the conversation.

And if you decide that you're not ready to tell anyone about your attraction, that's okay too.

The [Resources](#) section of this site contains information you can share to help people learn more about young people attracted to younger children and how they can lead happy, full, and safe lives.

**END**