



# SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EDUCATION

## MYTHS & REALITY LESSON #1



### NOTE

Log in to [WalkingWise.com](https://WalkingWise.com) and refer to the Implementation Toolkit for classroom teaching tips.

### Most importantly:

#### DEFINE SCHOOL POLICY

Establish a sexual exploitation reporting protocol with a trauma-informed response. The Walking Wise Implementation Toolkit provides a sample protocol.

#### AGE & AUDIENCE

This presentation can be edited by following the procedures on page 3 to align with your school policies, specific age groups, and the involvement of at-risk audiences.

#### SUPPORT PROCEDURE

Provide your students with guidance on accessing immediate help or arranging a private meeting with a social worker, counselor, nurse, school resource officer, or another trustworthy staff member to report concerns for themselves or a peer.

#### SECOND SAFE ADULT

Ensure a second trustworthy adult, such as a teacher, is present in the learning setting to observe student reactions and identify those who may benefit from a follow-up meeting. This person should remain focused and free from other duties during the presentation.

## NOTE TO PRESENTER

This PDF contains the same content as the PowerPoint presentation but has been condensed into fewer pages for easier reference. For live presentations, please use the PowerPoint version. It reveals bullet points one at a time.

Meaningful learning takes time. By introducing topics gradually over several years, educators can create steady growth in awareness and understanding.

Our recommended teaching plan offers a long-term path for middle and high school students to build knowledge and confidence.



## 5-YEAR TRACK

### PARENTS & STAFF

#1 Myths & Reality

### 6<sup>th</sup> GRADE

#2 Trustworthy vs. Unsafe Adult  
#3 Grooming Process

### 7<sup>th</sup> GRADE

#4 Pornography Link  
#5 Sextortion Scheme

### 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE

#6 Male Victims  
#7 Runaways as Targets  
#8 Rural Risks

### 9<sup>th</sup> GRADE

#9 Human Traffickers  
#10 Female & Peer Recruiters

### 10<sup>th</sup> GRADE

#11 Family Secret  
#12 Hidden Buyers

## NOTE TO PRESENTER

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- Insert new PowerPoint slides.
- Remove the Walking Wise logo and copyright "©2026 Walking Wise" from the new slides.
- Always add your organization's name or logo to each new slide.

Please delete this instruction page before presenting to audiences.



## NOTE TO PRESENTER

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For revision requests, please email us at: [support@WalkingWise.com](mailto:support@WalkingWise.com).

# STATISTICS

## Why Study Results Can Vary

- **Some crimes are never reported, making it hard to reveal the entire issue.**
- **Studies collect information in different ways, leading to different results.**
- **Small studies may not represent everyone.**

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In this presentation, we'll discuss statistics, but it's important to note that while statistics provide valuable insights into an issue, they cannot be relied upon entirely.

Here are a few reasons:

### UNREPORTED

Victims often do not report the crimes committed against them due to fear, shame, or manipulation.

### INCONSISTENT COLLECTION

Geographical areas have different legal definitions for sexual crimes, which may make data hard to compare.

### FOCUS GROUPS

Small or specific focus groups participating in a study or survey may not accurately reflect the diversity or experiences of the broader population.

SENSITIVE TOPICS WILL BE DISCUSSED

# CONTENT NOTICE

We'll be discussing serious safety issues today.

Some topics may be difficult to hear.

If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can step out and speak with a trustworthy adult for support.

You're not alone—help is available.

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## NOTE TO PRESENTER

### Presenter Guidelines for Delivery

Present the information in a calm, matter-of-fact way and avoid sensational language.

Avoid graphic details. Focus on understanding behaviors and staying safe.

Never blame victims. Responsibility always belongs to the person who caused harm.

Maintain a steady tone. Students often mirror the presenter's emotional cues.

Do not ask students to share personal experiences.

If students laugh or react awkwardly, stay calm and continue teaching.

Always pair risk information with solutions and support.

Remind students they are not alone and help is available.

CONFRONTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

# WALKING WISE



**KNOWLEDGE** serves as a powerful defense against sexual predators.

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Education is one of the strongest tools for preventing exploitation.

