

For survivors whose sexual abuse involved forced sexual contact with animals

Written by Kate

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Sexual abuse involving animals is a hard topic to talk about – so hard in fact that many of us never utter the words of our story out loud to another living person. It is a particularly degrading and soul-destroying way to abuse a person, leaving the person feeling dehumanised, humiliated, filthy and disgusting. While it may not feel true, it is important to remember that there are others out there who have experienced the same thing you have – you are not alone. In fact, the sexual abuse of animals is often linked to the sexual abuse of humans (Kowal, 1998), and has been recorded in (but is not limited to) cases of ritual abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, and has a quite large market in the pornography industry. Please bear in mind that this article may be triggering to some as you decide whether or not to read on.

Please know that for ease of wording, the words "rape" and "sexual abuse" have been used interchangeably throughout this article - however, whether your experience involved any form of penetration or not, what happened to you was horrible, traumatic, and real. You deserve to be able to acknowledge this, and heal from it too.

"I feel so dirty and alone"

There are many reasons why sexual abuse involving animals holds so much shame for the survivor. There is a very strong social stigma against people who sexually abuse or rape animals, often referred to as "bestiality", and in many places it is rightfully considered animal cruelty and is a crime. For a survivor who has been forced to be sexually involved with animals, this can leave them feeling perverted, guilty and ashamed for "participating" in the act. The truth is though that you were a victim in that moment. Whatever it was that you had to do to the animal, or the animal was made to do to you, was not your fault – you had absolutely no control over what happened.

Sexual abuse involving animals can leave the survivor feeling less than human. It is soul destroying to know that the person who forced this upon you did it solely to degrade and

humiliate you. Sexual abuse directly at the hands of the perpetrator often results in some form of physical sexual pleasure to the abuser, however small, but when that abuser forces sexual contact between the victim and an animal, watching the rape is simply about humiliation, domination, control, and exploitation of both the human and animal victims. It is hard to understand how anybody could do this to another person and dehumanising to know that the perpetrator received some form of sadistic gratification from forcing you into that situation. Feeling so powerless and degraded, forced into something that we all are taught is wrong and disgusting, leads the survivor to feel a very deep shame, a feeling of being inhuman and outside the sphere of what is normal and acceptable.

Another source of shame is the silence and isolation that surrounds sexual abuse involving animals. Shame festers when it is pushed deep inside and never given a voice. The truth is that animal rape is something that many survivors have experienced, even though they haven't been able to talk about it. For example, one study by Fleming et al. (2002) examining the behaviour of juvenile sex offenders found that of those who had engaged in sex with animals, 96 percent admitted to sexual abuse against humans as well. They also appeared to be more prolific in their abuse, where those participants admitting to bestiality reported a much higher rate of sexual abuse against humans than other sex offenders in the same age and racial group. While the study did not explore whether these perpetrators inflicted animal rape on their human victims, it is validating to know that sexual abuse against animals and people are very much linked. Experts in the field, such as Ascione and Arkow (1999) recognise that these perpetrators in turn can include sexual abuse involving animals in their abuse of people, and urge people in roles of support, such as therapists, doctors and crisis workers to be aware of this when working with survivors.

A study by Walker (1984) of women in violent relationships, found that bestiality was one of the "unusual sex acts" desired by their abusers in an effort to cause further humiliation and torment. In the sample group, 41 percent of the women in violent relationships that included physical violence also experienced some form of forced sexual contact with an animal, or had it requested of them. In violent relationships that did not include physical violence, the same was found in 5 percent of the the participants. What all of these findings show is that while you may feel completely alone in your experience, the truth is you are not.

What does being a survivor of sexual abuse involving animals make me?

Many survivors feel that their abuse makes them inhuman, tainted and unclean. They are afraid to tell anybody what they have been through for fear those people will judge them, look down on them, or assume that they must now be perverted themselves. They feel ashamed to have done something so taboo. It is important to recognise that what you went through was not your fault. You had no choice in it. Your experience was not bestiality – which is when somebody willingly chooses to have sexual contact with an animal – but rape and sexual abuse. While you may feel humiliated or degraded, please know that an act forced upon you by another person has no power to take away your worth or your value as a unique human being.

It can be hard sometimes to define what happened to you. Some survivors struggle with calling it rape or sexual abuse because they feel by saying that they are putting the responsibility onto the animal for what happened, as if the animal had a malicious and determined intent to hurt you. It might help to imagine the animal as simply the tool of the perpetrator. Survivors who have been raped with foreign objects know that what happened to them is rape, even if the object wasn't the perpetrator's genitals, hands, or mouth. In the same way, the perpetrator's plan was for you to be raped or sexually abused by the animal - it is rape regardless of whether or not they did it themselves.

It's also very normal to struggle with feeling that your story is unbelievable, and that people will think you are lying. This form of abuse is extreme - I think only the people who perpetrate this kind of abuse can understand why they do it. If you do a search online for any terms relating to this, whether it be "bestiality", "animal rape", "sexual abuse by animals", or "sexual abuse involving animals", you will get all kinds of results - many of them, unfortunately, from pornography sites featuring stories or photographs depicting this. We all know those kinds of sites are out there, those kinds of pictures and stories, we've all heard jokes about bestiality, we've all heard stories in the news about it - it isn't much of a stretch to imagine that some people would use this same thing that we all hear about and use it to hurt people. The limits of what people are willing to do to each other seem endless - what happened to you is believable, and most of all, we know that it does and can happen.

