

# **Finding Children Sexually Attractive**

*This booklet is for anyone who finds that they are sexually attracted to children. In it, people talk in their own words about their own experiences and provide advice on how to handle this situation.*

*I hope you will find this booklet encouraging, helpful and inspiring!*

## About This Booklet

By writing this booklet, I want to break through the loneliness and worry which you may feel, and let you know that there are others who feel similar to you. There is very little information written which includes direct quotations from those adults (usually but not always men) who have this sexual attraction, and there is a lot of confusion and misinformation on this topic. This booklet will provide you with a route-map for handling this situation, with examples of people who have been dealing competently with their sexual feelings for many years.

This booklet is based on research. I have a doctorate in sociology and from 2004 to 2010 I studied and wrote about the experiences of self-defined paedophiles. In 2006 – 08 I conducted the **MAA (Minor-Attracted Adults) Daily Lives Project** and received information from 56 men and women living ordinary lives in different countries around the world. Many of these people had told no-one about their sexual feelings. A few had the support of family and friends, and others took advice from sites on the internet.

From the research I wrote two books, *Understanding and Addressing Adult Sexual Attraction to Children*, and *Paedophiles in Society*, both available to buy as books or to download as e-books. They will give you more information if needed.

*All the quotations shown below are from people who participated in the research, or people who contacted me because they read my books and wanted me to know about their experiences. (To protect confidentiality, none of the names given are real names, and some of the quotations have been altered slightly.)*

## Realising Your Sexual Attraction To Children

*This happens at different times for different people, but many people find that they first realise they are sexually attracted to children sometime during their teenage years. For some, they are immediately certain that they are sexually attracted to children. For others, it is a gradually dawning realisation.*

*"I came to full realization of what my sexual attractions were when I was about twelve. I went home for the summer after 7<sup>th</sup> grade not knowing I was attracted to children. I arrived the first term of 8<sup>th</sup> grade to find my middle school filled with all these younger boys (the new 7<sup>th</sup> graders) who looked extremely attractive to me." (Gus)*

*"I've felt attractions to children since I was a child, but it was only during late puberty that my age started pulling noticeably away from the ages of girls I was attracted to. Only relatively recently have I actually admitted to myself that I am a paedophile." (Kristof)*

*"The awareness grew quite slowly beginning about 20 years ago, culminating in a critical threshold experience about 10 years ago, when I profoundly loved a neighbour boy." (Frank)*

*"I remember going through my Grandma's *Cosmopolitan* magazines and coming across an article on paedophilia – this was my first real encounter with that term, and I recognized that that's what I was, though at that stage I really thought it was just a phase and I'd eventually outgrow it. Obviously I never did." (Martin)*

## What Is It That Attracts You?

*Some people are sexually attracted to adults as well as children. You may find yourself attracted to boys as well as women or men, for example, or only to young girls or boys. For many paedophiles, sexual attraction may be only one part of the mix. Some people have described to me an attraction that they find intensely emotional and spiritual, and for them this may be a more important part of their feelings than the sexual aspect.*

“What most attracts me is the changes that puberty causes, whether it’s physically, mentally or socially. It’s the process of flowering open that captivates me.” (Dirk)

“I am moved by little girls in many ways: emotionally, erotically, relationally, aesthetically, imaginatively, spiritually.” (William)

“There is something exciting about boys being right on the brink of puberty, between childhood and adolescence. It feels like a magical time.” (Jerry)

“I like their faces, their voices, the shape of their bodies, the way they act; just about everything.” (Kristof)

“I feel very comfortable and happy when I am in the company of girls aged 8 to 13 years old, and they seem happy to be in my company too. Whilst I will admit that there is a sexual element there because of my sexuality, sex is just a small part of the whole equation. I can’t think of anything I would like to do more than simply spend some time in their company.” (Bill)

“To me, the form and shape of the prepubescent or early pubescent body is *much* more appealing than a ‘developed’ female. I also find the personalities of most girls aged 2 to 12 years to be utterly joyous. Happy little girls just seem to be bursting with enthusiasm, and being around them fills me with joy.” (Thomas)

