

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**
GRADUATE COLLEGE of SOCIAL WORK

**Recent Development in Forensic Interviews
in Child Sexual Abuse**

Presented at the University of Hong Kong

Presented by
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Presentation Agenda

- 1. Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interviews: Research Findings**
- 2. Overview of the Interview Protocol**
- 3. Practice Hints for Navigating the Interview Protocol**
- 4. Q&A mcheung@uh.edu**

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Research

- Research team reviewed 90 out of 4,373 tapes
- Systematic sampling results:
 - 62 children (68.9%) revealed child sexual abuse
 - 28 children (31.1%) did not divulge child sexual abuse

Cheung, M. (2008). Promoting effective interviewing of sexual abused children: A pilot study. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18*(2), 137-143. doi:10.1177/1049731507304359

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Recommendation #1

- Take children's short attention span into consideration.
 - 15-30 minute interviews are the norm for both the disclosure and nondisclosure cases.



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Table 2. Questions for Reticent Children

Question	Disclosure n=62	Nondisclosure n=28	Total N=90
Why are you here today?	51 (82.3%)	22 (78.6%)	73 (81.1%)
What parts of a little girl/boy's body shouldn't be touched by others?	48 (77.4%)	21 (75.0%)	69 (76.7%)
Did anyone tell you to tell or not to tell something?	18 (29.0%)	7 (25.0%)	25 (27.8%)
If someone touched a little boy/girl inappropriately, what would this boy or girl do?	4* (6.5%)	16* (57.1%)	20 (22.2%)
Who would a little boy/girl tell if someone touched him/her inappropriately?	6 (9.7%)	7 (25.0%)	13 (14.4%)

* $\chi^2=28.68$, $df=1$, $p<.001$

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Recommendation #2

- Younger children are less likely to disclose sexual abuse than older children.
 - Interviewer should demonstrate patience and understanding.
 - Obtain additional information from other sources rather than asking leading questions.



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Recommendation #3

- Hire more **male interviewers** to help male victims express their sexuality concerns.
 - Age of male children in both groups is significantly **younger** than female children.
 - Significantly **more males** than females among the **nondisclosure** cases.

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Recommendation #4

- Interviewers should not first ask *what* and *how* questions of reticent children.
- Interviewers should ask *who, where, and when questions* to request additional information.
 - Use non-threatening and non-leading questions.
 - Ease children's concerns.

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Recommendation #5

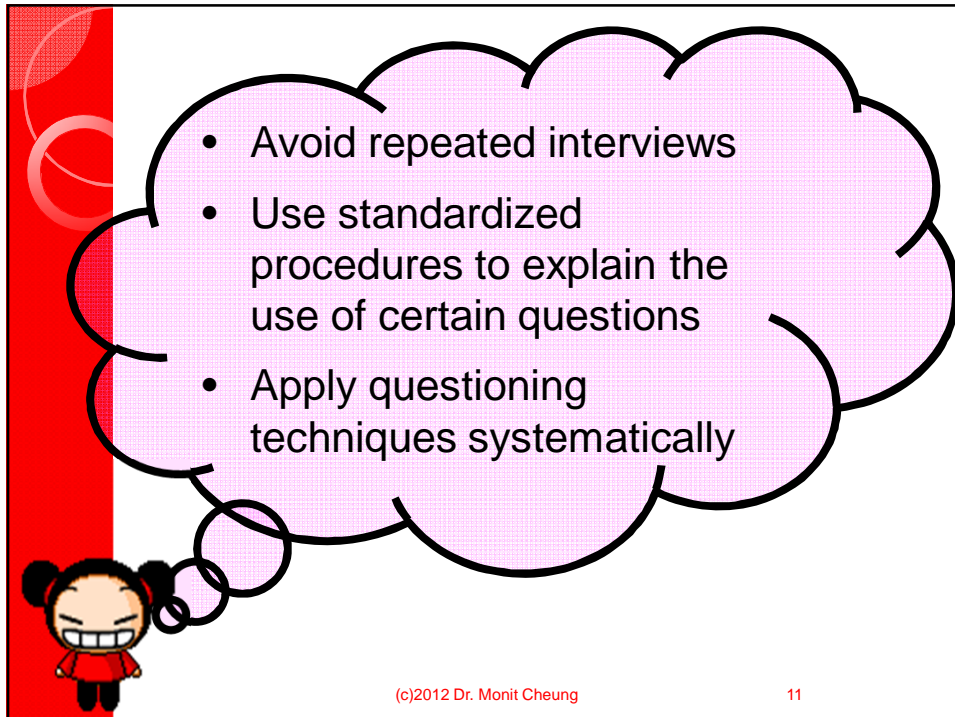
- Avoid the use of **accusatory why** questions during the interview.
- It's ok to ask "Why are you here today?" to help reticent children feel at ease.