Will I ever heal from this?

In short, yes, you can heal from this. This form of abuse is very severe, and has a long-lasting impact on the survivor, but it is possible to heal the shame and hurt you feel. For more information about healing from sexual abuse involving animals, please see this article: [How to heal from animal rape.](#) Some of the most important things to remember as you heal are that you are not alone, you are not to blame for what happened, and your story does not need to be stuffed down in silence and shame.

My story of surviving sexual abuse involving an animal

This section will be triggering due to its content – please weigh that with your current feelings to decide if you can read on or not.

My story is one that is still very much in process, but I am sharing it to help anybody reading know that they truly are not alone. For many years, I was sure I was the only person on earth who had been through this kind of thing, I felt sick and perverted. What I experienced as a child is something that has brought me a great deal of shame, guilt, and embarrassment, and while I am healing, those feelings still come and go. An important step in my healing was to be able to recognise that when I was abused I did not have even a shred of control – to accept that what happened was not my fault.

The sexual abuse I endured was perpetrated by my kindergarten teacher and her partner. As the abuse progressed, it eventually included the dog the children at the centre played with. The first time I remember it happening, the man held me to the floor by sitting on my stomach, pulled my legs apart, and encouraged the dog to lick my “private area”, while they both watched. Saying that even now brings a wave of disbelief that it could truly have happened, and humiliation, but at the time it was a million times worse and I wanted to sink into the ground and disappear, anything to get away from that room. I was also made to masturbate the dog, with the man giving me instructions on what to do, afterwards telling me how dirty I was, how my “secret” was safe with him. It didn't go much further than this, but I remember it happening many times. I was only four years old, but even then I knew that what was happening was very, very wrong and something to never tell about.

As I grew up, I developed a great sense of shame and alienation from my friends and the

other people around me. Kids at school made the inevitable jokes about bestiality, about the people who engaged in that being freaks and perverts and sick. They joked about pictures they found online, and how messed up it was. I knew I could never tell anybody, that they would quickly say the same thing about me. I felt different from everybody else because of the sexual abuse, but that part of it was the real clincher. In the end, I felt that if I just pretended it didn't happen, I'd be okay.

That strategy worked for several years, but as I began working on my healing I felt that there was a great big road-block to getting past my shame about the past. I felt I had finally been able to place the responsibility and blame for the abuse onto the people who hurt me throughout my life, and I couldn't see why that didn't translate into no longer feeling ashamed, as I thought it should. A corny light-bulb moment came when I realised that I couldn't release the sense of shame because of that part of my past I had ignored, and I knew it was time to face it.

The healing process was long, and it is certainly still going. There was a time when I felt completely degraded. Even my body repulsed me - I felt like every square centimetre of it was unclean. That feeling eventually passed with healing work, but it was very painful time. I remembered all the times I'd told people how much I loved dogs, the dogs that I'd patted and hugged and kissed, and the shame that came up was like a tidal wave crushing my insides. I didn't know how anybody could even look at me without feeling revolted. It really was a period of feeling utterly dehumanised and alone.

My first steps were to write about it, in a diary just for me, to process the memories and the feelings. As I went, I started to feel more and more like I wanted to talk about this out loud, I didn't want to keep it tucked away in silence any more. I tried to tell my partner, but couldn't get the words out, so I talked about it online instead. The people who replied were supportive, and caring, and they didn't seem to blame me or think any less of me which was unexpected. Regardless, the vulnerability and rawness I felt at sharing something so painful was too much, and I pushed it all back down again for a couple more years.

It wasn't until I went through a break-up in my relationship that I started thinking about it again. The emotions I had from the break-up paralleled the emotions from the abuse, of being unlovable, unworthy, and inherently bad. I found that I couldn't get the memories of what happened with the dog out of my mind. Eventually, I decided to go back into therapy,

and I pushed myself to face this and not hide it any longer. Telling my therapist was probably one of the hardest things I've done in my life, but also one of the best. He was compassionate, angry for me, disgusted that anybody would do that to another human being. He articulated that none of what he was feeling was because of me, but was directed at my abusers. His reaction helped me to realise that it wasn't me who was dirty, it wasn't me who should be ashamed, but them – I hadn't been able to see that up until that point.

While my healing is still in progress, and I still find this a very hard topic to talk about, I do know that I have nothing to be ashamed of. What happened to me was not an indecent act between human and animal, but a sadistic form of abuse – it was sexual abuse and rape. I know now that I am no less human or valuable because of it than I am for any other part of my abuse. And most importantly, I know I am not alone and I hope by sharing this part of my story, somebody else will have a glimmer of that for themselves, and begin to work forwards towards their healing.

Further Reading

A series of articles by Faith Allen, a survivor, on her healing pathway after animal rape:

- [After-effects of animal rape](#)
- [The shame of animal rape](#)
- [Why is it so hard to heal?](#)
- [How to heal from animal rape](#)

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