## Having Sexual Fantasies

*Absolutely everyone has sexual fantasies at some time or another. For some people, these may be occasional and not a very important part of their lives. For others, they are very frequent and intense. You may wonder what you should do about sexual fantasies that you have involving children. Feeling guilty about your fantasies may make the problem worse. People have described how they can choose to steer their sexual fantasies so that they can enrich their lives without leading to any harm to actual children.*

“I have two types of fantasies, daily. The first type is more like a daydream where I imagine including little girls in my daily activities. I could be driving to the store, and I will imagine that a little girl was going with me, and imagine what we would talk about on the ride there. If I’m eating a meal alone, I sometimes imagine that I’m sharing that meal with a little girl, and imagine what we would talk about as we ate. The second type would be sexual fantasies where I imagine engaging in sexual activities with little girls. The sexual fantasies are masturbation fantasies. Combined with legal pictures of little girls, the sexual fantasies are my only sexual outlet. My wife and I do not have sex.” (Thomas)

“I have two kinds of fantasies about relationships with children. One I find acceptable and the other I tolerate as a means of self-control. In the first kind I fantasise playing games, hugging, wrestling, singing, going on adventures, just hanging out and doing stuff together. These fantasies sometimes involve real boys in my life. The second kind of fantasy is sexual. I am careful not to use real boys that I know in these fantasies. I don’t feel completely at ease with these fantasies but if I don’t have regular sexual release I find myself tempted to fantasise about real boys, to follow boys around in shopping centres and public places.” (Louis)

"I am sure that if a person has sexual fantasies and feeds them thinking about a boy he knows, the step towards acting on them is smaller. In my opinion (and experience) it is safer to minimise sexual fantasies about someone you know." (Oscar)

"When I first started having sexual fantasies about young girls as an adolescent they made me feel very guilty and ashamed, and I felt like a bad person because of them, but now I do not feel any guilt about them. As far as I am concerned they do not harm anyone and I do not feel any reason to be ashamed of them anymore." (Bill)

"I have fantasies very often – several times each day. It allows me to express myself sexually in the only legal way that I can do that; because of this, it acts as a release of sexual frustration and tension. It is also sometimes quite a reflective experience: it allows me to reflect on my feelings." (William)

"I have learned to embrace my fantasies without encouraging them. I have found that when I sought to deny my thoughts they became intrusive over the course of my day-to-day life." (Xavier)

"My fantasy-life is rich and varied - in response, I suppose, to my not engaging in any real-life sexual behaviour." (Jerry)

"I alleviate my fantasies / desires through masturbation, but I also channel my thoughts and feelings toward my art and my fiction. In other words, I seek healthy outlets that do not involve actual children in any direct way." (Martin)

"I sometimes feel guilty about it, but I remind myself that I am only attracted to the child's body for reasons that are beyond my control." (Justin)

## **Tempted To Use Child Pornography?**

*You may be surprised to discover that there are many paedophiles who have chosen never to use child pornography (images of the sexual abuse of children). Some have found that they became 'addicted' to viewing and collecting these images. Anyone using the internet is likely to find a range of attitudes towards this issue, but there are online forums where you can discuss your sexual feelings without being tempted to view illegal images.*

"I feel that producers of child porn should be arrested and 'put away' for a long time." (Martin)

"I do not need any child pornography and I am against it. It violates the privacy of a child." (Pete)

"In some forums, people are encouraged to view barely legal photo gallery sites. I think that's a bad thing and it could easily serve as a gateway to truly illegal pornography and it's an invitation to porn addiction." (Gus)

"If any image of a child causes the viewer to be aroused then I would say that looking at that image would be questionable for that individual. Some members of the online community want to throw porn at you. It is important to identify these guys quickly and steer well clear of them if you wish to avoid temptation." (Louis)

"If I use visual imagery of minors, my fantasy is being focused on boys I don't know, so that's safer. On the other hand, if those visual images contain pornography, the sexual component of my feelings is being aroused. I think you should not arouse the sexual component, nor ignore it. There must be a balance between both. This balance could be using non-pornographic nude boy-pictures. But I know from others that they have a different balance-system." (Oscar)

