

SHOW NOTES

Here are some important resources that could save a life, prevent a victim, and reduce future harm.

[Centre for Addictions and Mental Health](#) (CAMH)

[Andrea Bevan](#) (Therapist, social worker, featured in this episode): 289-228-7317

[Alan Kaine](#) (Sexual Therapist): 905-578-4127

[Shalem Mental Health Network](#) is a faith-based, Ontario-wide network that provides responsive and preventive mental health support to individuals, families and communities.

[Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers](#) (ATSA), an international association of practitioners and researchers in the fields of sexual abuse, deviance, and related topics.

[Mental Health and crisis resources](#) from the Government of Canada

Ontario Network of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centres,
<https://www.sadvreatmentcentres.ca/>.

VO: *This episode covers some heavy topics, including pedophilia and suicide. We don't go into details, but please take care as you listen.*

You are listening to UNDERCURRENTS. My name is Ken Ogasawara and I'm part of the Community Engagement team at Mennonite Central Committee in Ontario. This podcast is an ongoing experiment to find a new way to tell the stories coming from our community of partners, program participants, donors, and others.

Undercurrents is brought to you by Kindred Credit Union. Kindred's purpose is cooperative banking that connects values and faith with finances, inspiring peaceful, just, and prosperous communities. Kindred believes in and supports restorative justice and the conflict resolution it promotes in its operations and in its communities.

This episode is about Chuck. (This episode is about John)

Chuck: I honestly believe that even to this day, um, I would most likely not be alive today had I not been arrested and charged and gone through this process.

VO: *This is Chuck. If you listened to the previous episode, you will remember Chuck's father, John, sharing his story of what it was like for him and his wife to find out their son Chuck was attracted to minors and had been charged with possession of child pornography. We heard from John's perspective; today we'll hear from Chuck himself.*

Chuck: I was in a really dark place before I got arrested. Um, so I was, uh, divorced. I was, um, like separated from my family, uh, living on my own, um, for a good three years. And, um, that's a dangerous place for, for someone with pedophilia, um, is to live alone and to have the privacy, to do things, um, that you wouldn't otherwise have trying to live a normal life.

[Music pause]

I was in a downward spiral and they talk about it in therapy with the slippery slope. And that's part of my recovery too, is, um, understanding all the things that I do that, um, make myself, um, more prone to, uh, having a relapse, her re offense. Um, some of those signs were A) drinking alcohol. Um, I was heavily I'd be drink alcohol probably every chance I could get other than being at work.

I was on permanent night shifts and I that's, all I wanted was night shifts. So I did my grocery shopping at three in the morning I just want to be, uh, secluded from the world as much as possible. nyeah, my depression was, was probably at its worst, uh, in, around those those days. Um, my fast food addiction was, was out of control. So I was pretty much having just fast food and alcohol for the most part. I welcomed triggers. You know, I'd be watching like teenage kind of girly shows, um, just for the, for the eye candy and the, the triggers, um, that come with it.

[Music pause]

VO: *If you've listened to the first part of this story, you'll know that Chuck's father had encouraged him to seek counselling, professional help. And as a matter of fact, Chuck had gone to a few tentative sessions with a therapist before his benefits ran out. But for most men in Chuck's position, seeking help is easier said than done. Consider the challenges. First, they have to admit to themselves that they have a problem. This is a huge psychological hurdle on its own and one that Chuck admits he struggled with, and we'll hear more about that later. Nobody wants to admit they are attracted to minors, even to themselves. But to disclose this shameful secret to someone else, is another giant leap, and if it's to a health professional, there is a perceived risk and this is where the often misunderstood concept of 'duty to report' comes in.*

Andrea: I can clarify what the duty to report is but as it applies to a minor attracted people, it's complex.

VO: *This is Andrea Bevan. She started working with people who had offended sexually nearly 20 years ago after working in the parole system. Andrea is a social worker and therapist who specializes in working with people who have deviant attractions.*

Andrea: Within Ontario Child, Youth, Family Services Act under section 125, spells out a number of conditions under which professionals and other people must report either children who have experienced abuse or those children who may be at risk of experiencing abuse. And I think more so it's that at-risk piece that causes the most difficulty for people when dealing with minor attracted persons. It's not an easy thing I can't just say to that if someone comes in and discloses to me that they have an interest or that they are fantasizing about children, I don't say give me a minute I'm going to pick up the phone now and call family children services or children's aid. So it's again every situation is really unique and I go back to this idea if they are in emanate harm what is the real risk. We know that there are a lot of people who have interests in children who never act on it. So the very fact of just having an interest doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to act upon it or that you're going to, or that there's going to be a child at risk. And I go back to this idea of is there an imminent harm? What is the real risk? That kind of thing. More often than not, if I have somebody who comes in where there's been no history of offenses, and there's just been some thinking around it, if they engage in therapy and really make those efforts to manage those thoughts and perhaps we've involved other support people in their life and things like that, I may not need to make those calls.