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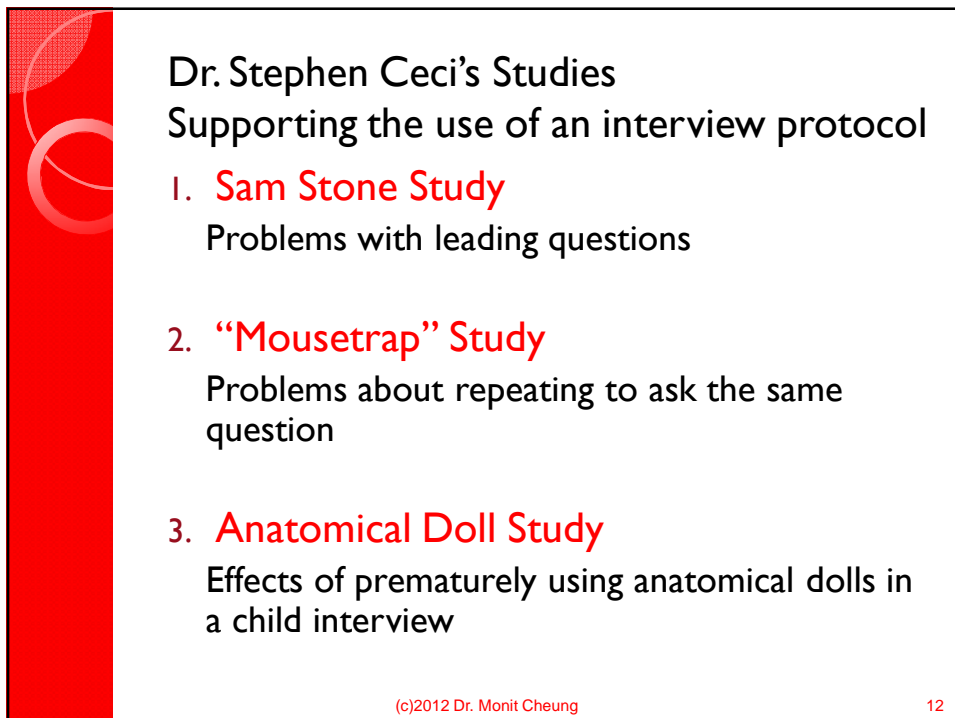
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WHY PROTOCOL?



- Avoid repeated interviews
- Use standardized procedures to explain the use of certain questions
- Apply questioning techniques systematically

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Dr. Stephen Ceci's Studies
Supporting the use of an interview protocol

1. **Sam Stone Study**
Problems with leading questions
2. **"Mousetrap" Study**
Problems about repeating to ask the same question
3. **Anatomical Doll Study**
Effects of prematurely using anatomical dolls in a child interview

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Interview Protocol

1. Introduction
2. Information Gathering
3. Clarifications
4. Closure

*2 case examples (disclosure “Julie” and nondisclosure “Erin”) will be used to illustrate practice principles.

