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EDUCATION GUIDE

Holding Candid Conversations on Child Exploitation

EMPOWERING YOUTH
to Recognize Sexual Exploitation



Education for Middle, High School, College-aged Youth & Adults

Walking Wise Education Center

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Parents & Caregivers

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents always treat a child’s disclosure of sexual abuse seriously and contact one of the following: the child’s pediatrician, a local child advocacy center, a child protection service agency, or the police. For more information, visit [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.HealthyChildren.org). In addition, if there are any suspicions of child sex trafficking, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or Rescue America at 833-599-FREE (3733). For more information, visit [HumanTraffickingHotline.org](https://www.HumanTraffickingHotline.org) or [RescueAmerica.ngo](https://www.RescueAmerica.ngo).

LESSON #9



LESSON PLAN #9

The Human Traffickers

Objective: To provide ideas for creating a deeper conversation that examines the tactics and behaviors of individuals who prey on young or vulnerable people to make money through human sex trafficking.

I. Emotional Readiness Acknowledgment

- A. **Educator:** To ensure readiness for exploitation prevention education, refer to the *Walking Wise Implementation Tools* and the U.S. Department of Education's guide, *Human Trafficking in America's Schools (ed.gov)*. Also, please review the classroom teaching tips to prepare for educating students about exploitation.
- B. **Parents:** To prepare for educating your children about exploitation, please review the home teaching tips.

II. Animated Video & Classroom PowerPoint Presentation

- A. **Educator:** Consider completing the adult learning module on this topic for additional background. Download and adapt the classroom presentation to fit your students' age and school policies.
- B. **Parents:** Review the vocabulary words (below) with your child, then watch the animated video. After discussing the lesson, consider having your child complete the student survey in this lesson plan.

Vocabulary

1. **Human Trafficker (Pimp):** A person who uses force (violence/held captive), fraud (tricks/lies), or coercion (pressure), or targets someone under 18, to make them engage in commercial sex or forced labor for profit.
1. **Family Trafficking:** A family member pressures the family's child into sexual exploitation or forced labor.
2. **Commercial Sex:** Any sexual activity exchanged for money, goods, or something of value.
3. **Coercion:** To pressure, manipulate, or threaten someone to make them do something against their will.
4. **Exploit:** To take advantage of someone's vulnerability in an unfair or harmful way for personal gain.
5. **Sex Buyer:** A person who gives money or anything of value in exchange for sexual activity. (Slang terms for a sex buyer include "client" or "trick.")
6. **Flatter:** To give excessive or insincere praise to gain someone's trust or to influence their behavior.
7. **Seduce:** To persuade or pressure someone using charm, attention, or manipulation to do something they might not normally do.
8. **Vulnerable:** To be at greater risk of harm due to a lack of protection, support, or resources.

III. Post Video Lesson Discussion

1. **What are the top two most profitable illegal trades in the United States according to law enforcement?**
 - #1 Drug Trafficking
 - #2 Human Trafficking (sex trafficking & labor trafficking)Other major illegal trades in the U.S. include the illegal sale of firearms, counterfeit goods, illegal gambling, cybercrime, identity theft, money laundering, prostitution, and wildlife and environmental crimes ([Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2025](#)).
2. **Who can be human traffickers?**

Human traffickers (sometimes called pimps) can be people the victim knows or trusts, including family members, caregivers, authority figures, acquaintances, online connections, or strangers ([Sprang, G., Cole, C., 2018](#)).
3. **What are some traits or behaviors of human traffickers?**
 - Many traffickers are skilled at manipulating others. They may act charming or confident at first, but often show harmful traits such as a lack of empathy, a desire for control, and a willingness to use others for personal gain.
 - Some traffickers may also display a strong sense of entitlement, believing they deserve power, money, or attention from others. They may become controlling, aggressive, or hostile when they do not get what they want ([American Psychiatric Association, 2022](#); [Zeigler-Hill, V. et al., 2013](#)).

4. Why might criminals choose sex trafficking over drug dealing?

- Some criminals believe sex trafficking carries a lower risk of being caught or receiving severe legal punishment compared to drug trafficking (Dank M. et al., 2014).
- Unlike drugs, which can only be sold one time, a person can be exploited repeatedly, allowing traffickers to keep making money or to profit.
- Sex traffickers are less likely to have turf conflicts compared to drug traffickers, who often compete for control of areas in their community and may use violence.
- In many cases, traffickers are involved in both drug trafficking and human trafficking.

5. What circumstances cause a commercial sex act to become defined as sex trafficking?

- Force (physical harm or held captive)
- Fraud (lies or false promises)
- Coercion (pressure, threats, or manipulation)
- Involving children (under 18)
- When involving a minor, it is always considered sex trafficking even if there is no force, fraud, or coercion.

6. How do U.S. laws protect people from sex trafficking crimes?

No one can cause another person to take part in a commercial sex act in exchange for anything of value.

