Shame is a common result of child sexual abuse. Understanding the impact that shame has on varied and interconnected aspects of your life as a survivor can help you see that many of your experiences may result from your abuse, not because you are weak or flawed.


01 Self-Worth
People who were sexually abused often see themselves as fundamentally bad even though they are not responsible for what happened.  


02 Emotional Health
Shame contributes to the development of PTSD symptoms. More specifically, shame can lead to anger, sadness, anxiety, and depression.  


4 Deblinger & Runyon, p. 364; Feiring, p. 308; Piekels, Street, & Kuesen, p. 689.

03 Physical Health
Sexual abuse in childhood is strongly associated with physical symptoms that don’t have a clear medical explanation, and shame plays a role in these symptoms.  


6 Deblinger & Runyon, p. 364.

04 Sexual Health
Survivors often subconsciously associate sexual acts with shame. This shame can manifest itself as either an avoidance of sex or engagement in risky sexual behavior.  


8 Rellini, p. 32.

05 Relationships
Shame is “fueled by concerns about how one is perceived by others,” and that concern can make it difficult to establish healthy and fulfilling relationships.

9 Deblinger & Runyon, p. 369.