

Ritual Abuse FAQ

What is Ritual Abuse?

Most sexual abuse of children is ritualised in some way. Abusers use repetition, routine and ritual to coerce children into patterns of behaviour in order to instil fear and ensure silence.

The sexual abuse of children is never a random act, it always involves thorough planning and preparation. A paedophile ring will often be geared up to record abuse on film and to distribute it as material to gratify themselves and to prepare children for abuse.

Some groups use elaborate rituals in order to terrify children into silence, by convincing them of the absolute power of their abusers. Religious practices and beliefs may be invoked. Gods and demons can be enlisted to serve the abusers and animals may be tortured, killed or reincarnated to demonstrate the power of the group.

Abusers exploit the trust that children are taught and feed their imaginations with terror.

What is Spiritual Ritual Abuse

Ritual abuse is "a calculated, systematic process whereby individuals may be brainwashed and programmed, using different methods, to disown and distort their own sense of self and reality." In such abuse "triggers" and programming may have been placed around primary biological and survival functions, including eating, sleeping, breathing, sexuality, elimination, emotions, the five senses, and human bonding. Individuals may have been forced and manipulated into breaking primary bonds to survive emotionally and physically. This may have involved forced participation in the torture, murder, dismemberment, and cannibalism of animals and humans that individuals may have known and even loved.

Ritual abuse is particularly insidious as it is often repeated over time, and in many cases is a trans-generational issue, as the secrecy surrounding these 'ceremonies' makes it additionally difficult for the cycle of abuse to be broken. Furthermore, the elaborate and sadistic nature of the abuse creates another veil of protection for the perpetrator as the survivors' account can be erroneously dismissed as too extreme to be easily believable.

Ritual abuse is more likely to occur in the context of small religious sects, high control groups, and in highly secretive and authoritarian families. Abuse may continue through several generations of family members, or adult members of religious sects, as children grow up, become indoctrinated, and continue the pattern of abuse.

What is the purpose/goal of Ritual Abuse?

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The goals of the ritual abuse are to completely control the individual and often to instill a life-view and philosophy espoused by the group, allowing them to maintain control over the individual and keep them from leaving. No one knows the extent of, or exact numbers of people victimised by, ritual abuse. Many survivors are not able to process the abuse until later in life, at which time memories can be confusing. Listening to descriptions of such extreme forms of abuse can be unsettling for a counsellor; society at large has not shown a readiness to believe that RA happens.

Is all ritual abuse Satanic?

No, Some child abusers may use Satanism to frighten young victims to maintain control. The abuser does not follow occult practices and use Satan as a threat. Abuse linked to faith or belief is where concerns for a child's welfare have been identified, and could be caused by, a belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual or satanic abuse features; or when practices linked to faith or belief are harmful to a child

Reva Seybolt, author of "Understanding Ritual Abuse" describes these general categories of abuse:

True cult-based ritual abuse involves an elaborate belief system and an attempt to create a particular spiritual or social system. The sexual abuse of children or adults is not an ultimate or major goal, but part of the group's method of operations.

Pseudo-ritual abuse-uses methodical, repetitive, ritualistic practices that appear similar to cult-based abuse, but are not part of an elaborate belief system. The sexual abuse of children or adults is a primary motivational factor.

Psychopathological ritual abuse includes ritualistic abuse of children or adults as part of the obsessive or delusional system of an individual or small group; the abuse may or may not involve sexual or religious preoccupations and compulsions.

What are some signs of Ritual Abuse?

Those who have experienced ritual abuse often display signs of being affected by trauma, and the effects of abuse may be long-term. Survivors may dissociate and experience extreme reactions to events and situations that bear some similarity to situations in which they were abused. They may become either fascinated with certain ritualised objects or symbols or develop a phobia of them. The effects of trauma and abuse are often long-lasting. Many who experience ritual abuse may not speak out or seek help for fear they will not be believed or because they have been brainwashed into accepting the abuse as normal. There are a range of emotional and psychological issues that survivors may experience as a result of ritual abuse, some of the most common are:

Some symptoms some survivors might display are:

Sleep issues (nightmares).

Mood swings.

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Uncontrollable rage or crying.

Suicidal thoughts.

Self-harm.

Addiction.

Eating and food issues.

Panic or terror.

Post-traumatic stress disorder.

Dissociative identity disorder.

Intense and overwhelming flashbacks to the time of the abuse.

Symbols or places associated with ritual abuse are triggering.

A preoccupation with death and suicidal thoughts.

Addiction issues.

Intimacy issues.