

One in Six: A Man's Guide to Overcoming Childhood Sexual Abuse

Russell Stagg

FriesenPress

(210pp)

978-1-03-917553-2

One in Six is a supportive self-help text for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Russell Stagg's self-help book *One in Six* addresses the trauma of the childhood sexual abuse of boys with bravery and compassion.

Drawing on national surveys, scientific research, and a decade of clinical experience as a trauma therapist, Stagg initiates a conversation around the taboo subject of men who are victims of sexual assault. Almost half of all sexual abuse is experienced by men, the book notes, and most boys are victimized by women abusers; family members are common culprits. The book defines forms of sexual abuse, outlines its mercurial symptoms, and delves into the minutiae of embarking on new, healthier life patterns.

Written for survivors of childhood sexual abuse looking to overcome their traumas, the book's recommendations range from instantaneous ones ("if material in this book triggers you, *stop reading immediately*") to holistic tips such as "if you have a substance abuse problem, you can't fully recover from child sexual abuse unless you get clean and sober." There is an introduction to PTSD alongside frank discussions of addiction and survivor's guilt. The book also undertakes a broad examination of self-care, successful therapy, and healthy friendships. Its analyses and recommendations are grounded by examples—both those of former patients and from Stagg's personal history.

Whether examining statistical data or explaining how to find a good therapist, the prose is candid, warm, and knowledgeable. It moves to support survivors at every stage of recovery—addressing financial behavior, traumas associated with a religion in which "God stands for an angry perpetrator, and forgiveness means excusing someone who hurt you," anger management tools, and relapse triggers too. Rather than suggesting one-size-fits-all diagnoses and prescriptions, it is a grab bag of useful information and strategies tied together by an empathetic guide.

At its most raw and difficult, the book delves into the fraught subject of forgiveness, asking questions about whether survivors are obligated to forgive their perpetrators or themselves. It proposes letting go of expectations, accepting that damage cannot be reversed or undone, and knowing that active individual agency is crucial to repair. In this way, it guides childhood sexual abuse survivors through every aspect of recovery, from the most harrowing to the most mundane.

One in Six is a supportive self-help text for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Its solace-giving pages raise awareness about catastrophes that occur in plain sight.

WILLEM MARX (September 11, 2023)

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