

*Our society should stop shaming paedophiles for coming forward and seeking therapy.*

Speaker

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**Juliet  
Grayson**

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PBSB therapist with expertise  
on working with paedophiles



European  
Peace  
Conference

# Why we need therapy for sex offenders

## Juliet Grayson on the prevention of sexual abuse of children

*We are excited to announce **Juliet Grayson** as a speaker on working with sex offenders at the European Peace Conference on Perpetrator-Victim Dynamics in Amsterdam, 2025.*

### Juliet Grayson

Juliet Grayson is an expert in body-oriented Pesso therapy (PBSB). She is the co-founder of StopSO, an organisation in the UK aimed at preventing sexual offending. Oscar, the founder of the Peace Conference came across Juliet's work via his board function with the Dutch Society of Pessotherapy (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Lichaams-gerichte Pesso psychotherapie). Monique Cuppen, another speaker at the peace conference, recommended to get in touch.

### What makes you explicitly stand up for perpetrators?

“Talking about sexual attraction to children is a big thing in our society. In the UK, committing a sexual offence, and using child pornography is considered worse than killing someone. Over here in Britain, people who commit sexual offences against children have to be put in specialist prisons. Otherwise they get attacked by murderers, fraudsters, and burglars, who look down on them. People here have the mindset ‘once a sex offender, always a sexual offender’. The more we judge, criticise, condemn and hate sexual perpetrators, the harder it becomes for them to ask for help - as societal shame only perpetuates more shame. No one wakes up in the morning and thinks ‘I’m going to be a perpetrator’. It is a combination of a troubled history, lack of control, and societal situation that makes someone a perpetrator. I’d say that every perpetrator has experienced neglect or trauma. As a sexual abuse victim myself, I think we need to make it safe for paedophiles to come forward and ask for help. I’m impressed with the number who take therapy when it is offered.”

### You have founded a non-profit to prevent sexual offending?

“Yes, I set up (co-founded) a UK-wide charity in 2012. StopSO: The Specialist Treatment Organisation for Perpetrators and Survivors of Sexual Offences. We trained therapists across the UK so that anyone who is a victim or perpetrator can access therapy within a half hour drive. The aim is that they can get one-to-one therapy within a matter of days of asking. When I left in 2019, StopSO was giving therapy to over 1,500 perpetrators a year, many of whom were paedophiles. In the 7 years since we started, we had helped over 4,000 sex offenders.”

### Why are you working with both victims and perpetrators in StopSO?

“I find it desperately sad for both sides, the victims and the perpetrators. Sometimes, they form the ‘perfect’ dysfunctional match. Perpetrators can be very charming and convincing, yet they are overriding the other person – violating them and ignoring protests. And, sometimes the victim lacks boundaries and is unable to stand up for themselves. Let me clarify. I think of boundaries in two parts. Like an orange, the orange skin protects me from the world, from what is coming in towards me. The white pith protects other people from me. It prevents me from acting out inappropriately in any way, including my inner sexual aggression and violence. With sexual perpetrators, sometimes there may be a sense of grandiosity and superiority – though this is often unconscious. On some level they consider their needs to be more important than others, they place their desire above that of the other.”

*Sexual offending is worse than killing someone. We think ‘once a sex offender, always a sex offender’. This societal shame perpetuates itself. To reduce child abuse, we need to make it safe for paedophiles to come forward and seek help.”*



“Victims, at the other end, may be too thin-skinned. Sometimes they ignore the warning signs, and find themselves going along with an inappropriate situation for too long. They do not want to offend or upset the other. They might be people pleasing instead of setting boundaries. I say this is in relation to adults – who know how to say, ‘No’. Of course it is different with children, who should have their innocence protected, and never be threatened with danger. However, the research shows that if a child says, ‘No’, that the perpetrator generally moves on to another child. So teaching our children to stand up for themselves, to know that it is okay for them to say, ‘No’ to an adult, is an essential skill. Just to be clear, there are also many cases of pure violence, where even if no is clearly stated, the abuse will still happen. I don’t want to oversimplify this, or imply that the victim is at fault. Everyone should be able to do what they want, dress the way they want, and be safe. No one should ever be exploited because of where they were, or what they were (or were not) wearing.”

