



## Understanding Incest

### *What is Incest?*

**Incest is sexual contact between family members or close relatives.** This can include people related by:

- **Blood** (biological family)
- **Marriage** (step-relations, in-laws)
- **Adoption** or **other family ties**

Across most cultures and religions, incest is **considered morally wrong**. In the United States, incest is also **a criminal offense** in most states, and laws may also prevent certain relatives from marrying.

### *Why This Matters*

- **Incest is one of the most common forms of child sexual abuse.**
- Children often face **family pressure** not to speak up or are **not supported** after disclosing.
- Many offenders show **no prior warning signs**, making prevention difficult.
- If a person in the family has **previously abused a child and faced no consequences**, they are at **higher risk of reoffending**.

**Remember:** *Most children who disclose sexual abuse are telling the truth.*

### *Who to Contact*

- **Local Police or Sheriff's Office**
- **Child Protective Services (CPS)**
- **National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)**

### *What You Can Do Right Now*

1. **Believe the Child** – Your support is critical to their safety and healing.
2. **Stay Calm and Listen** – Avoid reacting with anger or disbelief.
3. **Write Down Details** – Include names, dates, and what was said.
4. **Report Immediately** – Call CPS or law enforcement right away.
5. **Do Not Investigate Yourself** – Leave questioning to trained professionals.

### **Important:**

- ✚ *In most states, it is mandatory to report sexual abuse once you learn of it.*
- ✚ *You can report abuse even if it happened years ago and the victim is now an adult.*