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Stage I: Introduction

Purpose & Nature of the Interview

- State your **name, role/position**
- State **reason or purpose** is to interview the person to obtain information about an allegation
- Provide opportunity for the client to **express feelings** and release tensions

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Introduction:

Explaining the Interview Process

- **Take control** of the process by giving directions and specifying the protocol to be followed.
- **Inform** the client about note-taking or recording the interview, explain reasons and dispositions of notes and records.
- Determine the client's understanding of the **purposes and procedures** by asking for clarifications.

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Rapport with the Client

- Show empathy, concern
- Be non-punitive/judgmental to the approach
- Be honest
- Focus on the here and now
- Not to show approval/disapproval of what you heard

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Practice Hint #1:

- **Rapport:** When the child has concerns about the process, the interviewer must address these concerns in a child-focused manner.

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Example in Stage I: Rapport

Case 1: Disclosure; Client: Julie, Fourteen-Year-Old Female

After hearing about the purpose of the interview, the child feels uncomfortable about being videotaped:

C: I don't want my mom to watch it.

I: **Is there something you are about to tell me that you don't want your mom to know?**

C: Yes.

I: What are you worrying about?

C: I don't know.

I: If your mom doesn't know what happened to you, how would she be able to help you? (or how would we help if your mom is not involved)

C: I don't want her help.

I: **I understand. I will try my best to help you. Is it OK? (Who can help you? What problem do you need help on?)**

C: OK.

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Practice Hint #2:

- **Truth/Lie:**When providing examples to differentiate telling the truth and lying (truth/lie ritual), the interviewer must use **another individual** (such as “someone”), not the child or the interviewer, in the examples.
- Make sure to check the child’s competence to provide a correct answer before using a Truth/Lie example

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Example in Stage I: Truth & Lies

Disclosure Case: Eliminating “Burden”

After stating the importance of telling the truth, the interviewer uses two examples for young children who cannot tell in a conceptual way to differentiate truth and lies. When a “lie” example is used, the burden is placed on another individual rather than the child herself or the interviewer who is perceived not a liar. Thus, the subject of a “Truth & Lie” example would be changed from the client (“Julie”) to another person.

I: **If someone said your hair is black, would this person be telling the truth or a lie?**

C: Truth.

I: Let’s use another example. Are you, Julie, talking to me in this room?

C: Yes.

I: **What if someone said Julie is not here in this room, would this person be telling the truth or a lie?**

C: A lie.

I: What we are going to talk about is very important. Can you promise me that you will only talk about the truth, things that really happened?

C: Yes.

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Practice Hint #3:

- **Slang Clarification:** Although the interviewer may understand the meaning of slang terms expressed by the child, it is important to tell the child the purpose of clarifying further.

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Example in Stage I: Slang

Set Up Ground Rules and Clarify Terminology

I: Julie, if I ever ask you a question and you don't know the answer, I want you to just say "I don't know." If I say something you don't understand and you need me to repeat it in a different way, I want you to just say, "I don't understand." And if you hear something wrong, I want you to correct me, so I'll get the right thing, OK?

C: OK.

I: Julie, sometimes you might use words that are slang, or a word that you might use, others might use differently. I might ask you to clarify that word; so, I might ask you, "What do you mean by that?" Like I said, some people use the same word to mean different things, and I just want to make sure. OK?

C: OK.



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Practice Hint #4:

- **Consequences:** In the truth/lie ritual, the interviewer must also check if the child understands the consequence of lying.

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Example in Stage I: Consequences

- I: What usually happens if someone tells a lie?
- C: They get in trouble.
- I: When we talk today it is very important to only tell truths. Can you promise to only talk truths?
- C: Yes.

