

unavailability, lack of emotional closeness and flexibility, social isolation, emotional deprivation, and communication difficulties. Most sexual abuse is committed by men and by persons known to the child, such as family members (Forsdike, Tarzia, Hindmarsh, et al, 2014). Around 20% to 25% of child sexual abuse cases involve penetration or oral–genital contact. In 2011, more than 26% of sexual abuse victims were between 12 and 14 years old, and nearly 22% were between 15 to 17 years old (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

Initiation and Perpetuation of Sexual Abuse

The cycle of sexual abuse often starts insidiously unless it involves an isolated attack, such as rape. Often offenders spend time with the victims to gain their trust before initiating any sexual contact. Most victims are then pressured into being an accessory to the sexual activity through various means (Box 13-4) and may be unaware that sexual activity is part of the offer. Children may not reveal the truth for fear that their parents would not believe them if they told, especially if the offender is a trusted member of the family. Some fear that they will be blamed for the situation, and many young children with limited vocabulary have difficulty describing the activity when they do have the courage or opportunity to reveal the abuse.

Box 13-4

Methods Used to Pressure Children into Sexual Activity

- The child is offered gifts or privileges or has privileges withheld.
- The adult misrepresents moral standards by telling the child that it is “okay to do.”
- Isolated and emotionally and socially impoverished children are enticed by adults who meet their needs for warmth and human contact.
- The successful sex offender pressures the victim into secrecy by