When young people understand how predators operate, they are better able to recognize manipulation and avoid dangerous situations.

Reinforce that awareness increases safety.

CONFRONTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

# WALKING WISE



## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

includes grooming,  
sextortion, pornography  
& sex trafficking.

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Sexual exploitation can include:

### GROOMING

Building trust to manipulate someone.

### SEXTORTION

Threatening to share private images.

### PORNOGRAPHY

Involving vulnerable people in creating sexual images or videos.

### SEX TRAFFICKING

Manipulating or forcing someone into sexual activity in exchange for money or something of value.

# VOCABULARY



## VOCABULARY

- **Child Exploitation**
- **Sex Trafficking**
- **Myth**
- **Reality**
- **Coercion**
- **Manipulation**
- **Intimidation**

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Understanding vocabulary terms related to the behaviors of sexual predators can empower young people to recognize warning signs of harmful situations.

Knowing terminology helps them identify manipulative tactics predators use to build trust and exploit vulnerabilities.

With this knowledge, young people are better equipped to spot red flags, understand that these behaviors are abusive, and feel more confident reporting predators to trusted adults or authorities, potentially preventing further harm..

# VOCABULARY

## CHILD EXPLOITATION

**The use of a child for someone else's benefit, often in an abusive, unfair, or harmful manner.**

Includes: Sexual exploitation (grooming & sex trafficking), sextortion, labor trafficking, and criminal activity (such as drug dealing & theft).



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

9

Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FOR LEGAL DEFINITION:

Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOlVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim>

Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice. Citizen's Guide To U.S. Federal Law On Child Sex Trafficking. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-child-sex-trafficking>

Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice. Citizen's Guide To U.S. Federal Law On Child Sex Trafficking. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-child-sex-trafficking>

# VOCABULARY

## CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

**A child (under age 18) is made to take part in sexual activity for money or something of value, like food, shelter, or gifts.**



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FOR LEGAL DEFINITION:

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[https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOIVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim)

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# VOCABULARY

## SEX TRAFFICKING OF ADULTS

An adult is made to take part in sexual activity in exchange for something of value (like money, food, or housing), through the use of **FORCE, FRAUD, or COERCION**.



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

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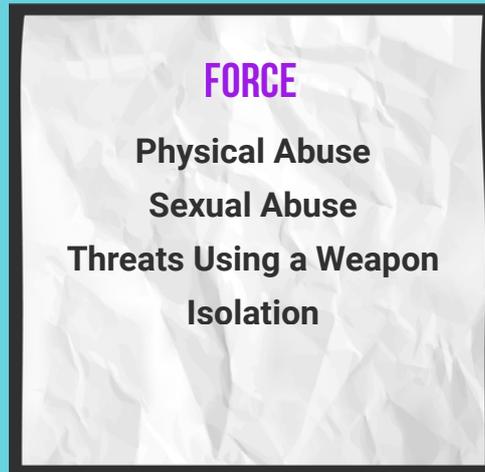
Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from

[https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOIVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim)

[hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOIVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim)

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# FORCEFUL TACTICS



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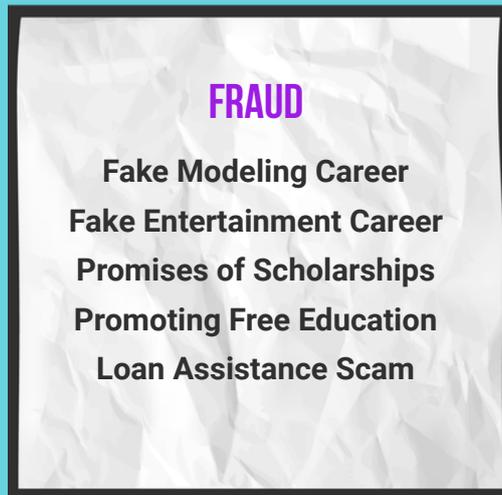
2020-2022 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Report

12

## Source

Polaris Project (n.d.). Human Trafficking During the COVID and Post-COVID Era. Polarisproject.org, pp. 3, 6. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hotline-Trends-Report-2023.pdf>

# FRAUDULANT TACTICS



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2020-2022 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Report

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## Source

Polaris Project (n.d.). Human Trafficking During the COVID and Post-COVID Era.

