Profile of a Child Abuser

The bulk of this list is drawn from studies of sexual abusers (the bulk of convicted abusers are convicted on sexual abuse charges) but the general attitudes described may apply to people who abuse in other ways. An abusive person does not think about categories; they are simply abusive.

**Men 18-38**
1. Low self esteem
2. Unhealthy level of need for power and control
3. Negative attitude about life and people
4. Labeled as having a "hot" temper
5. Blames others often for struggles in life; doesn’t recognize own contributions to difficulties
6. Poor family relationships
7. Difficulty in interpersonal relationships (relates to others immaturity both socially and emotionally); may not be involved with peers or engage in adult group recreational activities
8. Difficulty with impulse control
9. History of past physical/sexual victimization (80-95% of child molesters were themselves molested)
10. Primary interests are in children
11. May be involved in youth activities such as group leaders or coaches
12. May be married or single; if married, they are often experiencing marital difficulties; they have difficulty in developing satisfying, supportive, intimate relationships with adults
13. May have a specific age of children they prefer to work with
14. Tend not to have substance abuse problems
15. May have been insecure in childhood (due to frequent moves, early physical illnesses and/or marital difficulties between parents)
16. Less of a team player
17. Difficult time asking for help with his/her problems
18. Don't admit to stress or recognize a need to have a plan to deal with it
19. Use children to fulfill their needs or validate their sense of competence and well being
20. Highly skilled at gaining the trust and confidence of children
21. Sensitive to children's needs and have a way of putting children at ease
22. Move frequently and unexpectedly
23. Seeks opportunities to be alone with children
24. Has an idealistic perspective of children...may refer to them as objects

**Women**
1. Married young
2. Reared in a very strict home
3. Her family was/is very religious
4. Her husband is gone frequently and is not very supportive
5. Is sexually naive and immature
6. Is very dependent on a father figure
7. Frequently the victim of physical abuse
8. May use harsh, age-inappropriate discipline
9. Has low self esteem
10. The husband exaggerates his masculinity in dress, work, and with peers and usually has drug or alcohol problems that affect his sexual performance
11. Is lonely
12. Does not have much tenderness in her life
Adolescents
1. Generally feels powerless and inadequate
2. Lack of contact with peers
3. Few or no extracurricular activities
4. May feel more comfortable with children younger than themselves
5. May seem socially immature for their age
6. Make themselves available to babysit to be alone with young children
7. May come from a family where there has been physical or sexual abuse
8. May lack a close relationship with a father figure

CAUTION: A profile list, such as this, can be misleading because many of the characteristics here can describe men/women who are not abusive. Having more than one of these items does not necessarily increase the odds of that person being an abuser. Although this profile has some value in pointing out particular needs of people and risks associated with them, great caution should be used when assigning this profile to any one individual. Few abusers ever self-report the characteristics listed here. Individuals with abusive personalities are often more subtle and skillfully manipulative in their approach to their employers, as well as their approach to children. This makes it essential for those responsible for hiring to gain information from collateral resources such as past employers, friends, families and criminal background checks.

For Their Sake, 1992, American Camping Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children Abusing Other Children</th>
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<td>More and more cases of children abusing younger children are occurring in recent years. It’s important to note that only physical and sexual abuse definitions apply to minors. Verbal abuse from another child does not cause the same level of emotional or mental damage as abuse from adults and should be handled using standard behavior guidance procedures. Neglect does not apply because children are not the ones responsible for providing that kind of care to other children.</td>
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<td>So, is it abuse or normal kid stuff? One criteria to use is the 4 year age gap. It should be obvious that a 12 year old exploring sexuality with an 7 year old is inappropriate. However, at times a situation involving children of similar ages may be deemed abusive or exploitive.</td>
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<td>When it is determined that the situation is normal sexual curiosity or aggressive behavior, the staff should still intervene and return the children to behaviors more appropriate to the YMCA program. Check with your supervisor if you have questions about that. When, however, the situation is determined to be abusive, the abuser must be expelled in order to protect the other children in your program. Reporting the incident to the police will ensure that the abuser and his or her family will receive the intervention that they need. Remember, the YMCA cares about all children but may not be the right place for all children.</td>
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<td><strong>Number One Rule:</strong> Don’t Let It Happen in the First Place! Supervise Your Program Well!</td>
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