

# Sexual interest in children- self-help programme

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Sexuality comes in many forms and our sexual preferences can be directed to multiple objects. We can be sexually attracted to people of different ages and gender, and some of us also to certain things or artefacts. Sexual preferences and acting upon them are however two entirely separate issues. A decision to act upon one's own interest and preference cannot be based solely on one's own wishes.

Individuals have the right to express their sexuality fairly freely provided that it does not breach the rights of others, or break the law. However, there are acts that are never within the boundaries of freedom of sexual expression. Among them are all sexual acts that fulfil the characteristics of a criminal offence (Criminal Code). A child is vulnerable and needs special care and protection.

The user of this self-care program can not be individually identified in any way.

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**Aloita →**

# 1. WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Sexuality is an integral part of being human, and one of our basic needs. Sexuality is manifested in many ways in all what we are, how we interact with others, and what we do. Thus, sexuality is much more than merely sex and intercourse. Sexual interest is one dimension of sexuality. We may be sexually drawn to people of different ages or gender, and some of us also to certain things or artefacts.

Sexual interest in children may express itself in thinking about children in a sexual way, fantasizing about children in a sexual way, or experiencing sexual arousal related to children. It is entirely different to be interested in children sexually (e.g. "I am sexually interested in children") and act upon sexual interest in children (e.g. "I watch online footage of sexual abuse of children, or engage in a suggestive chat with a child"). Individuals, who have for instance sexual fantasies about children, may never act upon these fantasies because they comprehend how sexual acts harm a child.

One is free to express one's sexual preferences in action fairly freely provided that it does not breach the rights of others, or break the law. Sexual acts involving under aged children that fulfil the characteristics of a criminal offence are not within the boundaries of the freedom of sexual expression. They are a crime and as such they are punishable.

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## Sexuality and responsible behaviour

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Sexuality is an inseparable and essential part of being human. It is manifested in different ways in all that we are, feel, think, and do. Sexuality can be expressed in different ways through our thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Intimacy and fulfilling sexual needs primarily by following one's own desires is not, however, always self-evident. We all experience periods of time in our lives when our sexual desires and needs are not fulfilled as we wish. Also, the nature of our preferences may hinder the way we can manifest sexuality.

However, sexuality is not an immutable state. Instead, new ways of expressing sexuality and manifesting it in action can be discovered throughout our lives. One can develop and challenge oneself also in this respect. As important as it is to listen to one's needs and desires, it is crucial that one's actions are not illegal, or in other ways harmful or detrimental to others.

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## Sexual interest in children

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Being sexually interested in children may mean thinking about children in sexual ways, sexual fantasies about children or sexual arousal involving children. When a person over 16 is sexually attracted to children in their pre-puberty, it is paedophilia. Hebephilia refers to a condition in which sexual desires are directed to children in their puberty. Paedophilic interest may be primary (fixated paedophiles) when sexual interest is primarily and permanently directed to children in their pre-puberty. Nevertheless, fixated paedophiles can engage in sexual interaction with someone over the age of 16.

Secondary paedophilia (regressive paedophilia) refers to conditions in which one's sexual desire is temporarily (e.g. in a stressful life situation) directed to a child. Primarily and permanently the person is sexually interested in someone over the age of 16.

In medical terms, sexual interest in children is defined as paedophilic disorder, a psychiatric disorder in which an adult experiences primary sexual attraction to children. This means that the sexual desires towards children experienced by the individual cause the individual themselves harm, or they might have already acted upon their sexual desires in practice. (For more information, see "Definitions")

Current research has not been able to single out a cause that brings about sexual interest in children. The evolvement of this disorder takes place as a result of multiple factors. The genetic factors behind the disorder are actively being investigated, and the latest research findings suggest that neurobiological brain deviations may be involved in the evolvement of the disorder. Based on current knowledge, 90 per cent of the occurrences of the disorder are explained by multiple environmental factors and no single genetic connection explaining the disorder have not been established.

Although, in light of recent research, sexual interest in children appears to be a rather permanent feature, it is important to note that sexual desires and acting upon these desired are two entirely separate issues. We rarely follow solely our sexual desires as if automatically. Some never act upon this preference and for some this preference remains on the level of mental images and sexual fantasies. Even though this sexual preference itself may not be changed, there is help available to support engaging in sexual activity with adults or adolescents over the age of 16. Remember, sexuality is holistic and it can be manifested in many dimensions in our lives. Some of those sexually interested in children can also be attracted to adults or adolescents over the age of 16.

Life provides us with a myriad of temptations, and desires often come with fleeting thoughts and emotions. For someone who is sexually attracted to children, seeing a child or a child-related stimulus may trigger an almost automatic feeling of euphoria. This sensation may also be intertwined with satisfying one's sexual needs by looking at children or images of children. These kinds of problematic and harmful thoughts and behavioural models directed to children can be questioned and changed. People sexually interested in children, like other people, are able to restrain their detrimental thinking and behaviour at will.

