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ADDICTION

Maybe one of the greatest “secrets” of childhood sexual abuse is the far-reaching toll it takes on society.

Its cost is measured not only in broken lives – but also, debilitating expenses to our national economy, because one of the common affects of childhood sexual abuse is addiction and substance abuse later in life.

Addictions have reached crisis levels in the US:

- **Forbes.com** reports the 5 most expensive – or “hard” addictions according to government health agencies are:
 - alcohol
 - smoking
 - drugs
 - over-eating
 - gambling.

This adds up to an estimated astounding cost to the US of **\$590 billion*** annually in terms of treatment expense and loss of productivity.

Sex addiction – although it’s considered a serious problem, isn’t included in this figure, because no formal cost studies exist.

RAINN (the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network), reports victims of sexual assault are:

- **3 times** more likely to suffer from depression.
- **6 times** more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **13 times** more likely to abuse alcohol.
- **26 times** more likely to abuse drugs.
- **4 times** more likely to contemplate suicide.

Researchers from the Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital found that “...repeated sexual abuse during childhood causes physical changes in the brain, changes that can explain why abused children often develop substance abuse problems later in life.” (NIDA, the National Institute of Drug Abuse)

The carnage wrought by childhood sexual abuse affects us all.

For more information, go to www.boyhoodshadows.org