



Statement on Therapy and Sexual Abuse Memory

Washington, DC (Sep 20, 2018) Following is the statement of ISSTD President Kevin Connors in response to the recent statement of Dr. Blasey Ford regarding the allegations of an adolescent sexual assault and the questions of traumatic memory.

“Although we cannot speak to Dr. Blasey Ford’s specific case, we are concerned with recent press suggestions that her statement cannot be trusted because she disclosed the assault in the context of therapy.

It is a misrepresentation of psychotherapy to claim that therapists are encouraging clients to imagine abuse or assault that has not taken place.

Furthermore, there is no research evidence to support an argument that a person can be led to believe they have been sexually assaulted based on therapeutic suggestion. The argument that false memories of rape are induced by therapists is not empirically supported.

Based on a 2011 study published in *Child Maltreatment*, approximately one in five females and one in twelve males are sexually abused in childhood. These statistics have been consistent since the early 1980’s.

The evidence indicates that the likelihood of a therapist implanting false memories is very small while the likelihood of a child or teenager being sexually abused is much greater.

The majority of people who experience sexual violence in childhood do not disclose at that time, or if they do, the adults around them frequently do not take decisive or protective action. The fact that Dr. Blasey Ford’s allegations have surfaced decades after the alleged assault, and were disclosed in therapy, does not undermine the veracity of them in any way.”

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About ISSTD

The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation represents mental health professionals who specialise in treating complex trauma and dissociation. The ISSTD’s membership includes more than 1250 clinicians and researchers. The ISSTD seeks to advance clinical, scientific, and societal understanding about the prevalence and consequences of complex trauma and dissociation.

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