Fantasies are common and as such part of the multitude of sexuality. At times, however, fantasies are accompanied by thoughts, which are in reality not possible or appropriate to bring into action. Sexual fantasies about children may increase the risk of harmful, criminal activity that damages a child. It may also lead to watching illegal images or footage depicting child abuse, so-called "child pornography". However, these types of images or footage are not pornography but images or video recordings of child molestation and abuse – sex crimes.

People experience it differently what kind of thoughts their sexual preference to children evoke. For most, sexual attraction to children causes anxiety and they would like to act in a responsible way, and do what is right. According to current research, approximately 1-5 per cent of the population experience sexual interest in children. Based on the statistics, a vast majority of the perpetrators are men but also a small minority of women experience sexual interest in children. It is estimated that there are 19 000 over 18-year olds in Finland who are sexually interested in children. The

actual number is, however, difficult to estimate because, due to the sensitivity of the matter, doing research and collecting accurate statistical data is difficult.

It is critical to remember that sexual interest in children does not automatically lead to sexual action. One can control, and learn how to control, one's sexual impulses. This guide offers you help in regulating your harmful behaviour. If you feel that the guide offers you insufficient help, or if you suspect you may not be able to control your detrimental sexual activity, seek further support. Many people sexually attracted to children have availed of e.g. Uusi Suunta individual rehabilitation programme, and cognitive behavioural therapy.

When should I worry? Do I need help? (The Worry Test)

- Do you experience sexual interest in children, and/or images of children?
- Are you worried about your behaviour related to your sexual interest?
- Have you been worried about the possible negative consequences of your sexual interest?
- Do you experience shame, guilt or fear over your habits that are somehow linked with your sexual interest?
- Have you used images of children to a sexual end, or caught yourself repeatedly ending up on a website depicting child-related sexual material?
- Have you experienced the need to approach children to a sexual end?
- Have you approached or contacted children much younger than yourself to a sexual end?
- Do you want to control your thought processes and actions involving harmful sexual interest, such as sexual interest in children and/or images of children?

If your answer to **one or more** of the above questions is **yes**, this guide may help you ponder on the activity you deem problematic and find tools to control it.

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The effects of child sexual abuse on a child

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Sexual abuse of a child is always a serious offence, and extremely traumatic to the child. In the abuse situation, a child often experiences confusion, helplessness, and fear. Sexual acts usually have serious and long-standing negative repercussions on the child's development, health, and life in general.

A child, due to developmental stage and age, may not understand having been sexually abused. Even though a child does not understand or recognise that an adult's behaviour is wrong, it never diminishes the adverse repercussions on the child. The emotions experienced by the child in the abuse situation, such as confusion and fear, or experiences of pain may paralyze the child's ability to act.

Generally, a child may not - on the outside - seem to react to the abuse because of confusion or distress, which can falsely be interpreted as consent to sexual acts. In a shocking situation, a child often lacks the capacity to say no, or stop the sexual acts. It is common that a child freezes and is unable to stop the sexual act through speech or action. This does not in any circumstances mean that a child would be consensual or willing to sexual acts.

In the course of sexual acts, a child may experience also other sensations. Feeling of euphoria experienced by a child as a result of e.g. caressing the genital area are normal physiological reactions that are triggered automatically. It is important to understand that these are not signals of consent, pleasure or willingness to the sexual act. Pleasure or orgasm experienced during the course of sexual abuse often leave a long-standing, harmful marks in the child's mind – fortifying the experienced feelings of guilt and shame.

A child is never responsible for the sexual abuse he or she has been subjected to even though he or she might have taken the initiative, or initially given his or her consent to engage in sexual interaction. The person abusing a child is always responsible for his or her actions, not the child.

According to current research, capturing and storing sexual abuse in image or video form is growing in number. Potential spreading of this kind of illegal material through digital media repeatedly victimizes a child. Portraying a child as a sex object, or recording child sexual abuse significantly increases the suffering the child undergoes. It is often unbearable for the child to face the possible uncontrollable dissemination of images or footage portraying him or herself. In addition, the fear over this kind of material circulating on the Internet interminably significantly hampers recovery. Child sexual abuse is extremely traumatic to the child victim and also to his or her nearest and dearest.

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Definitions

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More specific definitions of key terms:

**Sexual interest in children** = a person is sexually attracted to children, most commonly to boys or girls or both in their pre- or early puberty. Sexual interest may manifest itself in thinking about children in a sexual way, in child-related sexual fantasies or sexual arousal by children.

**Paedophilia** = sexual orientation in which interest is primarily oriented towards children much younger than oneself, in their pre-puberty. Not all people with paedophile orientation act upon their orientation but the interest remains on the level of mental images and sexual fantasies.

**Hebephilia** = sexual orientation in which one's interest is primarily oriented towards children much younger than oneself, in their puberty. Not all hebephiles act upon their orientation but the disorder remains in the level of mental images and sexual fantasies.

**Ephebophilia** = sexual orientation in which one's interest is primarily oriented towards children much younger than oneself, in or slightly past their puberty. Not all ephebophiles act upon their orientation but the disorder remains in the level of mental images and sexual fantasies.

