Dear Alice,

This may seem like a stupid question, but I'm eighteen years old, and I recently read a book in which there was a girl who had been molested by her father. One of the things that she did was poke holes in the female genitals of her dolls. Now I distinctly remember doing that with my dolls when I was a lot younger. Is this normal, or could there be "something" in my past? I don't remember anything, and don't want to try and make up something that was never there, but how can I be sure?

Answer

Dear Reader,

This is not a stupid question. Truthfully, there is no way of knowing for sure. The fact that you had the same doll play as a woman in a story who was molested by her father may be coincidence, or it may have meaning. There are questions that you can ask yourself to help you see if this situation, or a related one, may have occurred and had some impact. For example, if you had an unwanted childhood sexual experience, what might it mean to you? How is your current level of functioning? How is your life unfolding? For example, are you in school? Do you have a job? Do you have friends? How is your relationship with your mother? Father? Family? Have you had meaningful relationships or friendships with both girls and boys (when you were younger), or men and women (currently)? How happy are you in life? Do you have goals for yourself? Self worth? A sense of humor?

Positive answers to these questions are some indicators of a well-balanced and productive life. If you have these, or elements of these, then delving into an intensely emotional and difficult issue such as this may not be beneficial to you. Try to think about how important it is to you to sort through your feelings on this topic and how/if this process would help you lead a more fulfilling life. This is not to minimize the important issue of molestation; however, sexual molestation is often an issue for an individual when the psychological or physical effects interfere with the quality of his or her life.

To learn more about childhood molestation and its impact, you can look at many books on the subject. A good one to read is Ellen Bass and Laura Davis's book, *The Courage to Heal: A Guide to Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*. As you read them, see if anything seems somehow familiar. If it does, or if your quality of life is somehow compromised, then it would be important ? in fact, an investment in yourself ? to get help.
Columbia students can call Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) [2] at x4-2468 to make an appointment. Otherwise, call your health care provider and ask for a referral to a therapist; or, contact the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT) [3] for the name of a therapist who works with these issues near you.

Alice!
Category:
Child Abuse [4]

Related questions
Molested as a child: Promiscuous as an adult? [5]
Multiple personality disorder [6]
Published date:
Apr 26, 1996
Last reviewed on:
May 11, 2007

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.
If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/possible-childhood-sexual-abuse#comment-0

Links