VO: *Unfortunately, the majority of treatment for minor-attracted people happens reactively. In other words, after an abuse has already occurred, or the law has been broken.*

It is also important to remember that having an attraction to minors does not, by itself, break the law. However, ACTING on that attraction, like Chuck did when he ordered child pornography, is where lawful lines are crossed.

Chuck was arrested and charged with possession of child pornography. As his father John relates in the previous episode, this was rock bottom for both his parents and Chuck himself. Chuck was deemed a high risk for suicide at this point. But somewhere in the depths of this painful time, there was a part of Chuck that recognized that this might finally be the wake up call he needed.

[Music pause]

Chuck: There was no question. I was, I was guilty of my crime and I wasn't going to ever even contemplate, uh, not pleading guilty. Um, when my lawyer presented me with, um, with what the Crown was going after, um, as far as sentencing goes, it's, um, they were proposing six to nine months.

And, um, I knew I needed therapy and a lot of therapy. I knew I needed help. I knew that, uh, I'm going to jail as much as it is as a punishment. I just wasn't going to be getting the help I needed.

VO: Chuck had heard good things about the Ontario Correctional Institute or OCI as it's called, for its thorough psychiatric and therapy-based rehabilitation program for Ontario male offenders. The problem was that Chuck's potential sentence of 6-9 months was at risk of being too short to qualify for OCI. So Chuck did something very unusual: he asked for a longer sentence.

Chuck: And it was, it was a hard decision. I mean, to ask for more time, it was really, um, I was really scared to go into jail. Um, it, um, I knew it wasn't going to be a good time. I knew it was going to be a rough ride, but, uh, I, yeah, I just had to, uh, make it all effort, um, to get OCI. And even when you get to OCI, even if you do get, uh, you know, approved to go to OCI, um, it's, it's very easy for them to send you back into jail if you, uh, if you disobey any of their rules or whatnot. So there's no guarantee that even if you make it to OCI that you're even going to last there.

I think when I went into OCI, I was still playing the victim card. I think I was still in this self-pity mode where, uh, I, I felt sorry for myself that here, here I am, I lost my job, I lost my, um, career, um, I didn't have a lot of empathy for my victims, and I didn't even think I had any victims, to be honest with you. I just, I really downplayed my role that I'm just a guy, you know, that was caught, um, downloading child pornography and viewing it.

And, uh, to me that was, um, a lot less than, um, actually doing harm to a child. And, uh, but that's really not the case. And that's something that I really did learn and that hit me hard at OCI was, um, just viewing, um, child pornography is victimizing that victim again. And, um, there's really no, no difference than for me being in the room while that's being done to a child versus, um, being a person watching cowardly from home. Um, you're just as guilty. Yes. So, um, I think that was a big eye-opener for me. It was that, um, and thinking back on my past and thinking of, of who I was before, um, no, I got all those treatment OCI. It really, really disgusted me the person I was and the things I was doing.

So when did I realize I was a pedophile? I think, um, I mean, pedophile is such a, he a really nasty word and it's something that, um, I mean, nobody ever wants to admit that they are a pedophile if they are one.

Chuck: And as far as we know, there is no cure for pedophilia and that's, that's the thing that makes it the hardest is, um, is knowing that that feeling that I have and that, that desire that I have may never go away. And, um, it's always going to be a, um, an on a non satisfying thing to go through life. Not that I'm saying that that's Boohoo poor me, but it's, you know, people with normal sexual, uh, appetites can, can quench that appetite and someone who suffers with pedophilia, uh, can never, um, they have to abstain from that forever. And, uh, that's where it becomes a challenge. That's where it becomes a mental health problem, because it causes your

depression, it causes your hum your hate for yourself and your, um, that pedophilia is an evil, and it is something that, um, um, you need to get out of here out of your body.

