



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EDUCATION

MYTHS & REALITY

by WALKING WISE



NOTE

Log in to 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.



6-YEAR TRACK

PARENTS & STAFF

#1 Myths & Reality

6th GRADE

#2 Trustworthy vs. Unsafe Adult
#3 Grooming Process

7th GRADE

#4 Pornography Link
#5 Sextortion Scheme

8th GRADE

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

9th GRADE

#9 Human Traffickers
#10 Female & Peer Recruiters

10th GRADE

#11 Family Secret

11th GRADE

#12 Hidden Buyers

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NOTE TO PRESENTER

The presenter is welcome to customize this Walking Wise presentation according to the instructions provided on this page.

For revision requests, please email us at: support@WalkingWise.com.

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

Trauma-Informed Delivery Guidelines

To support a safe and effective learning environment, please follow these guidelines:

- Present the information in a calm, matter-of-fact way and avoid sensational or alarming language.
- Avoid graphic details. Focus on helping students understand behaviors, risk, and ways to stay safe.
- Never blame victims. Responsibility always belongs to the person who caused harm.
- Maintain a steady, composed tone. Students often mirror the presenter's emotional cues.
- Do not ask students to share personal experiences or disclosures.
- If students laugh or react awkwardly, respond neutrally and gently redirect the focus.
- Pair all risk information with needed resources, practical solutions, and support options.
- Reinforce that students are not alone and that trustworthy adults are available to help.

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, retaliation, or manipulation. Also, many don't realize that what is happening to them is a crime.

INCONSISTENT COLLECTION

Areas may define sexual crimes in various ways or use different methods to collect data, making it hard to compare information.

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.

WHY LEARN ABOUT THIS



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.

PREVENTION EDUCATION



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

includes grooming,
sextortion, pornography
& sex trafficking.

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SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Taking advantage of another person for their own benefit, especially in a sexual way, often using pressure, tricks, or control.

Below are different forms of exploitation:

GROOMING

Building trust, dependency, or an emotional connection to manipulate someone.

SEXTORTION

Threatening to share embarrassing or sexual images, videos, or information to pressure someone into following demands.

PORNOGRAPHY

Involving someone in creating sexual images who is under 18, or someone who is pressured, or unable/unwilling to give consent.

SEX TRAFFICKING

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

Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 (Legal Definition):

SEX TRAFFICKING is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person under the age of 18 for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

TVPA link: Retrieved April 14, 2026, from <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-106hr3244e nr/pdf/BILLS-106hr3244enr.pdf>

VOCABULARY



Words to Understand

- **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 these terms helps them identify manipulative tactics that unsafe people (predators/traffickers) 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.

Legal Definition: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person under the age of 18 for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

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

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The following is included under child exploitation:

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

Source

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%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOlVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGlObGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim)

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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.

Legal Definition: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person under the age of 18 for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

Source

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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VOCABULARY

SEX TRAFFICKING OF ADULTS

To take part in sexual activity in exchange for something of value because of the use of **FORCE, FRAUD, or COERCION.**

Legal Definition: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion.

Source

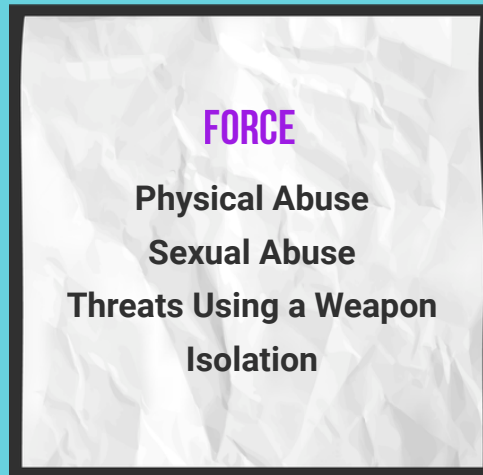
Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from

[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%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOlVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%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%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOlVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%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

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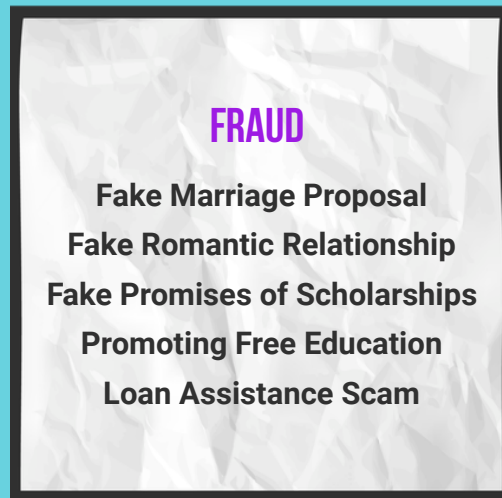
Source

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>

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.

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TVPA Legal Definition (18 U.S.C. § 1591(e)(2))

“Coercion” means:

- (A) Threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person;
- (B) Any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or
- (C) The abuse or threatened abuse of law or the legal process.

Source

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

Taking Legal Documents
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.



VOCABULARY

REALITY

A true fact based on what actually happens.



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.

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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

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, 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

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.

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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

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, victims often know their trafficker.

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

21

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

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

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

ANSWER

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

Sometimes violence is involved; however, traffickers often use manipulation, intimidation 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

MYTH OR REALITY?

Myth or Reality? Sex trafficking victims are usually kidnapped.



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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 manipulate their victims.

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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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.

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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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.

Sex traffickers also victimize both men and boys, including LGBTQ+ males and females.

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>



This 3-minute Walking Wise animated video series teaches 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.

Is animation appropriate for teens?