Polarisproject.org, pp. 3, 6. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from

<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hotline-Trends-Report-2023.pdf>

# VOCABULARY

## COERCE

To manipulate, threaten, or intimidate someone to act against their will.



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

14

Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FOR LEGAL DEFINITION:

18 USC 1591: Sex trafficking of children or by force, fraud, or coercion. (n.d.). Title 18- Crimes and Criminal Procedure, Part 1 - Crimes Chapter 77 - Peonage and Slavery.

Retrieved January 3, 2025, from [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid%3AUSC-2000-title18-section1591&num=0&edition=2000#sourcecredit)

[req=granuleid%3AUSC-2000-title18-section1591&num=0&edition=2000#sourcecredit](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid%3AUSC-2000-title18-section1591&num=0&edition=2000#sourcecredit)

# COERCIVE TACTICS

## COERCION

**Creates Substance Addiction**  
**Exploits Substance Use**  
**Threatens Harm to Family or Pets**  
**Emotional or Verbal Abuse**  
**Manipulation or Intimidation**  
**Stalking or Monitoring**  
**Withholding Food & Shelter**



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2020-2022 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Report

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## Source

Polaris Project (n.d.). Human Trafficking During the COVID and Post-COVID Era.

Polarisproject.org, pp. 3, 6. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from

<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hotline-Trends-Report-2023.pdf>

# VOCABULARY

## MYTH

A false belief commonly held by a group.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

# VOCABULARY

## REALITY

A true fact based on what actually happens.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

# MYTH OR REALITY?

**Myth or Reality?** Sex traffickers mostly target young people living in dangerous communities.



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Polaris Project (2025) Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

18

Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers mostly target young people living in dangerous communities.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth - Sex traffickers target young people from all types of communities, including urban, suburban, rural, and online communities.

Source

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from [https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBlEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE\\_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD\\_BwE](https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBlEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE)

# ANSWER

**MYTH.** Reality is, traffickers target young people from all types of communities, including urban, suburban, rural, and online communities.

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Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

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Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

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# MYTH OR REALITY?

**Myth or Reality?** Sex traffickers mainly target young people they don't know.



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Polaris Project (2025) Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

20

Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Human traffickers mainly target young people they don't know.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER:

A) Myth - Victims often know their trafficker. Traffickers can be family members - including parents, intimate partners - including older boyfriends and spouses, and other known and trusted members of the community.

Source

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from [https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE\\_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD\\_BwE](https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE)



# ANSWER

**MYTH.** Reality is, victims often know their trafficker.

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Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

21

Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

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# MYTH OR REALITY?

**Myth or Reality?** Sex trafficking usually involves violence against victims.



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Polaris Project (2025) Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

22

Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking usually involves violence against victims.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Sometimes violence is involved; however, traffickers often use manipulation, intimidation, and threats to control their victims.

Source

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from [https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE\\_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD\\_BwE](https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE)

# ANSWER

**MYTH.** Reality is, traffickers more often use manipulation, intimidation, and threats to control their victims.

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Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

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Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking usually involves violence against victims.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Sometimes violence is involved; however, traffickers often use manipulation, intimidation, and threats to control their victims.

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Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from [https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE\\_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD\\_BwE](https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE)

# MYTH OR REALITY?

**Myth or Reality? Sex trafficking victims are usually kidnapped.**



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Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking victims are usually kidnapped.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. It's possible for someone to be kidnapped by a trafficker, but this is uncommon. Most traffickers use lies, manipulation, or pressure to trap people into trafficking situations.

Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

# ANSWER

**MYTH.** Reality is, most trafficking does not involve kidnapping. Traffickers more often trick their victims.

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National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families.

25

Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking victims are usually kidnapped.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

## ANSWER

A) Myth. It's possible for someone to be kidnapped by a trafficker, but this is uncommon. Most traffickers use lies, manipulation, or pressure to trap people into trafficking situations.

## Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

# MYTH OR REALITY?

**Myth or Reality? Sex traffickers usually hold victims physically captive.**



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Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers usually hold victims physically captive.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Some traffickers may hold victims captive, but most people in trafficking situations stay for more complicated reasons:

- They don't have the basics to leave, like transportation or a safe place.
- They fear for their safety if they try to escape.
- They've been manipulated so much that they may not realize they're being controlled.

Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

# ANSWER

**MYTH.** Reality is, most victims are not locked in. People usually stay because they are scared, controlled, or feel they have no choice.

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National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families.

27

Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers usually hold victims physically captive.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

## ANSWER

A) Myth. Some traffickers may hold victims captive, but most people in trafficking situations stay for more complicated reasons:

- They don't have the basics to leave, like transportation or a safe place.
- They fear for their safety if they try to escape.
- They've been manipulated so much that they may not realize they're being controlled.

## Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

# TRAFFICKING MYTH

**Myth or Reality?** Sex traffickers only target females.



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28

Online Polling Interaction  
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers only target females.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Both men and boys are also victimized by sex traffickers. Additionally, LGBTQ+ males are especially vulnerable to traffickers.

Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

# ANSWER

**MYTH.** Reality is, females are most targeted, but males and boys are also trafficked.

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National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families.

29

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Message Especially for Teens:

Businesses worldwide use explainer-style animation as a training tool for their employees.

So, this 3-minute Walking Wise animated video series is appropriate for both teens (ages 11+) and adults to learn how sexual predators use manipulation, intimidation, and coercion to exploit young people.

NOTE

Log in to Walking Wise.com to watch the three-minute animated video with audiences.

# BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

**In what types of business or industry are people commonly trafficked?**



# BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

## Industries Impacted by Sex Trafficking

- Social Media Platforms
- Illegal Massage Parlors
- Entertainment Industry: Strip Clubs & Casinos
- Hospitality Industry: Hotels & Motels



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Myth: People are only trafficked in illegal businesses.

Reality: Trafficking can happen anywhere people can be controlled or exploited, even in legal businesses and industries.

# BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

## Industries Impacted by Labor Trafficking

- Hotel Housekeeping & Maintenance
- Restaurants & Tourism
- Agriculture: Crops, Livestock, Fisheries
- Logging & Mining
- Construction, Factories, & Carnivals



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Myth: People are only trafficked in illegal businesses.

Reality: Trafficking can happen anywhere people can be controlled or exploited, even in legal businesses and industries.

# VOCABULARY

## MANIPULATION

Influencing or controlling someone's behavior or decisions deceptively or unfairly, usually for personal gain.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

# VOCABULARY

## INTIMIDATION

To influence or control another person's actions or behavior by causing fear.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

# FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

When can young people experience a false sense of security?



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## FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

A false sense of security refers to the feeling of being safer than one actually is.

# FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

## Stay Alert – Even When Things Seem Safe

- Talking or hanging out with an “Online-only” friend.
- Spending time with an older peer or adult.
- Receiving special attention, gifts, or favors from an adult.
- Going to unfamiliar places with people they don’t know well.

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A false sense of security occurs when a situation feels safe or normal despite the presence of certain risk factors.

Young people may feel comfortable with someone they only know online because of frequent conversations or shared interests.

Spending time alone with someone significantly older, especially in private settings, increases vulnerability due to power differences.

Unusual attention, gifts, or favors from an adult can be part of boundary-testing behaviors.

Likewise, being in unfamiliar places with acquaintances reduces natural safeguards.

Safety is not about fear; it’s about awareness, boundaries, and ensuring that relationships remain transparent and appropriate.

# PLAIN SIGHT

What makes it possible for human traffickers to operate in plain sight?



# PLAIN SIGHT

## Someone We Wouldn't Suspect

- **Authority Figure:** Adult in charge of young or vulnerable people
- **Neighbor:** Adult or peer in the local community
- **Employer:** Boss or co-worker
- **Family Member:** Close or distant relative



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“Operating in plain sight” refers to visibly engaging in activities without attempting to conceal them or behaving in a way that attracts no suspicion despite the potentially harmful intentions.