**Pedophilic disorder** = harmful urges and fantasies about eg. children causing the individual significant distress that lasts over six months, or problems with relationships, or the individual has already acted upon his or her sexual urges. This psychiatric disorder is considered an illness (International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems code ICD-10: F65;4) when the urge to engage in sexual activity with a child or children in their pre-puberty is dominant and permanent. In addition, this sexual interest must extend over a period of more than six months, cause the individual him or herself suffering, or the individual has already committed a sexual offence. Also, the individual must be over 16 years of age and a minimum of 5 years older than the child he or she is attracted to. This disorder encompasses the definitions of pedophilia, hebephilia, and in some cases also ephebophilia.

**Paraphilia** = recurring and obsessive dependency on a unconventional or socially unacceptable stimulus as a source of sexual pleasure (objects, situations, individuals such as children)

**Dependency** = compulsive need to act on or experience something that is perceived personally rewarding. A dependent person can no longer regulate one's behaviour and the dependency adversely takes over one's life and time consumption. In people sexually attracted to children, dependency may manifest itself in multiple ways. Activity yielding instant gratification may develop into an automatic, problematic habit that functions both as a source of joy and anxiety.

**A potential perpetrator** = refers to a person who is sexually interested in children but does not act or has not yet acted nor fulfilled one's sexual preferences.

## 2. WHAT CAN I DO?

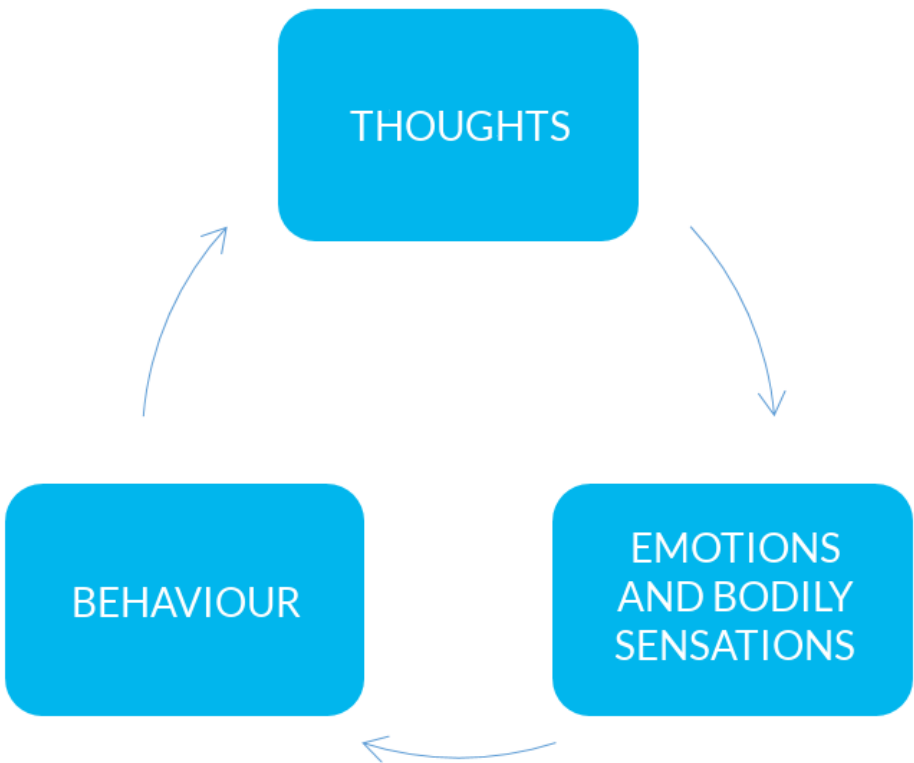
Thinking and viewing children in a sexual way and the possible related fantasies are issues that require careful consideration. This section aims at offering information and support in controlling sexual interest in children and regulating the subsequent thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Through this section you can learn ways to control your sexual mental images of children and regulate the impulses to act in a way that is detrimental to the child arising from these mental images. Strengthening one's self-regulation tools through different exercises supports responsible behaviour and way of life. You can use this section of the self-help programme independently, or combined with other treatment you may be receiving.

### Recognizing harmful thoughts

It is important to learn to recognize and challenge one's harmful thoughts and the contents of one's mind in particular when one is tempted to engage in detrimental, or illegal activity towards children. Everyone is capable of learning to recognize the emotions and thoughts within one's mental images. No matter how highly sexual your mental images of children in their meaning for you may be, it is possible to try and change them.

The basic idea of cognitive behavioural therapy is that thinking, emotions and our bodily sensations affect our behaviour. Behaviour, in turn, affects our thinking and emotions as well as our bodily sensations, so changing the way we think can change our behaviour. This means that one's own sexual interest in children and the possible related detrimental activity could also be learnt to control. It is important to learn to recognize what aspects related to thinking, emotions, bodily sensations and behaviour your sexual interest in children entails, and how the related possible activity can be controlled.



