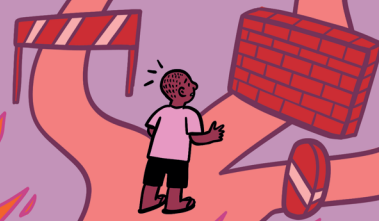


# Feelings of Anger and Frustration



Young people may feel a range of emotions after experiencing sexual abuse.



Anger is one of these emotions. Young people may feel anger about:

The abuse they have experienced



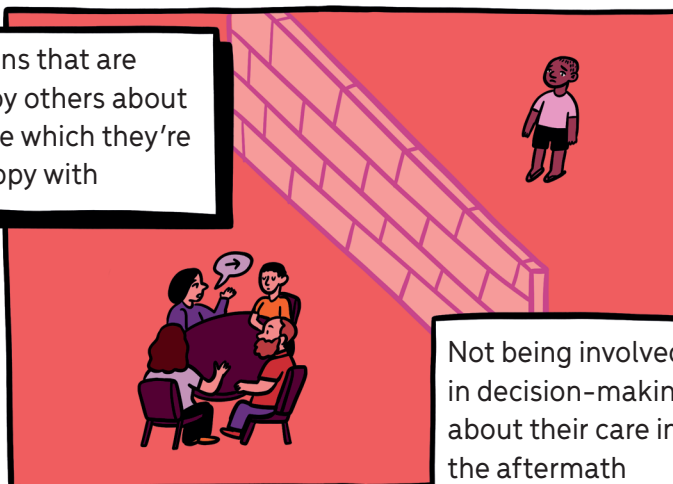
People responding to their experiences in negative or unhelpful ways



The services and systems they encounter



Decisions that are made by others about their life which they're not happy with



Not being involved in decision-making about their care in the aftermath

Anger is a common emotion for young people to feel in the aftermath of sexual abuse and can manifest in different ways for everyone.



Young people have every right to feel angry, yet sometimes it can be used as a reason to not involve them in participatory activities – particularly group based ones.

WILL THEY THINK I'M DIFFICULT?  
IS MY ANGER A PROBLEM?  
WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF ME?



I don't think it's appropriate for Grace to take part in that group activity, she's quite angry. What if she causes other young people to become angry or upset?

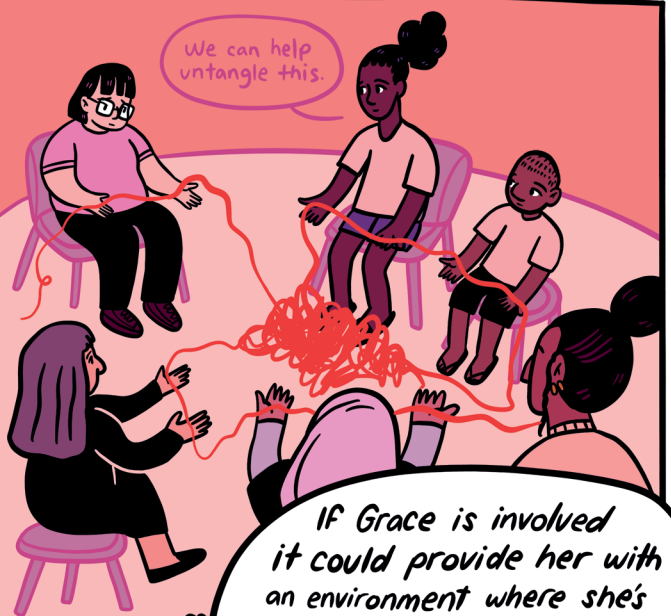


I think young people may have these different emotions anyway. It doesn't mean we can't bring them together, we just need to prepare for and support their individual needs as best we can.

Grace, what do you think?



We can help untangle this.



If Grace is involved it could provide her with an environment where she's able to express herself and feel understood and reassured that her feelings are normal.



When young people participate in group activities with other young people, and are able to express their emotions in a safe space, this can support individual healing and recovery.

*It's not a case of group work making me angry — those emotions are already there.*

*They may just be activated in that environment, which can be helpful.*

*Sometimes it's easier to be angry for other people and what they've experienced than it is to be angry about your own experience.*

*She's not to blame for what happened to her, so why have I been blaming myself?*

Anger can help to promote positive change.

*Collective feelings of anger and frustration can shine a light on where young people want to see change.*

*And sometimes when those in positions of power hear from young people and the anger they feel, it can motivate them into making a change.*

*Anger can be a motivating factor for activism and change, it's got to be expressed in a way that people will respond well to.*

*I agree. It's helpful for young people to be able to connect with their anger and frustration — we can support them to channel and express these emotions in a positive way, and ensure we're not causing harm.*



# Concluding Thoughts

## For young people

- When thinking about taking part in group based participatory activities, it's important to be aware that discussions may cause, or increase, feelings of anger for you and/or other young people.
- Feelings of anger and frustration are normal and common in the aftermath of abuse and have the potential to be used to positively influence change.
- You may find it helpful to talk to professionals involved in the project to discuss how they can help you respond and work with these emotions in a way that helps you and others.

## For professionals

- Potential risks and dynamics need careful thought and attention when bringing young people together in groups – but participatory spaces can provide a safe environment for young people to share their collective frustrations.
- Young people will all have different behavioural responses to the emotions they feel after sexual abuse. You should avoid making assumptions on the basis of how a young person presents when making decisions about participatory opportunities and involvement.
- You should consider if and how participatory opportunities might enable you to work in partnership with young people and support them to channel their anger into something positive, and maximise participation outcomes.

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Comics are by Maria Stoian.

To find out more about the work of the Centre please visit the Centre's website [beds.ac.uk/sylrc](https://beds.ac.uk/sylrc).