Often, people believe criminal activity happens in dark alleys or places not visited by the average person. However, illegal activity often occurs in areas where people commonly spend time.

# NOT MY COMMUNITY

What can happen if sexual exploitation is ignored in a community?



# NOT MY COMMUNITY

## Cost of Looking the Other Way

- **Silence can enable exploitation to grow.**
- **Vulnerable individuals may face greater danger.**
- **Victims can remain unseen and unsupported.**
- **Communities may lose the chance to prevent harm.**

When communities avoid talking about sexual exploitation, traffickers and exploiters benefit.

Silence creates space for manipulation, grooming, and abuse to continue unchecked.

Exploitation thrives in secrecy. When no one is watching, asking questions, or speaking up, harmful behavior becomes easier to hide.

# AUTHORITY FIGURES

How can someone in authority misuse their power to harm others?



# AUTHORITY FIGURES

## How Power is Misused

- They **build trust** through manipulation and deception.
- They can use their position to **discourage questions** from others.
- They often **threaten consequences** to maintain control.
- They **blur boundaries** to test what they can get away with.

Traffickers rarely begin with force – they begin with persuasion. They slowly influence how a young person thinks about themselves, relationships, money, or loyalty.

Over time, this shapes decisions in ways the person might not have made before. They may apply pressure to push someone beyond their comfort zone, framing harmful behavior as normal, necessary, or proof of trust.

Mind games, such as guilt, blame, or mixed messages, create confusion and self-doubt, making it harder to think clearly or ask for help.

# BROKEN PROMISES

What types of false promises are used to manipulate young people into sexual exploitation?



# BROKEN PROMISES

## Fraud & False Promises

- **Fake love** or marriage proposals are used to gain trust.
- **Promises of fame** or a dream job can be used to lure and control.
- **Promises of adventure** are often used to entice running away together.



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A “false promise” is a commitment made with no intention of carrying it out.

It occurs when the intent is to deceive or defraud others.

Often, traffickers trick young people into complying with harmful requests by telling lies such as their “dedicated love” for the youth or promises of fame and fortune.

# POWER OF PERSUASION

How can traffickers gain “mental control” over young and vulnerable people?



# POWER OF PERSUASION

## Controlling Thoughts & Emotions

- They gradually **influence** beliefs to shape decisions.
- They **pressure** individuals to act against their values or comfort level.
- They create confusion, guilt, or **self-doubt** to gain control.

Mental control works by weakening confidence and increasing dependence.

Traffickers rarely begin with force; they begin with persuasion.

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Over time, this shapes decisions in ways the person might not have made before. They may apply pressure to push someone beyond their comfort zone, framing harmful behavior as normal, necessary, or proof of trust.

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# SOCIAL LIFE

How do traffickers enter a young person's "social circle"?



# SOCIAL LIFE

## Getting Too Close

- They **pretend to share interests** to build connection and trust.
- They **insert themselves** into locations, online or in person, to spend time together.
- They **encourage oversharing** to identify an individual's vulnerability.

Traffickers often enter a young person's world by blending in.

They may pretend to share hobbies, music tastes, struggles, or goals to create a fast sense of connection.

They position themselves in familiar spaces, social media platforms, gaming communities, friend groups, schools, or local hangouts, to increase access and visibility.

As trust grows, they encourage personal sharing to learn about insecurities, family conflict, financial stress, or emotional needs. That information can later be used to manipulate, isolate, or control.

# HELD CAPTIVE

What are the ways traffickers can hold a person captive?



# HELD CAPTIVE

## Emotional Captivity

- **Brainwash:** Manipulation can change beliefs, attitudes, & decisions.
- **Trauma Bond:** Rewards & punishments can create loyalty & fear.
- **Financial Control:** Providing needs leaves victims feeling trapped.
- **Substance Use:** Alcohol or drugs can be used to increase control.

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Being held captive does not always mean being locked in a room. Sometimes control happens emotionally.

Brainwashing:

Traffickers use manipulative techniques to change an individual's thought process, giving them control of the victims' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Trauma Bonding or Emotional Bondage: Traffickers use rewards and punishments in cycles to foster a powerful emotional connection with their victims. This form of abuse causes the victim to experience positive and negative emotions for the trafficker, such as love or loyalty, while also living in fear.