Appropriating a new way of thinking and acting requires practice; this self-help programme aims at offering tools for accomplishing this. The exercises in this section help you control your thoughts and the emerging impulses to act in a way that is detrimental to a child. Practise reduces the risk of engaging in sexual activity that is seriously detrimental to a child and a crime. The feeling of being in control of one's behaviour that can be gained through the exercises often reduces the anxiety and fear related to harmful sexual interest.

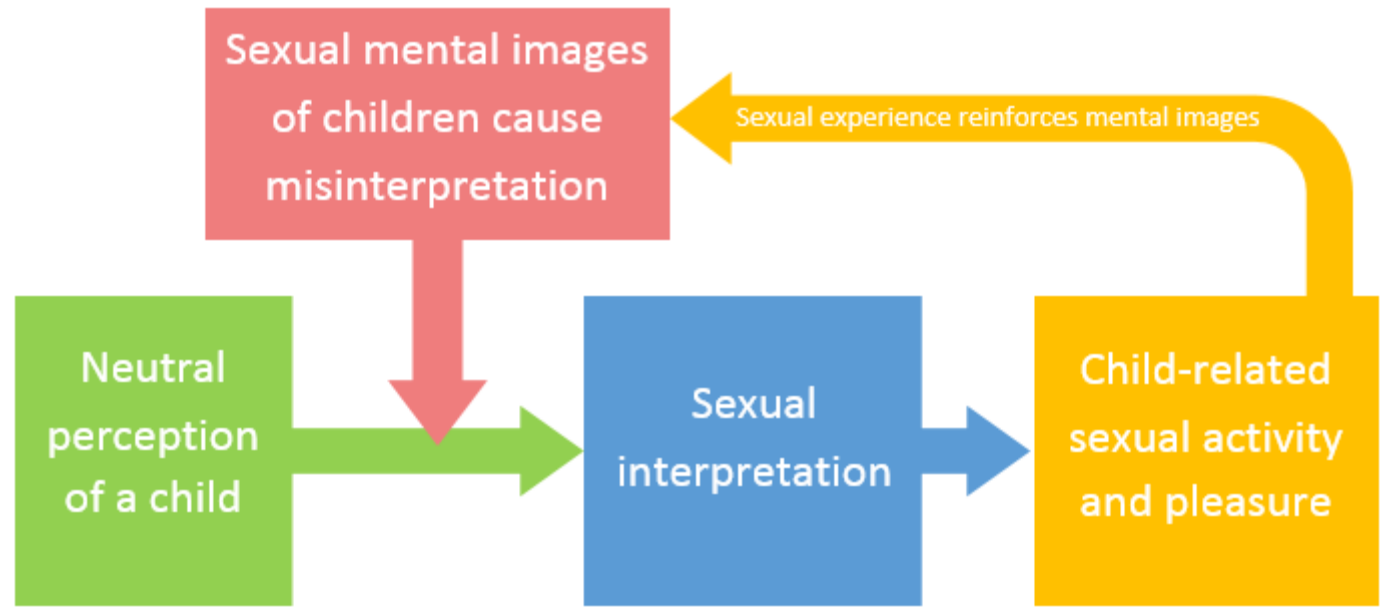
### Mental images guide perception

A mental image refers to an image of a certain issue in our mind, for instance what is a "dog" or "a good-looking woman/man". Mental images are individual and different visual, aural, sensory or olfactory sensations. Mental images stem for instance from our experiences, upbringing or through the media. Our values and principles also affect the emergence of mental images. People often have differing mental images of a certain thing. For instance, "a dog" in one person's mind can be large, black and dangerous whereas in another person's mental image a dog is depicted as small, fluffy and cute. Mental images affect how we interpret things, what kind of thoughts and emotions they evoke in us, and how we behave. For example, if our mental image of a dog is " large, black and dangerous", it is likely that we avoid encountering dogs, and vice versa.

Our mind is also perceptive to things. The more meaningful something is, the more it occupies the mind. How we experience things or situations has a lot to do with mental images. We pay much more attention to things that enforce our existing mental image of a certain thing. For those sexually attracted to children, child-related mental images may be dominant. For example, if child-related mental images are highly sexual, a person often interprets his or her perceptions of a child as sexual. A person sort of sees things and interprets them through "suggestive lenses". So, a child who wants to be cuddled may be erroneously interpreted as behaving in a sexual way while the child only wanted to be held. Also, children's friendly messages or conversations via digital media may be interpreted as sexual even though the child has only been friendly and polite.

Mental images guide perception and interpretation and so also reinforce themselves. A strong feeling of urge to act is often related to mental images. For someone sexually interested in children, a mere thought or an image of a child may

evoke in his or her mind sexual activity and the related pleasure.



It is important to learn to recognize and challenge the contents of one's mental images. Everyone can practise and learn to recognize the emotions, thoughts and urges to act that are enveloped in one's mental images.

The first step in learning to control one's behaviour is the recognition of the sexual mental images of children and the related thoughts and emotions. If the mental images of children are sexual, it is important to practise changing them into, for instance, activity that is less sexually enticing.