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Stage II: Information Gathering

- Focus on the Truth
- Collect Basic Facts Related to the Allegation
- Be a listener
- Use exact wording in your notes

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Information Gathering: Examples

- “Before you tell us what you know, we must stress that only the truth is to be revealed. I may ask you some questions to clarify what you have told me. Please don’t guess if you do not know the answers.”
- “Since sex abuse is a sensitive subject, if we ask you something that is related to sex or intimacy, please be specific and understand that our role is not to judge but to get the exact information from your experience.”

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Step-by-Step Interview Process

- Provide a **free-narrative** opportunity first.
 - “Tell us what happened.”
 - “Tell us about your relationship with _____ (the accused).”
- Ask **follow-up** questions:
 - Use when, where, who, what, and how (**4W1H**)
 - Use the client’s words to ask further questions
 - Ask about inconsistencies
 - Do not ask “why” questions
 - Do not use an accusing tone
 - Do not defend for or judge the alleged perpetrator.

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The Interviewing Process

- Always be conscious about the reason behind asking certain questions.
- Don’t use leading questions
- Ask open-ended questions
 - e.g.: Instead of asking “Did XX abuse you?” you may ask, “Please tell me about your relationship with XX.” “What did he do to give you this impression (specified with the client’s words)?”

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The Interviewing Process

- If you received this complaint from another person, be clear about the report but **separate** what is in the report and what are you gathering now.
- Beware that the client may be emotional. Provide water or use deep breathing to **calm** down.

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The Interviewing Process: Examples

- Address the **client's emotion** when it blocks the interviewing process

e.g.: "I sense that you are getting uncomfortable and upset, is there anything specific you are concerned about?"

"I notice that you are not talking, is there anything you don't want someone to know?"

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Practice Hint #5:

- **Non-linearity of Stages II and III:** When a child begins to withdraw and/or become silent without disclosing abuse, it is suggested that the interviewer move to the questioning stage of the interview to explore the child's reluctance and concern.
- Once a child begins to feel comfortable speaking and becomes open to narrating the occurrence of events, the interviewer can move back to Stage II—the child's free narrative, **moving with ease between Stage II and Stage III (or going back to rapport building)** based upon the child's level of participation and comfort.

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Example in Stage II: Free Narrative

I: Tell me what brought you here today.

C: (Silence.)

I: It's OK. Take your time.

C: (Sighs.)

Move between Stage II and Stage III

I: Julie, who brought you here today?

C: My mom.

I: What did she say about coming here?

C: Hmm. That I was going to talk with you.

I: Did she say what you are going to talk about?

C: (Sighs.)

I: How have you been?

C: Not good.

I: Tell me what happened.

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Examples in Stage II (Continued)

Handle Secrecy

- I: What hasn't been good?
C: Well, it's a secret. If I tell you, can you not tell anyone?
I: Julie, I talk to lots of young boys and girls, and I can help you figure out what you can tell and what you can't tell.
C: (Silence.)

Return to Stage II

- I: You said you haven't been good. Tell me about this.
C: I have been having problems with my stepdad. Sexual problems. (Pause.) He makes me do things I don't want to do.

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Stage II: Clarifications

- Clarify and analyze the **observed facts** and the statements made by the client and ask yourself what conclusions can be drawn as a result.
- Make concerted effort to concentrate on what the client says. **Not to ask too many questions** if the client is ready to share the information.

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Clarification Techniques

- Avoid words that may convey blame or judgments (positive or negative).
- Avoid statements reflecting false reassurance, e.g., Don't say, "Everything will be alright."

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Clarification Techniques

- **Should not break silence prematurely.**
- Avoid the use of technical terms.
- **Clarify** terms in the report regarding **sexual acts or activities.**
- Step 1: Purpose: "You just told me something related to sexual activities (or a term the client used). I'm going to ask you specific questions about these activities so that there will not be misunderstanding or guessing from my side. My first question is...?"
- Step 2: Clarifying: "When you said _____ (sex act or body part), what is it? (what did he do? How did he do it?)"

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Consider...