VO: *Chuck takes pains to emphasize how unacceptable pedophilia is, calling it 'evil', but at the same time acknowledging that for him, it's not a choice. he was cursed with an attraction that he must not fulfill, an innate part of him that disgusts him but that he must reconcile within himself.*

Andrea: I don't use the words evil and, and that type of thing when I'm when I'm working with people and, you know, I have fellas that will, you know, use those terms, you know, we do explore that we do, you know, sort of examine, you know, is that fair? Is that compassionate, you know, to towards you to think of yourself as an evil person, right? Some of the guys I work with, you know, have this really long history of self loathing, you know, towards themselves and, and this whole, you know, really destructive relationship with their self.

VO: *Chuck falls into this category. After a lot of therapy, he has identified several traumatic incidents with his peers from when he was around 12 years old that [were sexual in nature and] contributed to his poor mental health and depression later in life. We won't unpack that here, but it's worth mentioning because, to paraphrase addictions specialist Dr. Gabor Mate, "The first question is not "why the abuse?", it's 'Why the pain?'. This is where therapy can truly be life-changing.*

Andrea: I generally find, even for some of those folks, that when they come in to even talk about something where they haven't had that opportunity before, it can be, again, can give them a sense of relief, and can almost give them a sense of their humanity back because the opportunity to be actually, you know, sit down with someone and to be able to talk about this stuff and, and to, to be proactive and to talk about strategies and all of that stuff. You know, it takes it away from being this, you know, this entity that's sort of uncontrollable and, you know, needs to be all that they identify with.

VO: *I like the word 'strategy' that Andrea applies here. It removes any of the self-sabotaging self-judgement and morality from the matter and breaks it down to problem solving. Here is the problem, how do we deal with it? Chuck's strategy involves building multiple pillars of support. In addition to ongoing therapy sessions, he takes medication that all but eliminates his sex drive. It is a drastic solution, but Chuck is deeply grateful for it. Another pillar of Chuck's foundation is family - but this one is complicated.*

Chuck: My relationship with my kids, um, I wasn't really a very strict dad to them. I was very, uh, easy going and, um, I think I was more of a friend to them than I a parent. And, um, that causes issues, I think with, um, you know, doing the parenting with, with, uh, with your wife, um, you need to be on the same page. And, uh, um, my wife and I are not on the same page as

all, a lot of things, but, um, I was good at the entertainment factor with my kids. I was good at, um, taking them to the movies and taking them to a hockey games and taking them bowling and taking them. So I was really like the fun dad and just, uh, I spent a lot of money, um, taking them places and just doing things like that.

[Music pause]

Chuck: I was able to hide my sexual, um, disorder and my, you know, that's something that, uh, they had no clue going into this, um, when I got arrested and whatnot. For them to see their dad go to jail and, uh, and being charged with those charges. Um, it was pretty, pretty bad. The damage that's been done to my kids and my relationship with my kids, it is forever scarred and forever, um, damaged. Um, I don't think there's any recovery from that.

Anyways, so I, it's, it's a tough pill to swallow and I, I can't imagine what my kids have gone through and I can't imagine what they think of me today and what, um, what is to come, if anything, so as it stands today, um, my oldest child does already said to me that he, um, does not want me in his life. And, um, he says he forgives me, but doesn't want any part in, in his future. Um, and, um, that that's, that's tough to take, and that's, that's probably the, the hardest punishment you can possibly get. I have let my kids know that, um, I'll always love them. I'll always want to be with them and always want to spend time with them. And I have nothing but love for them.

And I understand that, um, being a parent, It's both a privilege, then it's a, you know, it's a responsibility, but it's wholesale. It is also a privilege. I'm just grateful for that at the time I had to spend with my kids and that, um, Yeah, all I can do, all I can do is be a better person and hope that one day the whole, they will accept me their life again.

[Music pause]

Chuck: My relationship with my parents is by far way closer than it has ever been. It's amazing how close it's brought the family together and to realize what's important in life and, um, this whole experience, um, as much as I screwed up in as much as I, uh, had to go to jail and, and do my time and, and whatnot, it's, I think it's made me a better person today. And it's, um, I think my parents, uh, like them, my brother and sister too, they, they liked the person that I see right now. There's no question that, um, that, uh, I am a better person today than it was before.