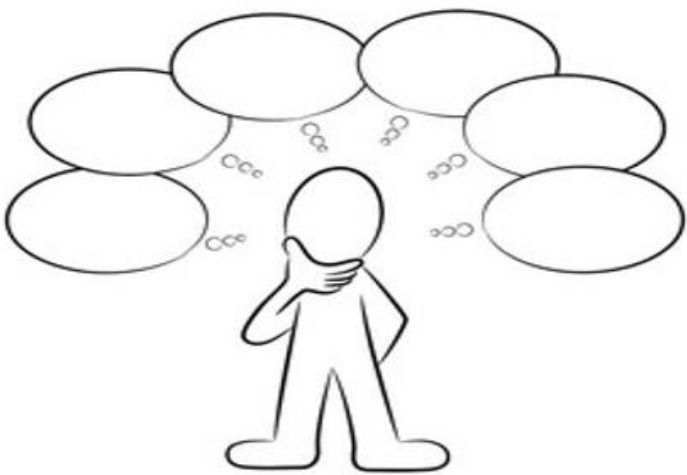
Though the following exercises you can learn how your mental images affect your thinking, emotions and behaviour. The exercises aim at giving you a clearer picture of how disturbing and/or compelling you experience the mental images of children you have. Moreover, you will learn to recognize the types of things or situations that evoke child-related sexual thoughts, or what kinds of mental images increase the desire to act in a way that is detrimental to a child.

The exercises also aim at allowing you to become better aware of the types of mental images, thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and behaviours your harmful sexual interest in children evokes in you. Awareness is important so that you can later learn qualitatively new and responsible thinking and behaviour. Exploring your sexual interest in children and the related mental images may be distressing. Nevertheless, it is worth your while to complete the exercises because awareness is the first step in gaining control over your own activity and changing your behaviour.

### Child-related sexual mental images

With the help of the following exercises you may explore your child-related **mental images and sexual thoughts** and the **emotions and bodily sensations** you may experience. The exercises draw your attention to **situations and occurrences** that make you think about children in a sexual way. Such situations are called triggers. It is important to identify these triggers because it helps you understand what sexual interest in children is all about in your situation. The exercises also give you an opportunity to ponder on what kinds of feelings and bodily sensations (e.g. sexual arousal) emerge when you think about children in a sexual way. Emotions and sensations in their meaning can be experienced as positive, negative, or neutral. It is a commonly accepted fact that if something is experienced as positive in its meaning (e.g. thinking about children in a sexual way feels good and turns me on), it is likely that one is reluctant to give up something that yields positive emotions and sensations. The same works vice versa: an unpleasant experience does not encourage continuing.

The following exercises solely focus on **child-related mental images and sexual thoughts** (e.g. "a child looks nice and it seems that the child wants to talk to me". Thoughts are inner speech that other will not hear. Child-related sexual acts (e.g. watching images of children online) will be dealt with later in a separate section.



PDF Task 1

PDF Task 2

### Child-related sexual activity

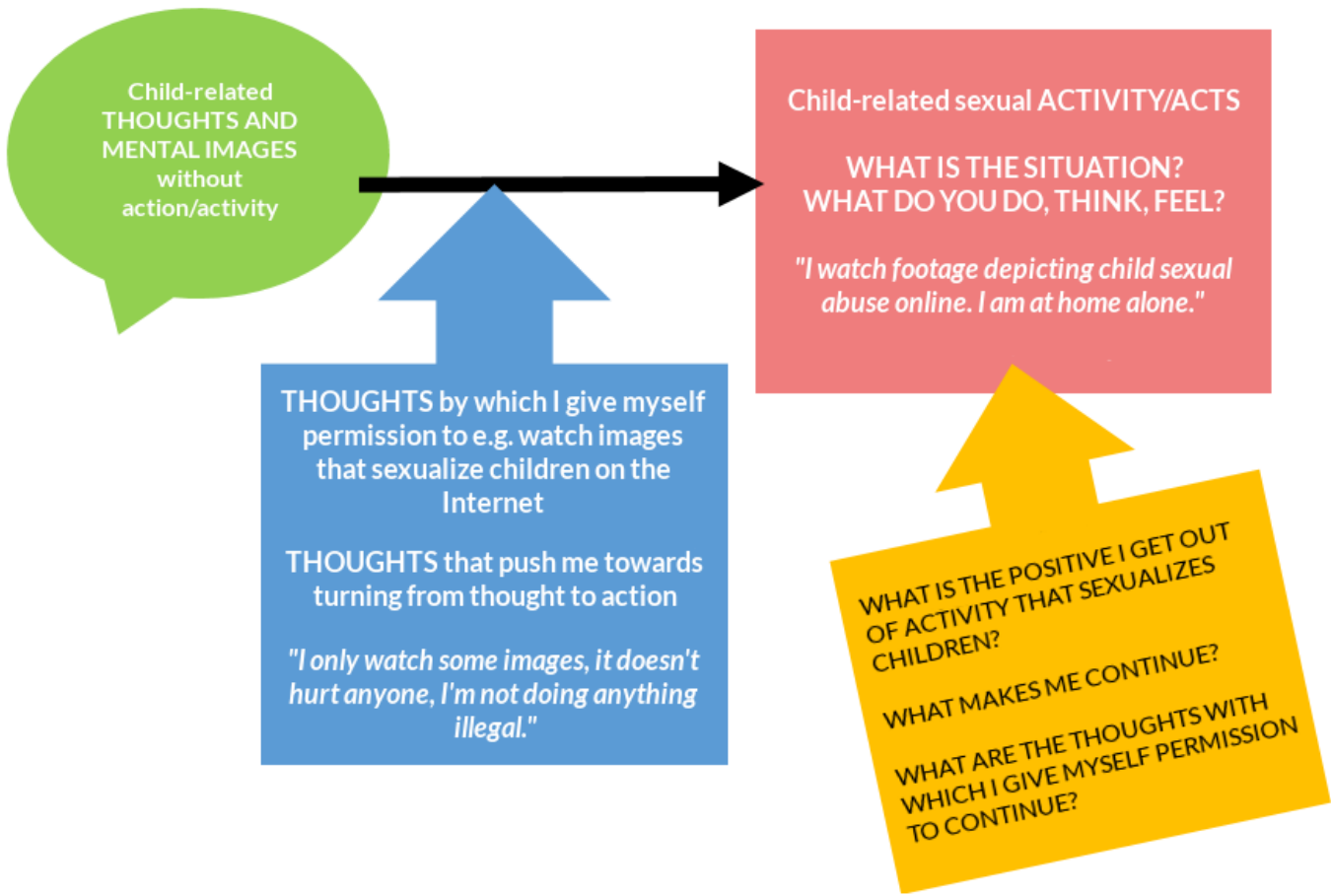
In the previous exercises, you have reflected on your child-related sexual thoughts and mental images. Not everyone, who has sexual thoughts about children, brings their child-related preferences into action (e.g. look up online material that sexualizes children or depict child sexual abuse). Proceeding from **child-related thoughts to child-related action** does not happen instantaneously. It requires that the individual give him or herself permission to proceed from the level of thoughts to the level of action. Giving permission refers to all the excuses and rationalizations that a person would give oneself to make the act/activity feel permissible and non-detrimental. These excuses may include e.g. the following: "I only watch images, I am not abusing a child", "I only talk to children, how can I help it if some of them want to talk to me about sex things", "the child could stop the conversation whenever if it wasn't something that they'd like", "watching photos never hurt anyone".

