

# **When the Face Reveals What Words Do Not: Facial Expressions of Emotion, Smiling, and the Willingness to Disclose Childhood Sexual Abuse**

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For survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA), verbal disclosure is often complex and painful. The authors examined the voluntary disclosure-nondisclosure of CSA in relation to nonverbal expressions of emotion in the face. Consistent with hypotheses derived from recent theorizing about the moral nature of emotion, CSA survivors who did not voluntarily disclose CSA showed greater facial expressions of shame, whereas CSA survivors who voluntarily disclosed CSA expressed greater disgust. Expressions of disgust also signaled sexual abuse accompanied by violence. Consistent with recent theorizing about smiling behavior, CSA nondisclosers made more polite smiles, whereas nonabused participants expressed greater genuine positive emotion. Discussion addressed the implications of these findings for the study of disclosure of traumatic events, facial expression, and the links between morality and emotion.