### What key dynamics do you see with victims of sexual abuse?

“First, victims of sexual abuse often have the unconscious predisposition to repeat the situation again and again. It’s a strange repetition that we see. They need help to avoid the pattern of sexual, physical, emotional abuse, which feels familiar for them, though they usually won’t understand why. Second, it can take years, and even decades, for victims to recover from the reaction they receive when they tell someone about their abuse. When a victim tells their story, if they are met with disbelief, this will be almost as damaging as the abuse itself. For example, if the first person you tell says, “I can’t believe that he (or she) would have done that” it is devastating. Whatever the response from others, the consequences of abuse usually goes on for years – decades – it maybe life long. As a society, I think we should all consider looking at and understanding our own perpetrator and victim dynamics.”

*One in five people are sexually attracted to children. In our society, this would be too uncomfortable to admit without shame, so instead we vilify others, rather than owning the attraction ourselves.*

## What makes sexual attraction to children a societal issue?

“Research shows that sexual attraction can be seen on a continuum. For example, one continuum is heterosexuality or homosexuality – on the one end I am attracted to the same gender, and on the other end I am attracted to the other gender. Another continuum has, on the one end, a sexual attraction to adults and on the other end, there is the sexual attraction towards children. We are all on this continuum, somewhere. Research has shown that almost one in five men, if they use a penile plethysmograph, (a cuff that goes around the penis and measures erections), get more physically aroused with child pornography than with adult pornography. So, I think that the level of sexual attraction to children is much higher in society than we are aware of. And yet most people are managing their sexual attraction and would NEVER dream of acting on it.”

“We also know from research that men who look at legal pornography can get bored after a while. At that point, they may start experimenting, and exploring different kinds of pornography. They may even move along the continuum, and start looking at pornography involving children. Many will not have been aware of their innate, unconscious, sexual attraction to children. I have found through working with those people who have switched, and developed a ‘new’ sexual interest in children later in life, that therapy can help them to ‘switch back’ and become attracted to adults again. It is different with those with who have a primary and exclusive sexual attraction to children though. They have to learn how to manage their sexual attraction. They need to contain it and find ways, without using children, or images of a child (because that would be illegal) to satisfy their sexual needs. I sometimes say: ‘You should not be condemned for your sexual preferences. But you are responsible for your sexual behaviour.’”

*We should not  
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“Did you hear of the James Cantor hypothesis? This researcher suggests that our sexual preference is formed between the fourth and the fifth month of pregnancy. He says that there’s simply nothing you can do about that fact. I would even say that there’s nothing inherently wrong with being a non-offending paedophile. In fact, having the attraction to children, and choosing to remain non-offending, is a gift to society. So let’s think about the 20% of people that are, according to research, attracted to children yet do not admit their sexual attraction - as it’s too uncomfortable to do so. What happens to that? I think that they may project their inner attractions outwards, and then condemn it. They may be the people who accuse, vilify and become aggressive towards paedophiles and those who have that attraction. They are trying to deny it or get rid of it within themselves, as the idea is unbearable to them. With regard to paedophiles, whilst I may judge their behaviour, I do not judge who they are. We should not forget how hard some people work to be a pro-social and good member of society. I have clients who avoid going near schools, and get off the bus if a child gets on. They are focussed on keeping children safe, and they will avoid any situation that involves any child. They want to protect innocence, they realise they represent a potential threat, they avoid any temptation, and they take care to keep everybody in society safe. I think they should be applauded.”

### **We are mostly talking about men. What about paedophile women?**

“The statistics say 10% of sexual offences are committed by women. I’d say that female sexual offending is heavily underreported. For example, I hear about mothers who insisted on massaging their son’s genitals when they were children. This is clearly sexual abuse, but the man-who-was-a-child had not thought of it as such. I also think an older woman who is in her mid thirties, having sex with a much younger boy is not as strongly condemned as older man with a younger girl. If the boy is between 13 and 15 years old, I think there has been in the UK a sense of, ‘Oh lucky boy, an older woman who wants to help him learn about sex’. Society has a different attitude towards paedophile women than towards men.”