Furthermore, proceeding from child-related sexual thoughts to action that sexualizes a child, requires that the perpetrator find gratification in the activity. For example, watching online images that sexualize a child may energize someone after a stressful day, or watching the images may lead to sexual arousal, which feels good. Or an online chat with children may alleviate feelings of loneliness. A person who sexualizes a child this way is trying to fulfil the natural needs everybody



experiences, the need of intimacy, feeling of being in control, sexual fulfilment, feeling of coping and being able, friendship and a feeling of being in control of one's life and the related stress factors. The goal/objective of the activity is just and acceptable but the means to this end (sexualizing a child) is detrimental to a child, and in some cases also sexual offences as stipulated in Penal Code. One can, however, change one's behaviour so that all the needs listed above are fulfilled but one's activity does not damage oneself or others.

The following exercises allow you to reflect on what has lead you to proceed from thoughts that sexualize a child to activity that sexualizes a child. What, you feel, is the reward of the activity for you, or does it disturb you? What is the nature of the activity, i.e. what do you do, what functions as the trigger for the activity that sexualizes a child? How do you justify engaging in the activity and what kinds of emotions and bodily sensations are involved? In addition, you will be provided with tools with which to reflect on how you could behave in a more responsible way in future and increase meaningfulness and well-being in your life.



Tasks

What contributes to my acting in a way that sexualizes a child?

The following task examines the nature of the situations that can function as triggers for you to engage in activity that sexualizes a child. What is going on in the activity, how often does this take place (daily, weekly, monthly)? In addition, you will be having a closer look at the thoughts you use to justify your actions that sexualize a child.

PDF task 3

Thoughts aimed at changing the activity

Giving permission refers to all the justifications and excuses you use to convince yourself that the child-related sexual activity you engage in is permissible, or to explain to yourself how the harmful behaviour is less harmful than it is in reality. An example of such justification: "It does not hurt the child in the picture that I watch it and that's why I can watch pictures", or "it is only a picture, all I do is watch some pictures".

PDF task 4

How could I act differently?

The previous exercise drew your attention to what could it be all about concerning your child-related sexual activity. You reflected on what kinds of situations or issues contribute to your beginning to act in a way that sexualizes a child (e.g. you search for images online and/or watch such images). You also reflected on the justifications you use to give yourself permission to watch images and what is the positive you get out the activity that sexualizes a child. Next, focus on gaining a deeper understanding of your child-related sexual activity. For you to be able to act differently in future, you first need to recognize in yourself the issues that contribute to your behaving in a way that sexualizes a child, and also what do you see as the possibilities and obstacles for you to act differently.