"Someone taking pictures of real children for the purpose of sexual arousal is wrong, in my view. When it comes to pornographic cartoons and 'virtual porn', I am not so sure. There are good reasons for it to be both legal or illegal." (Justin)

"I've been arrested for child porn. It was the worst time in my life. It was hard before, but when arrested it caused me to break down, have suicidal thoughts." (Marc)

## **If You Are Worried That Your Actions May Harm A Child, What Should You Do?**

*Realising that you find children sexually attractive, you may think that you are a 'monster' and that you cannot stop yourself from sexually abusing a child. This is absolutely not true. You are just the same as everyone else, with the same ability to be self-controlled as anyone else. If you feel you are at breaking point, there is help out there for you.*

"I once thought this about myself, but only because society said it must be true. I never honestly thought I was a dangerous person, but I was still convinced that someday I would ruin a child's life forever. Since accepting myself for who I am, my attraction has become something I can safely manage." (Xavier)

"Remove yourself from the situation. If this means physically removing yourself from your own home, then so be it. If this is a case where you are under so much pressure that you cannot handle it, you think you are about to break and lose control of yourself, perhaps do something violent, I would have to say that you need to find some way to cope, and may have to resort to professional help (as much as I might hate to say so, because of the dangers in doing such)." (Steve)

"If anyone is worried that they are a danger to children, they should seek professional advice." (William)

"Take yourself out of the path of temptation, seek the help of other MAAs (minor-attracted adults) to help reinforce your sense of ethics and responsibility for the welfare of children." (Clive)

"Stay away from children until you can control your urges." (Bernice)

"1) Don't act on your attraction because you would be putting children at risk. 2) Don't think you're a bad person because of your attraction." (Ben)

"Discussing things with other MAAs is probably appropriate. I also advocate finding a passion one can pursue, painting, writing, music, gardening, anything to help fill the empty spaces inside." (Quentin)

"Talking about it will probably help. Just because you have such an attraction, it doesn't mean that you don't have the same self-control that 'normal' people do." (Kristof)

## What Is It Like Being A Paedophile?

*Here are a range of things which paedophiles have told me they want other people to know about them, so that everyone can understand more clearly what it is like being sexually attracted to children.*

"I will not act illegally with children, and I am not a slave to my sexual desires. I have worked with children now for many years, as a primary school teacher, and have never once acted illegally or inappropriately with them. That will not change." (William)

"The first thing I would like the public to know is that we are not child molesters. It is the equivalent of making a study of men that have raped women, and then drawing the conclusion that all heterosexual men are rapists, and that they have uncontrollable sexual desires that they cannot suppress. ... Society is helping to create its own monsters. In treating us as animals and scum, you are risking turning a small minority of us into just that." (Bill)

"Many of us are happy, well-adjusted, and mentally stable." (Gus)

"We are like everyone else – some of us are good, some are average, and a handful are bad." (Martin)

"We have morals, empathy and restraint but being targets of hatred and labelling doesn't help anyone." (Oliver)

"We aren't monsters!! We don't want to rape your kids, and we don't fantasise about it! We're just like you." (Anne)

"It's not easy being a paedophile, that's for sure. I need to be around little girls to be happy, and for my life to not be stupid and pointless. That is the most difficult part of being a paedophile. I think pedophilia is a very beautiful thing, even if we have to be in this situation." (Ben)

"Paedophilic feelings are only one aspect of life. These feelings *may* or *may not* form the kernel of someone's identity. Identity is always much broader." (Pete)

"I think MAAs are born (or develop at a young age) and we need guidance on how to become good, responsible MAAs. MAAs need positive role models. Unfortunately, the only thing a young, confused MAA is likely to see in the media are negative examples and negative comments equating minor attraction with brutal child molestation." (Thomas)

"Paedophiles have the same drive for sex and intimacy other people do and simply demanding they be celibate is both unrealistic and inhumane. It is possible to have compassion for people who are sexually attracted to children without condoning sex between children and adults." (Justin)