VO: *Despite this growing foundation, Chuck is still living in a world that largely wants nothing to do with him. I asked Andrea how the gap can be bridged between society that reviles pedophiles, and those that work to support these individuals. Where is the common ground?*

Andrea: So, I think we can all come together over a common goal of preventing further abuse or preventing further victims. Nobody wants anymore victims. So if we work from this place of shared responsibility around no more victims, what does that look like?

I mean, our research and the literature is really clear around what are the factors that increase somebody's risk of committing another offense or of perhaps acting out on a particular attraction, things like isolation, things like not being accepted. All of those basic human needs really deprive people of basic human needs, we are going to see maladaptive coping. So, if we are coming together over this idea of how do we prevent this, there has to be the idea that we can't isolate these folks, that needs to be understood and I think needs to be accepted. Now that's going to look different for some people, and so that might just mean we aren't going to ostracize people.

I've had clients who've had their houses picketed, I've had community rallies and all sorts of things. And all that does is drive people underground and contributes to diminish mental health and all sorts of things. And so we're actually, through those activities and through our own fear, increasing the likelihood that somebody might do something or might do something again and so we are actually we're actually contributing in some ways to creating more victims.

[Clip from Circles call]

VO: *This is where Circles of Support and Accountability come in. CoSA as it's called is a crucial and rare link to the wider community, made up of volunteers and professionals who, as the name suggests, offer both support and accountability to individuals like Chuck, for the sake of community safety.*

Chuck: Being a core member of core of CoSA, um, and having my circle and having regular meetings and, and having a circle of people that, that do honestly care for me, and want the best for me. And it's the accountability piece that I need for my life. I need to always have people looking out for me and always, um, beyond me, as far as my, my weight and my, my health, my lifestyle. And so we're always talking about exercise and healthy eating and what to do to what are my short term goals, my long-term goals, and, um, my smart goals. Everything to me with, with Cosa just feels right. And it's, um, it's something I'm really drawn to. Um, it's something it's a program that, um, it feels to me it's like being close to God.

[Music pause]

VO: *Some faith traditions find God in peaceful solitude, but for Chuck, who has spent so much of his life feeling alone and despised, God is found in community, in the presence of those who despite knowing everything he's done, accept him, support him, and treat him like a human being.*

Andrea: CoSA does a tremendous job of helping people to transition, helping them to feel, to get to that place where they can feel okay. If we can be okay then we can get to that great feeling, hopefully, down the road, but they provide a tremendous amount of support and guidance. And if I go back to I said this earlier that we all have this innate desire for interpersonal attachment. It's a fundamental human motivation and Circles of Support provides that.

I consider it a tremendous privilege to work with CoSA. I often times say that I benefit just as much as the members do.

Chuck: And, um, I hope to soon get on my feet again and get back to a job where I could support myself and, um, and live healthy. Um, but this is where Cosa really becomes a huge factor for me in my future. They know me really well and they know everything that's I've done, there are no secrets. When they look at me they don't see my charges. They don't, they don't see me as a pedophile. They don't see me as, uh, an offender. They, they see the good in me and they bring that good out of me. I know there's a good person inside me. I know there's, there's a lot of good I can do in this world.

VO: *I want to thank Chuck for sharing so vulnerably and openly with me. It's been a privilege to hear your story and to see how you are finding a new purpose in life and working hard to make a positive impact in the world. Chuck's hope is that in sharing his story, we can, through confronting tough questions and facing our fears, prevent future victims and create safer and healthier communities for everyone. He also hopes that fewer people have to go through the pain he and his family did. People should not have to offend and be charged in order to find help.*

To that end, I have included a number of resources in the show notes and if you or someone you know is struggling with minor-attraction or simply have questions, I hope you will pick up the phone and reach out to the professionals listed there, including Andrea Bevan, the therapist who shared with us.

There are also resources for survivors and victims of sexual abuse and it is important to note that a primary guiding principle of restorative justice is to support the needs of victims, and the community also.

I want to thank Andrea, Rick Pauw and the Restorative Justice team at MCC, and of course the circle of volunteers who support - and hold accountable - Chuck and many others like him. Your empathy, compassion, and persistence in treating all people in a good way, is inspiring.

I want to thank you, too, listener, if you've made it this far. I know this was a challenging story to hear, and not everybody is ready to hear it. If you feel moved to step out in a radical way by volunteering with CoSA, you can find more info in show notes.

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