- Motive
- Who was the first person you told about the abuse?
- What was that person's reaction?
- What made you decide to report now?
- What action, on the part of client, is required now.

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Practice Hint #6:

- **Sequence of Questions:** The “Who”, “When,” and “Where” questions are utilized to help the child talk and reduce embarrassment, anxiety, fear, and further negative feelings that may be associated with the use of other questions.

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Example in Stage III: Questions

Case 2. Nondisclosure

Client: Erin, Ten-Year-Old Female

Use Non-threatening Questions

Throughout Stage III, the three non-threatening questions – who, when, and where – should be utilized prior to introducing the “what” question because they help reduce the experience of negative emotions and offer clarity to the acquired information, particularly when interviewing a reticent child.

- I: What is mom's name?
 C: XX.
 I: Do you live with your mom?
 C: Yes.
 I: You told me that you live in a house. Tell me how many bedrooms you have in your house?
 C: 4
 I: Who sleeps in your bedroom?
 C: Me.
 I: At this Center, we often talk with kids about how to protect their bodies. Tell me the places on your body that no one should touch?
 C: My lips and my privates.

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Practice Hint #7:

- **Nondisclosure:** If a child does not disclose abuse, the interviewer may provide information about **body protection**. If a child discloses abuse, the interviewer may return to the **free narrative** stage.

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Example in Stage III: Body Protection

Provide Body Protection Knowledge (Example: Non-disclosure case)

- I: You pointed to certain areas on your body, and I just want to make sure I understand. Do you have another name for the areas that you pointed to?
- C: My chest, my butt, and my tee-tee.
- I: What's another name for tee-tee?
- C: Um ... vagina. My mom taught me this word.
- I: Who is allowed to touch those areas?
- C: Doctors.
- I: Who shouldn't touch you there?
- C: Other people.
- I: If those other people tried to touch you, what would you say or do?
- C: I'll run away really fast!
- I: What else would you do?
- C: I'll tell my mom.
- I: Yes, if someone did try to touch you, telling your mom is the right thing to do. Has anyone ever touched you or tried to touch you on those areas?
- C: No.
- I: Has someone ever looked at those places or tried to look at your chest, butt, or tee-tee?
- C: No.

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Stage IV: Closure

- Highlight facts revealed.
- Address the client's emotions.
- Don't promise what you don't know.
- Is the client willing to make a written statement?
- Ask if additional persons should also be interviewed if time allows.
- Discuss possible future actions.

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Practice Hint #8:

- **Motivation of Disclosure:** As the interview draws to a close, the interviewer may ask the child “**Has anybody told you to say what you just shared with me?**” followed by validation questions such as “What did this person tell you?”
- **These questions clarify that the information is from the child’s own experience rather than from the prompting.**

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Example in Stage IV: Motive

EXAMPLE FROM A NON-DISCLOSURE CASE:

- I: Erin, I have been asking you a lot of questions. Do you have any questions for me?
- C: No.
- I: I want to make sure I heard everything you said. Now I’m going to repeat the main things you said; correct me if anything is not true. You told me that you were playing with Tim and his dad. While you guys were playing, Tim stuck a stick in your mouth. Is that what happened?
- C: Yes.
- I: **Has anyone forced or asked you to tell or not to tell what you just told me?**
- C: NO ONE.
- I: If you ever have any worries or ever get scared about something, remember to always tell a grown up. OK?
- C: OK.