Economic Dependency:

Traffickers can gain control over young people who cannot earn enough money to obtain necessities like food and shelter. Victims often feel stuck because they have no means to support themselves when wanting to break free from a trafficker who fulfills their basic needs.

Drug and Alcohol Addiction:

Traffickers work to influence an individual's substance use or introduce the individual to drugs and alcohol to create dependency. Substance abuse can increase a victim's economic, physical, and emotional dependency on their trafficker, significantly reducing their ability to end their exploitation.

Imprisonment:

“Imprisonment” is the physical or emotional restriction of a person’s freedom to move about or make independent decisions. Even if not physically confined, traffickers often maintain control over victims by setting strict rules or causing isolation from friends and family members.

# ASK FOR HELP



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# ASK FOR HELP

What are ways young people can ask for help?



# ASK FOR HELP

## How to Ask for Help

- If you are in immediate danger, dial 911.
- If the sexual predator IS a family member, consider telling a trustworthy adult.
- If the sexual predator is NOT family, consider telling a parent.
- If you are a student in school, consider telling a trustworthy teacher, coach, school nurse, social worker, counselor, resource officer, or principal.
- To gain internet access for help, consider using a computer at your school or a public library.



# HAND SIGNAL FOR HELP



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Source: Canadian Women's Foundation, April 2020

55

Although the hand signal for help has not yet achieved universal recognition, it may discreetly get someone's attention in urgent situations.

## SILENT

It can be used silently.

## UNTRACKABLE

It leaves no digital footprint.

## CONCEALED

It can be done secretly when a perpetrator is nearby.

## SIGNALS DISTRESS

Combining the hand signal with distressed facial expressions might help attract the attention of an individual who is unfamiliar with the signal's meaning.

## Source

Canadian Women's Foundation, April 2020

# 24-Hour Hotline for Help

- ✓ National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888 or TEXT 233733
- ✓ Rescue America 833-599-FREE (3733)
- ✓ National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-HOPE (4673)
- ✓ National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 800-THE-LOST (843-5678)
- ✓ National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-SAFE or TEXT 88788
- ✓ National Runaway Safeline 800-RUNAWAY (786-2929)

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56

## NOTE

Presenters may ask their audience to consider adding a few "hotline for help" phone numbers in their cell phone contacts or take a photo of this slide.

# EVALUATION



## NOTE TO PRESENTER

If you would like to conduct an online student evaluation, *paid subscribers* may contact us at [support@WalkingWise.com](mailto:support@WalkingWise.com) for information about using Slido.com.

Otherwise, refer to the Walking Wise lesson plan on this topic to access a pre- and post-student survey.



Two ways to conduct a pre-/post-student evaluation:

- 1) Use the pre/post survey in the Walking Wise lesson plan for this topic.
- 2) Activate Slido.com to conduct an online survey.

# SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS



1. How would you rate this lesson?
2. What was the one thing you liked?
3. What one thing should we improve?

**slido.com**  
**#XXXX**

If Using Slido: Replace "#XXXX" with your organization's custom Slido code.

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58

Online Polling Interaction  
SLIDO.com: 3-Question Survey

IF SLIDO IS ACTIVATED:

Follow the instructions provided on WalkingWise.com to access your school or organization's custom Slido QR code and #code, which the audience will use to complete the 3-question evaluation.

Please encourage your audience to scan your organization's custom QR code to share what they enjoyed and what could be improved about the lesson.

Please send any feedback you want to share to Walking Wise at [support@WalkingWise.com](mailto:support@WalkingWise.com).

# Thank you!

WalkingWise.com



Online Course for Adults Accredited by:  
Postgraduate Institute for Medicine  
Academy of Forensic Nursing



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59

## NOTE TO PRESENTER

To access additional resources about the myths, please refer to the last page of Lesson Plan #1 by logging in to the Walking Wise Learning Platform.

We welcome your feedback at [support@WalkingWise.com](mailto:support@WalkingWise.com).