PDF task 5

The effects of child-related interest in my own life

We all have at least an idea of how we spend our time. A balanced and good life is often based on a functioning daily life that includes activities and rest in balanced proportions. Sexual interest in children and the related activity may have an effect on several dimensions of one's life. They can affect what we find interesting, with whom we spend time, what is our spare time like, how we experience our sexuality, how happy and content we are with our lives.

The following exercise focuses on all the aspects of you and your life that your activity that sexualizes a child has affected.

PDF task 6

Reflect on the drawbacks and benefits

In the previous exercise, you evaluated how your sexual interest and the related activity have affected you, and the different dimensions of your life. Next, you could go deeper into the short- and long-term benefits and drawbacks there might be for you and your life with regard to your child-related sexual interest and activity. Generally speaking, someone is not likely to change his or her behaviour before the drawbacks of the activity begin to outnumber the benefits.

PDF task 7

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### Considering other problems

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Stress, anxiety and fear may become risk factors for losing control and self-regulation. Someone who is sexually interested in children may feel that it makes no difference what he or she does because people hate such persons anyway. It is, however, important to remember that sexual preferences and acting upon them are two entirely separate issues.

Sexual interest in children may be connected to other problems. For instance, feelings of shame and anxiety are fairly common with those who are sexually interested in children. Also, various symptoms of depression and anxiety are fairly common.

#### Problems related to criminal sanctions

Child-related, harmful sexual interest and the connected activity come with multiple feelings of strong concerns, fear and anxiety – but also with significant criminal sanctions. Sexual activity directed to under aged children is illegal and always detrimental to the child. Depending on the specific offence, you may be charged and convicted to a fine, or to serve a non-custodial or custodial sentence.

An entry in the criminal records for a child-related sexual offence often complicates getting a future job and hinders certain career paths altogether. The negative effects are often also reflected in relationships: important ties to friends and family may be cut out. The negative effects are connected to all dimensions of life and impair mental health and well-being.

Responsible and meaningful sexual behaviour never puts others' or one's own well-being at risk. The Penal Code of Finland is very unequivocal in terms of child sexual abuse offences, and abiding the law is very simple indeed: A child cannot be used as a means to fulfil one's sexual needs.

The Finnish law protects everyone against sexual violence, abuse and exploitation. According to the law, it is sexual abuse to perform a sexual act on a child below the age of sixteen years, said act being conducive to impairing his or her development, or inducing a child to perform such an act.

The age of consent is 18 years when the adult in question is the child's parent, or comparable who is in a position of authority or supervision (coach, teacher, councillor, next of kin, etc.) over the child. Also, purchasing sexual services from a child under the age of 18 by promising or giving remuneration in exchange for performing a sexual act is a crime.

A child is vulnerable and needs special protection and care. Also grooming, luring a child into one's own sexual purposes, is a crime. If the activity so much as touches on preparation to perform a sexual act, it is a question of attempted sexual abuse of a child even if an actual physical encounter with the child never took place.

Consensual peer-to-peer sexual activity, when there is no significant difference in age, psychological or physical maturity, is not sexual abuse. However, a child younger than the age of consent (16) cannot, according to the Finnish law, give consent to a sexual act that fulfils the characteristics of a sexual offence. The legislation governing child sexual abuse or grooming, covers also digital media. Perpetrators of sexual acts against a child who have performed the acts via digital media have been charged and sentenced. For example utilising so-called "child pornography", material depicting sexual abuse of a child may fulfil the characteristics of a crime as such. Also grooming is criminalized. Do not commit a sex crime – seek help!

# 3. SEEKING HELP TO SUPPORT

Many people struggle with various harmful sexual thoughts and fantasies. For many, sexual interest in children is a serious problem, which can be demanding to battle alone. If you feel this self-help programme and the related exercises do not offer you enough support to control your behaviour or if you suspect you will not be able to regulate your actions, this section will offer you instructions on how to get further support and help.

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## Seeking support and help

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Sexual interest in children narrows and reduces opportunities to express one's sexuality. Paedophile orientation often impairs the quality of human relationships and narrows social life. Current research shows that sexual interest in children is a rather stable feature that is often perceived involuntary and oppressive with no way out.

Sexual interest in children and the possible related feelings of shame and self blame often adversely affect mental health and quality of life. Things are further complicated by the fact that sexual interest in children in our society remains a taboo, which is not discussed openly. In daily life, many hide their sexual interest in children and paedophile tendencies and do not seek help. However, help and support are available also anonymously to start the process.

If your sexual interest in children and related thinking and/or activity worries you, be brave and seek further support and help. Open and honest discussion with someone with specialized knowledge on the issue can help you control the harmful, sexual thoughts and offer support in regulating your behaviour.

There are services in Finland housing specialized knowledge to help individuals who are sexually interested in children. For further information, guidance and help, please contact the following:

- [Välitä!](#) Sexual violence services offer conversational support in confidence to sort out your situation and help in finding further support. The services are free of charge and you may contact the staff anonymously.
- [SEXPO](#) foundation offers counselling by appointment and guidance over the Internet or phone. All guidance can be given anonymously.

The nature of sexual orientation or disorder should never determine whether help and support are available. However, the fact remains that in Finland there is a relatively scarce range of services available for those worried about their sexual interest in children. Sexual interest in children evokes in people strong, often negative feelings. This is why it is advisable that you seek help somewhere where your situation and problem will be understood.