"People need education about paedophilia. It should be taught in classes just like when discussing gay relationships. The more they know about us, the more they will understand and not be afraid." (Max)

"There are far more of us than they know about, and many of us are caring for their children, and are not the same kinds of people who end up in jail for forcing themselves on children." (Bernice)

"I know I am a good person of worth who can live a healthy life legally and morally. Our attractions do not define us; it is merely one aspect. We did not choose it, but we can choose how we act. Our attraction does not imply any kind of behaviour. All people deserve equal respect, and have a right to be judged only for how they act, not what they think." (Victor)

"We are normal people. A certain fetish does not imply lack of impulse control." (Derek)

"Putting yourself in a pigeonhole is no good. It does not matter what you are, but who you are." (Vincent)

## Advice From Paedophiles:

*I asked paedophiles what advice they would give to someone who discovers that they feel sexually attracted towards children. Here is what they said.*

“The most important piece of advice for someone who is discovering they are sexually attracted to children is, without a doubt, to understand what they are and what they are not, and to accept it. But to someone who is still wondering, I would say, whatever you do – don’t get into porn because many people do and don’t get out until they are in prison.” (Gus)

“Never place yourself in a compromising situation, and if ever tempted to do anything that may break the law or harm a child *in any way*, step well back from the situation, give yourself time and space to breathe and think, and then reconsider your actions. ... If you want to have relationships with children, then there is nothing wrong with this, as long as you can accept that you can only ever be a friend to them.” (Bill)

“Accept yourself as you are. Speak about it with trusted people. Find ways to live legally and socially.” (Pete)

“This is what I find helps: (1) Have a strict policy of never being alone with other people’s kids. (2) Go off and masturbate when I feel inclined to do something I would regret. (3) Talk about my struggle with other adults who will encourage me to appropriate behaviour. (4) Focus on my relationship with God through prayer and Scripture reading.” (Louis)

“Don’t try to deny it. Denial is a recipe for internal anguish and for suddenly ‘acting out’.” (Thomas)

“First and foremost, always obey the laws. Accept yourself for who you are and don’t fret about not having a sexual relationship with a child. Concentrate on making the life / lives of the child(ren) you love better and in just being there for them when they need you.” (Martin)

“These things settle, unless one really worries about it. In some people, it’s also just a passing phase.” (Vern)

“People should examine themselves closely and make sure that the attraction is not a cop-out or a coping mechanism for their failure to attract an age-peer.” (Clive)

“Don’t take any notice at all of the media / public stereotypes. What is ethically important is not the type of person one is attracted to, but the manner in which one responds to those feelings. Don’t worry about it – accept yourself.” (William)

“Get involved in the online community. Learn from others who are in your same situation. Get accountable and supported.” (Louis)

“You are *not* a monster, and you are *not* going to rape anyone just because you find them attractive. There are many people out there coping with this the same way you are, and if you can’t go it alone there are places you can talk to someone. Just take it easy, everything’s okay.” (Xavier)

## Where Do You Go From Here?

The message of this booklet is that a person's sexual attraction is not a reason or an excuse for criminal behaviour.

There are many individuals who experience sexual attraction to children who have chosen to live satisfying, moral lives as law-abiding citizens.

It can be a tough road. Some paedophiles wish they were born differently; others are happy and content with who they are and with their lives.

## ***The most important things to take away from this booklet are:***

- 1) Being sexually attracted to children does not make you a monster.
- 2) You are not responsible for your feelings, but you *are* responsible for your actions.
- 3) *Any* sexual contact with children is illegal and is harmful.
- 4) Using child pornography is dangerous and harmful for you and for the children involved. Many people successfully avoid using it.
- 5) Be a safe person around children.
- 6) Tell people you trust and be honest with them.
- 7) There is confidential and helpful support for you, for example through Stop It Now! (a specialist child protection charity). There are also some online discussion and chat forums which can be helpful and where you will find understanding, advice and encouragement to remain law-abiding.
- 8) Many people are dealing competently and successfully with this situation. You haven't heard about them because they're just quietly getting on with their lives.



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