*Cantor's hypothesis suggests that that our sexual preference is formed between the fourth and the fifth month of pregnancy. There's nothing you can do about that.*

## What should we as a society do to prevent sexual abuse of children?

“What helps is to work with the Finkelhor model. It maps four preconditions for a sexual offence to occur. First, the motivation to exploit can be reduced. For example, lots of paedophiles come to me when they realise their attraction to children is not okay. Perhaps they knew for a while. Perhaps it was seeing a famous person being locked up, 30-40 years after committing the offence. Second, perpetrators need to overcome their internal inhibitors. They may rationalise their actions. Or within the privacy of their homes, they think ‘I’m not really a bad person.’ Some incorrectly interpret innocent child behaviour as showing that the child wants sex, so they can blame the child. Third, perpetrators need to overcome external impediments and gain access to the child. I heard about a school where they put more glass windows, so that there would be fewer hidden corners. Most sexual offences are committed by someone who knows the child. Simply reducing the time a child is left alone with an adult, can sometimes help reduce the opportunity. Fourth, the perpetrator needs to overcome the victim’s resistance. If we can help victims speak up and say ‘No,’ that would reduce the number of offences. Looking through the lens of these four conditions may help us map out some places we could intervene.” It’s up to all of us to be vigilant, and help to keep vulnerable adults, and children, safe. And for those who know they have problem with their sexual attraction, let’s applaud them for coming forward. Let’s offer them therapy as soon as they want it. Therapy is a cost effective way of protecting children – it’s much cheaper than locking perpetrators up. And if we can stop one sex offender, and help them not to act out, we protect many people, who never become victims. Our actions define who we are. Not our attractions.”

*Therapy is a cost effective way of protecting children. It’s much cheaper than locking perpetrators up.*

## Publications

- Grayson, J. (2016). *Landscapes of the heart: The working world of a sex and relationship therapist*. [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL29322495M/Landscapes\\_of\\_the\\_Heart](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL29322495M/Landscapes_of_the_Heart)
- Grayson, J. (2018). *Back to the root: Healing potential offenders' childhood trauma with Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor*. In *Sexual diversity and sexual offending* (pp. 251–271). Routledge.

## In the media

- Grayson, J. (2016). He is a paedophile, but that does not make him a child molester. HUFFPOST. [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/juliet-grayson/he-is-a-paedophile-but-th\\_b\\_12046562.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAFsNdRXsC910ohUzTHy5suRBRmnBXgtDqiy\\_tp0TOElvpeAT6GwQPEFbbXRdCYUjKOU6I\\_AJFPDwfjY](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/juliet-grayson/he-is-a-paedophile-but-th_b_12046562.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAFsNdRXsC910ohUzTHy5suRBRmnBXgtDqiy_tp0TOElvpeAT6GwQPEFbbXRdCYUjKOU6I_AJFPDwfjY)
- Grayson, J. (2016). Preventing Child Abuse: How to work with paedophiles to stop the first crime from happening. HUFFPOST. [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/juliet-grayson/child-abuse-paedophilia\\_b\\_11684296.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/juliet-grayson/child-abuse-paedophilia_b_11684296.html)

*There's nothing wrong with a non-offending paedophile. Sure, I do judge their behaviour, yet, I do not judge who they are.*

*Juliet Grayson –  
Speaker EPC 2025*



Want to learn more? Join us in person or online.

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# European Peace Conference on Perpetrator-Victim Dynamics

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"We are not at war, but not at peace either," said the new NATO Chief, Mark Rutte. "If you want peace, prepare for war." Is Europe at a crossroad towards more polarisation, identity politics, and war? Reflections on our human nature may help us find a sensible way forward.

At this year's peace conference, the first of its kind, an international group of scholars, experts and practitioners, will seek ways to explore how perpetrator-victim dynamics run through our lives, families, business and politics.

With guest lectures, workshops, personal and group reflections, we seek to embody the latest expertise from the research on war and peace.

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