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## Helplinks in Europe

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Help and support is available in many European countries. If your sexual interest in children worries you, listed below are some helpful resources for you to contact.

### Austria

[www.courage-beratung.at](http://www.courage-beratung.at)  
[www.maenner.at](http://www.maenner.at)

### Belgium

[stopitnow.be](http://stopitnow.be)

### Bosnia-Herzegovina

[mfs-emmaus.ba/](http://mfs-emmaus.ba/)

### Croatia

[bolnica-vrapce.hr/web/](http://bolnica-vrapce.hr/web/)

### Czech Republic

[www.pedofilie-info.cz/rubrika/lecba/](http://www.pedofilie-info.cz/rubrika/lecba/)

### Denmark

[www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/bryd-cirklen/](http://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/bryd-cirklen/)

### Estonia

[tarkvanem.ee/kusi-nou/](http://tarkvanem.ee/kusi-nou/)

### Finland

[www.pelastakaalapset.fi/tyomme-kotimaassa/lasten-suojelu-ja-nettivihje/omahoito/](http://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/tyomme-kotimaassa/lasten-suojelu-ja-nettivihje/omahoito/)

### France

[ange-bleu.com/fr](http://ange-bleu.com/fr)  
[www.criavs-ra.org](http://www.criavs-ra.org)  
[inceste-viol-protegeons-les-enfants.psychologies.com](http://inceste-viol-protegeons-les-enfants.psychologies.com)

### Germany

[www.dont-offend.org](http://www.dont-offend.org)  
[www.kein-taeter-werden.de](http://www.kein-taeter-werden.de)  
[www.just-dreaming-of-them.org](http://www.just-dreaming-of-them.org)

### Ireland

[www.oneinfour.ie](http://www.oneinfour.ie)

Italy

[www.centrouominimaltrattanti.org](http://www.centrouominimaltrattanti.org)

Latvia

[psihosomatika.lv/ievads](http://psihosomatika.lv/ievads)

Luxenburg

[euline.eu](http://euline.eu)

[eupax.eu](http://eupax.eu)

Netherlands

[downloaders.stopitnow.nl](http://downloaders.stopitnow.nl)

Norway

[dinutvei.no](http://dinutvei.no)

Slovenia

[www.pb-ormoz.si](http://www.pb-ormoz.si)

Sweden

[preventell.se](http://preventell.se)

Switzerland

[www.keinmissbrauch.ch](http://www.keinmissbrauch.ch)

[www.disno.ch](http://www.disno.ch)

United Kingdom

[www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)

Psychotherapy- an affective treatment

Cognitive behavioural therapy has proven an effective treatment with people who are sexually interested in children. Cognitive therapy focuses on strengthening the individual's own inner control and responsible behaviour, correcting possible distorted thoughts and accepting responsibility for possible sexual acts involving children already committed.

The treatment focuses on dealing with the feelings of worry, fear and insecurity. The focal point is the child-related sexual thoughts, emotions and activity. The treatment increases and strengthens the individual's control over his or her behaviour and the related emotions. Already one single temptation averted and a new, more responsible way of behaving adopted is a step towards a better life.

Not all individuals who are sexually interested in children commit sexual offences. On the other hand, some people commit child-related sexual offences even though they are not primarily sexually interested in children. Many people struggle with their harmful sexual thoughts and fantasies. Help is available and seeking psychotherapy is the best option in these circumstances.

Identity risks and do what is right

1. Look after yourself

If you are sexually interested in children, it is vital you seek help and support to control your behaviour. Shutting yourself in may cause feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness that are reflected on your mood and deteriorate mental health. It is important that you look after yourself.

2. Seek information

The more knowledge you have of your sexual interest in children, the better you understand your feelings, thoughts and experiences. Information and knowledge guide you in controlling your harmful, sexual thoughts and behaviour. The exercises in this programme help you understand your child-related sexual interest. You may want to think about your situation through the following exercises and questions.

- [When worry/do I need help?](#)

3. Talk

Stop dwelling on your sexual interest in children on your own, be brave and contact people who can help you. (See Section 3 for contact information) The specialized staff are there to help and support you, also anonymously.

4. Thoughts, emotions and behaviour

Current knowledge states that sexual interest in children is a rather stable feature. In spite of this, everyone can control, or learn how to control, one's actions and behaviour. It is important to differentiate between sexual thoughts or impulses and actual actions. Humans rarely follow their sexual urges fully automatically. One can affect the way he or she behaves. Strong sexual impulses do pass and everyone can learn to regulate and control the related thoughts and emotions, and act responsibly.

It is a serious offence to act upon child-related thought and desires in practice. Do not commit a crime, seek help. If you feel this programme and its exercises do not offer you the support you need or if you suspect you cannot control your behaviour, please do not harm a child, seek help.

**Feedback**

We appreciate your time and effort in providing feedback to us. Please answer to following questions about this self-help treatment.

← Edellinen

**Seuraava →**