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

VENUES & BUSINESS

**In what types of venues or businesses
are people commonly trafficked?**



VENUES & BUSINESS

Venues Used by Sex Traffickers

- Social Media Platforms
- Illegal Massage Parlors
- Bars & Casinos
- 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.



VOCABULARY

INTIMIDATION

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



FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

When can young people experience a false sense of security?



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 is when someone feels safe in a situation where hidden risks may still exist.

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 people may face **greater danger**.
- Victims can remain unseen and **unsupported**.
- Communities may **lose the chance to prevent harm**.

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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.

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An authority figure is a person who leads or oversees others, such as a teacher, coach, boss, or community leader.

Sometimes, young people may feel they must obey an authority figure, even if the person does not actually have the right to control them.

Unsafe people may try to use their position or influence to pressure young people into doing things that feel wrong or unsafe.

A trustworthy authority figure will never ask someone to do something illegal, harmful, or inappropriate.

FALSE 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 when someone says they will do something but never plans to keep the commitment.

They may say things that sound exciting or caring to trick someone into doing something harmful or even illegal.

For example, an unsafe person might promise money, a special opportunity, fame, or love to gain a young person’s trust.

These promises are used to manipulate someone into doing things they would not normally do.

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** people to act against their values or comfort level.
- They create confusion, guilt, or **self-doubt** to gain control.

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Mental control works by weakening confidence and increasing dependence.

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.

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.

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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 where vulnerable young people are, such as 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

- **Mind Games:** Manipulation can change beliefs, attitudes, & decisions.
- **Trauma Bond:** Rewards & punishments can create loyalty & fear.
- **Financial Control:** Providing needs can cause victims to feel 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.

Mind Games: Using manipulative techniques to change an individual's thought process, giving them control of the victim's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Trauma Bonding or Emotional Bondage: Using 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.

Financial Dependency:

Gaining 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:

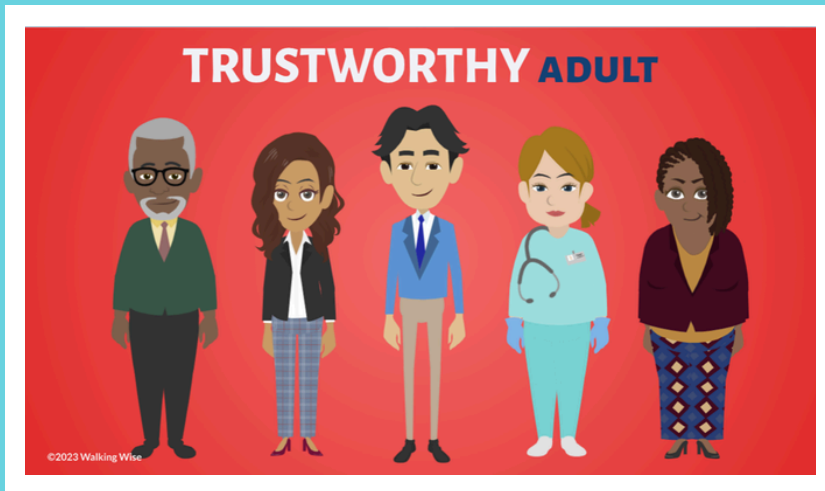
Influencing an individual's substance use or introducing the individual to drugs and alcohol to create dependency. Substance abuse can increase a victim's economic, physical, and emotional dependency on their trafficker, significantly reducing their ability to end their exploitation.

Imprisonment and isolation:

Physically or emotionally restricting a person's freedom to move about or make independent

decisions, or causing isolation from friends and family members.

ASK FOR HELP



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Walking Wise asked a focus group of survivors:
What do you think young people should know about sex trafficking?

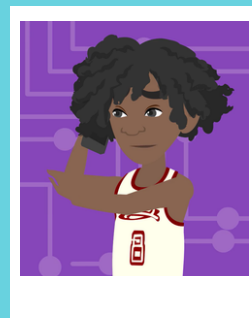
ANSWER

The survivors agreed that the most vital information teens should know is how to ask for help.

At the top of their list:
Tell a TRUSTWORTHY adult.

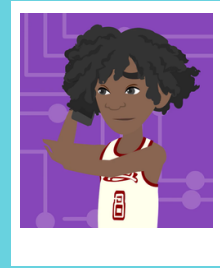
ASK FOR HELP

What are ways young people can ask for help?



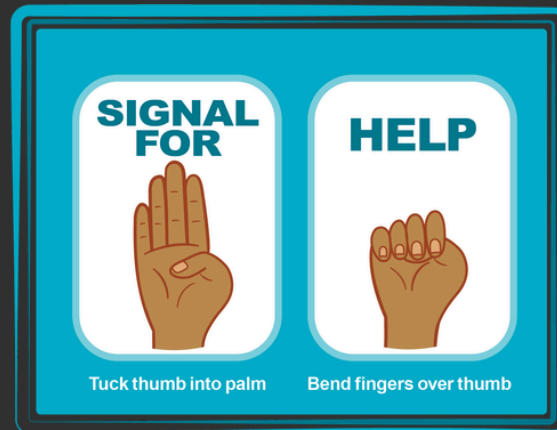
ASK FOR HELP

How to Ask for Help



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

HAND SIGNAL FOR HELP



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Source: Canadian Women's Foundation, April 2020

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Although the hand signal for help has not yet achieved universal recognition, it may quietly 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 in the vicinity.

SIGNALS DISTRESS

A distressed facial expression can help others recognize that help is needed if the hand signal is not understood—but it is important not to alert the predator/trafficker, causing harm.

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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NOTE TO PRESENTER

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

Thank you!

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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.