



# Ritual/Satanic/Sadistic Abuse

## What is Ritual/Satanic/Sadistic Abuse?

As described by survivors, this type of abuse involves organized forms of severe sexual, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse, often involving numerous perpetrators and numerous victims. Ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse occurs across the variables of race, gender, and socioeconomic conditions. The majority of victims are children when the abuse begins. (Smith, Margaret. (1993). *Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, How To Help.*) Often differentiation is made between satanic, sadistic, and ritual abuse.

**Ritual Abuse** may be defined as abuse which occurs frequently, regularly, and/or in a formalized or systematic manner and often within the context of a group or “family” setting. Often ritual abuse is also performed in the name of an ideology or belief structure. Groups that perform ritual abuse use their ideology to justify the abuse, and abuse is used to teach the group’s ideology. **Satanic Abuse** generally involves ritual abuse that incorporates some form of devil worship and/or abuse with religious overtones. **Sadistic Abuse** usually involves some form of physical torture and is perpetrated by a person or people who enjoy inflicting pain on the victim.

## How Often Does it Occur?

Ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse survivors have often been disbelieved due to the extreme and bizarre nature of these types of abuse, and the secrecy that surrounds it. However, it is important to remember that ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse does happen. The more our society denies its existence, the greater the vulnerability of potential victims. Although there are still few studies that document ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse, more survivors are speaking out, and service providers are documenting the number of clients with such histories. Assessment of the prevalence rates of this type of abuse is further complicated by difficulty in tracking the groups who commit this type of abuse. Also, due to the severity of the abuse, many survivors repress the memories for many years--or may never remember. However, we do know that ritual abuse is becoming more widely recognized and that legal steps are being taken to combat ritual abuse:

- There have been more than 35 documented and convicted cases that include ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse. These convictions have been made in more than 7 countries, and in 24 states in the U.S. (Believe the Children Organization. (1997). *Conviction List: Ritual Child Abuse.*)
- A 1993 survey by the American Bar Association’s Center on Children and Family Law determined that 26 percent of prosecutors nationwide have handled cases involving “ritualistic or sexual abuse.” (Ross, A.S. (1994). *Blame It On The Devil.* Redbook, June, p. 86-89, 110, 114, 116.)
- In all States and Canadian provinces, there are laws against particular physical acts committed during ritual abuse. Additionally, Illinois, Idaho, Texas and Louisiana have passed laws against the ritual abuse of children, specifying particular acts or simulations of acts that are common in ritual abuse. They are written in such a way that no group’s freedom of religion is attacked. (Ritual Abuse, Ritual Crime and Healing Site. (Last updated: 1999). *Ritual Abuse: Frequently Asked Questions.* [www.xroads.com/rahome/faqs/ra\\_faq.html](http://www.xroads.com/rahome/faqs/ra_faq.html))

## What are Some Common Symptoms of Ritual/Satanic/Sadistic Abuse in Children and Adults?

Most symptoms are non-specific to ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse. The effects of trauma are often similar in a variety of different kinds of abuse. However, because ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse is so extreme, the symptoms may be especially severe and detrimental. There are also some symptoms that are acknowledged by professionals to be common reactions to ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse:

## In Children:

- Acting out what has been done to them by harming other children or animals, committing self-mutilation, and chanting.
- Being preoccupied with mutilation. Often destroying objects, stuffed animals, etc.
- Being preoccupied with death. Practicing being dead, asking if s/he will die soon, or asking whether we eat dead people.
- Fear that there is something foreign inside the child's body- e.g., ants, ice, or a bomb.
- Fear of going to jail, being taken away by "bad people", or tied up/caged.
- References to sexual activity with other children or adults. Unusually detailed understandings of sexual practices, etc.
- References to drugs, "pills", mushrooms, "bad medicine", or injections that seem peculiar for a young child.
- Feelings of guilt; believing themselves to be evil.

(Gould Ph.D., Catherine. (1992). Symptoms Characterizing Satanic Ritual Abuse Not Usually Seen In Sexual Abuse Cases.)