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Current Issues in CSA

- False Allegations
- Recovered Memory Work
- Advocacy
- Disproportionality
- Secondary Trauma

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False Allegations

• Types of Error

✂ Type I Error (False Positives)

Reported abuse that didn't occur

✂ Type II Error (False Negatives)

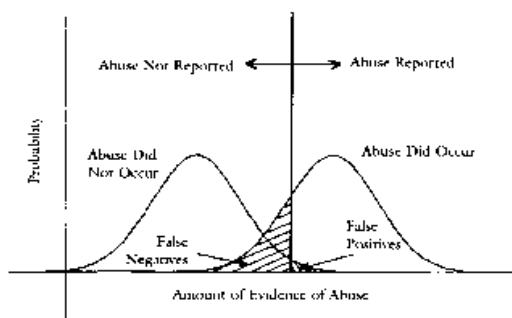
Did not report abuse that did occur



Higher probability of committing a Type II Error

Probabilities of Errors

Figure 1. Hypothetical Probability Distributions for Cases in Which Abuse Occurred and Cases in Which Abuse Did Not Occur



Source: Baker, R.A. (1998). (Ed.). Child sexual abuse and false memory syndrome. NY: Prometheus Books.

Recovered Memory

- Three Types
 1. Hidden emotional trauma
 2. False memories based on suggestive comments
 3. Recall CSA that was not perceived as traumatic outside of counseling

Advocacy

- Victim Impact Statements
- Mandatory Treatment for Offenders
- Sexual Offender Registry
- Amending Legal Definitions of CSA
 - Clear CSA definition in the law
 - Sexual ability definition (e.g., boys' sexual offenses; under 14 has ability to offense)
 - Independent legal representation for minors
 - Mediation exchanges (e.g., apology)

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Disproportionality

- Minority children are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system
- Definition of disproportionality in Hong Kong?

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Secondary (Vicarious) Trauma

- High negative effects on professionals
 - but not necessarily higher than those who work with sexual offenders or clients in non-sexual violence
 - Self care is essential
- Chouliara, Z., Hutchison, C., Karatzias, T. (2009). Vicarious traumatisation in practitioners who work with adult survivors of sexual violence and child sexual abuse. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*, 9(1), 47-56.

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Self Care

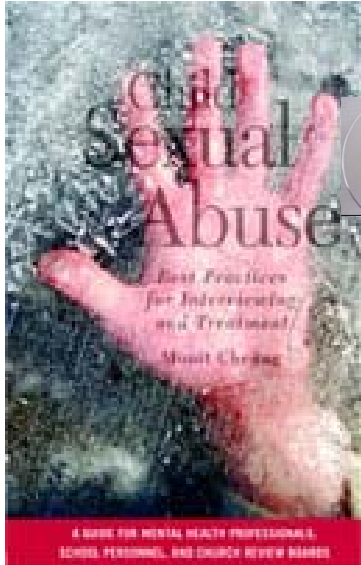

- Once a day
- Commitment

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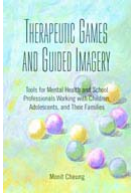
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New Book (Lyceum Books)
新書推介 2012 (with the DVD)

<http://lyceumbooks.com/ChildSexualAbuse.htm>

<http://lyceumbooks.com/TherapeuticGames.htm>



Therapeutic Games and Guided Imagery Exercises for victims and survivors

Dr. Cheung's publications in Child Sexual Abuse research (selected)

1. Cheung, M., & Brandes, B.J. (2011). Enhancing treatment outcomes for male adolescents with sexual behavior problems: Interactions and interventions. *Journal of Family Violence*, 1-15. doi:10.1007/s10896-011-9373-5
2. Cheung, M., & Boutté-Queen, N. (2010). Assessing the relative importance of the child sexual abuse interview protocol items to assist child victims in abuse disclosure. *Journal of Family Violence*, 25(1), 11-22. doi:10.1007/s10896-009-9265-0
3. Brandes, B.J., & Cheung, M. (2009). Supervision and treatment of juveniles with sexual behavior problems. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 26(3), 179-196. doi:10.1007/s10560-009-0170-4
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14. Cheung, K.M., Stevenson, K.M., & Leung, P. (1991). Competency-based evaluation of case management skills in child sexual abuse intervention. *Child Welfare*, LXX(4), July-August, 425-435.

For other publications, please see <http://www.sw.uh.edu/about/faculty/m-cheung/index.php>

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