

# Strategies for coping emotionally after a wrongful allegation of child sexual abuse

*This FACTsheet is based on the responses to a questionnaire in 2017 returned by 43 people who had either been the victim of a false allegation of CSA or were their friends and relatives.*

## **In the immediate aftermath of the investigation**

1. **Talk** about your situation with close family and friends. You may be surprised how supportive they are. The majority of those responding to the questionnaire found them helpful. If your work place prohibits you from speaking to anyone, get legal advice because this avenue of support is vital and could be life-saving.
2. **Phone FACT's helpline on 0843 289 2016**. You can also speak to the **Samaritans on 116 123** (in the UK and the Republic of Ireland). Don't keep it all to yourself. We will listen and understand what you are going through.
3. Get good **specialist legal advice** from a team that will support you and believe in your innocence. FACT can help you find a good solicitor.
4. **See your GP** as soon as possible. Your doctor can help you look after your mental and physical health at this difficult time and can keep a record of your suffering. Don't be afraid to take medication such as antidepressants and sleeping tablets.
5. **Contact your Union** and/or professional indemnity insurance provider.
6. **Don't talk to the media**; if necessary let your legal advisor do the talking for you.

## **In the longer term**

1. Keep in touch with family and friends, and **keep talking**.
2. Make use of **FACT's support**, come to FACT conferences and speak to other members of FACT who are in the same situation as you. We understand what you are going through because we have been there too. FACT's website has many helpful resources.
3. Continue to visit your doctor, and take medication if prescribed.

4. You will feel better if you can **take active steps to regain some control** of the situation. Some of the strategies recommended by our respondents are:
  - a. Get involved in campaigning for justice for the wrongfully accused.
  - b. Support others in the same situation.
  - c. Research the allegation and/or the complainant
  - d. Help your legal team prepare your defence.
  - e. Keep a diary, including detailed notes of meetings, correspondence and phone calls.
  - f. Research false memories and the phenomenon of wrongful allegations.
  - g. Read accounts of other victims of wrongful allegations.
  
5. These **psychological strategies** can help control your anxiety and depression.
  - a. Try to keep your anxiety in a separate “compartment” of your mind.
  - b. Limit the amount of time during the day during which you and your partner/spouse discuss the situation.
  - c. Try to live in the moment. You may want to learn and practise the technique of ‘mindfulness’.
  
6. These **distraction techniques** can also help control your mood.
  - a. Exercise, such as long walks.
  - b. Keep busy.
  - c. Go on weekends away or holidays somewhere completely different.
  - d. Visit family and friends.
  - e. Listening to music, watching escapist or comedy films and TV can be helpful.
  - f. Take up a creative hobby or find a constructive project.
  - g. Do voluntary work.
  
7. **Counselling** can be helpful, but check their confidentiality policy first. Some counsellors will feel they need to pass on information about you if they (mistakenly) think you are a risk to others.
  
8. If you visit your **priest or faith leader** bear in mind that they may have an obligation to take safeguarding measures which may restrict what you can do in your faith community. You may want to seek spiritual support elsewhere.
  
9. **Keep drugs and alcohol under control**, over indulging can damage your health and can make your anxiety and depression worse.

**Useful Phone Numbers**

FACT helpline **0843 289 2016**

Samaritans (UK and Ireland) **116 123**