## In Adults:

- Fascination or phobia of objects, events, or symbols specific to ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse and not generally encountered in other types of physical and/or sexual abuse.
- Strong reactions to events similar to incidences of abuse may also provoke extreme reactions. These include the holidays observed by the cult, medical and dental procedures, and childbirth or abortion.
- Other general symptoms of severe trauma.  
(Ritual Abuse, Ritual Crime and Healing Site. (Last updated: 1999). Ritual Abuse: Frequently Asked Questions. [www.xroads.com/rahome/faqs/ra\\_faq.html](http://www.xroads.com/rahome/faqs/ra_faq.html))
- One of the most severe effects that ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse can have on a victim is the occurrence of Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD). MPD is a condition closely related to ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse. In fact, 25% of individuals that struggle with MPD have been ritually abused. (Braun M.D., Bennett. (1992). Children at Risk: Ritual Abuse in America. Cavalcade Productions, Ukiah, CA).

## Who is Involved?

People who are involved in these activities are often connected with a social group that serves as a disguise for their actions. These include fraternal organizations, preschool and school groups, and churches. Additionally, ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse has been suspected in organized groups such as the military, law enforcement agencies, counseling centers and medical groups. Perpetrators of ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse have been classified into three major groups:

- 1). **Family or Transgenerational:** Adults, who were abused as children may in turn abuse and indoctrinate their own children. The tradition can go back for generations.
- 2). **Extra-familiar:** Adults abuse non-related children. Children can be accessed at day care, schools, church, or through social groups.
- 3). **Ad hoc groups:** Adults, who may or may not have had abusive childhoods, come together and form a new group with its own ideology and rituals. Teens are thought to comprise many such ad hoc groups.

## Perpetrators:

Perpetrators tend to be very diverse, and come from a wide variety of social classes, locations, and religions. The following statistics are taken from a study of ritual abuse victims, all of whom voluntarily participated and were in therapy for their abuse at the time of the study:

- In 67% of cases, fathers were perpetrators of abuse.
- In 42% of cases, mothers were perpetrators of abuse.
- In 33% of cases, physicians (not family) were perpetrators of abuse.
- In 17% of cases, priests/ministers (not family) were perpetrators of abuse.
- In 17% of cases, teachers (not family) were perpetrators of abuse.

(Smith, Margaret. (1993). Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, How To Help)

## **Ritually Abusive Groups vs. Religions and Spiritual Groups:**

In many cases, ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse perpetrators have stolen, perverted and mocked the holidays and/or traditions of legitimate religious and spiritual groups. For example, this has caused many pagans to be stereotyped as taking part in ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse. The vast majority of modern day pagans are not satanic or abusive.

## **What Types of Activities are Involved?**

Brainwashing and/or Mind Control	Cutting and Scaring
Witnessing and/or Receiving Physical Abuse	Satanic Worship
Prostitution	Sexual Abuse
Child Pornography	Drug Use
Witnessing and/or Participating in Human Adult and Child Sacrifice	Cannibalism
Being Buried Alive in Coffins or Graves	Marriage to Satan
Witnessing and/or Participating in Animal Mutilation and Killings	Forced Impregnation

## **What Resources are Available for Victims/Survivors of Ritual/Satanic/Sadistic Abuse?**

Survivors of ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse can contact their local sexual assault or domestic violence programs for services. WCASA can also help you find the services nearest you, and provide you with resources on ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse. However, there are also some resources and support networks available that specialize in ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse.

Believe the Children  
P.O. Box 268462  
Chicago, IL 60626  
(708) 515-5432

*Believe the Children provides information and referral to survivors of ritual/satanic/sadistic and their advocates and publishes a national newsletter.*

Voices in Action  
P.O. Box 148309  
Chicago, IL 60614

*Information, referrals and resources for survivors and advocates. Publishes a newsletter and conducts an annual conference.*

Ritual Abuse, Ritual Crime and Healing Site  
[www.xroads.com/rahome/faqs/ra\\_faq.html](http://www.xroads.com/rahome/faqs/ra_faq.html)

*An excellent site of resources and support for ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse survivors.*

Survivorship  
3181 Mission Street, #139  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
[www.survivorship.org](http://www.survivorship.org)

*A newsletter and website for ritual/satanic/sadistic abuse survivors. Emphasis on supporting victims and the healing process.*