- **Adults 18+:** If force, fraud, or coercion is used to exploit an adult, the abuser is charged as a sex trafficker.
- **Minors (Under 18):** Any time a child is involved in a sex act for something of value, the abuser is charged as a sex trafficker (Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000).

7. What strategies might different types of traffickers use to control their victims?

Traffickers often use various approaches to gain trust and maintain control. They may start by building a relationship and later switch to manipulation, pressure, or threats. While terms like “pimp” may be glamorized in the media, the reality is that these individuals exploit and harm others as follows:

- **Romeo Traffickers** – Use romance to build emotional connections and gain trust. They may use charm, attention, gifts, and promises of love or a better life. Over time, they isolate the victim from friends and family, lower their self-esteem, and create emotional or financial dependence.
- **Gorilla Traffickers** – Use fear, threats, and violence to control victims. They may punish, harm, or physically trap victims to maintain power. Victims are often isolated and may be forced to commit crimes such as theft or drug-related activities.
- **CEO Traffickers** – Present themselves as successful or well-connected. They may promise opportunities like modeling, travel, or financial success. After gaining trust, they manipulate victims into exploitation by making the situation seem like a business opportunity or partnership.

8. Where do traffickers often target vulnerable people?

Traffickers and their recruiters look for opportunities in everyday places, especially where young people may have less supervision or support.

- **Common public locations:** Areas where teens spend time, such as near schools, bus stops, parks, playgrounds, malls, and convenience stores.
- **Higher-risk environments:** Places where individuals may be more vulnerable, including outside juvenile detention centers, rehab clinics, homeless shelters, drop-in centers, and on the streets.
- **Online spaces:** Digital spaces where young people interact, such as social media, gaming platforms, and messaging apps, where traffickers may start conversations that seem friendly, supportive, or flirtatious.

9. What conditions might traffickers take advantage of?

Traffickers often look for young people who may be facing challenges, unmet emotional needs, or basic needs like food or even a shower. These situations are not the victim’s fault, but can increase vulnerability:

- **Lack of basic needs or stability:** Experiencing homelessness, running away, or living in poverty

- **Unsafe or difficult home environments:** Abuse, neglect, violence at home, or family conflict (such as divorce, loss of a loved one, or a family member being in jail or prison)
- **Emotional struggles:** Low self-esteem, feeling isolated, unloved, or disconnected from others
- **Substance-related risks:** When a young person or someone close to them uses drugs or alcohol
- **Limited support or protection:** Involvement in foster care, the juvenile justice system, or living with a disability
- **Desire for change or opportunity:** A strong interest in money, relationships, fame, travel, or a “better life,” which traffickers may exploit with false promises

10. What are three forms of bonding traffickers use to control victims?

Traffickers often use different types of control, or “bonds,” to make it difficult for victims to leave. These are not healthy relationships; they are forms of manipulation.

- **Trauma Bond:** Forms through repeated cycles of harm followed by kindness or affection. This creates a confusing emotional attachment, where the victim may feel loyal or connected and try to please the trafficker in hopes that the “good” behavior will return.
- **Debt Bond:** Happens when a trafficker creates or increases a debt for basic needs like food, housing, or transportation. The victim may feel trapped trying to “pay it off,” even though the debt is often unfair or impossible to repay.
- **Drug Bond:** Involves using drugs or addiction to create dependence. A trafficker may supply substances or take advantage of an existing addiction, making victims feel unable to leave without access to the drugs.

11. Why might a victim not report their trafficker to the police?

Victims may face strong emotional and physical challenges that make it difficult to seek help. Not reporting is often the result of manipulation and control—not the victim’s choice.

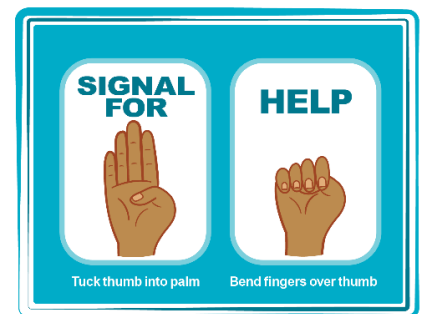
- **Sense of obligation:** Victims may feel a strong sense of loyalty or believe they “owe” the trafficker for providing basic needs like food, shelter, or protection, even if those needs were used to control them.
- **Fear and intimidation:** Victims may be threatened with harm to themselves or their family if they try to leave or report what is happening.
- **Physical dependence:** Victims may develop a physical need due to a drug bond, making it difficult to leave the trafficker without losing access to substances.

IV. How to Ask for Help

There are safe ways to get help if you or someone you know is being threatened or harmed.

Options:

- If you are in immediate danger, dial 911.
- If the sexual predator is NOT a family member, tell a parent or guardian.
If the sexual predator IS a family member, tell a trustworthy adult.
- If you are a student, tell a trustworthy teacher, coach, school nurse, social worker, officer, principal, or guidance counselor.
- To gain internet access for help, use a computer at school or a public library.
- If you are in public, consider hand-motioning the “Signal for Help” to alert bystanders to call the police.



24-Hour Hotlines for HELP

- National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888 or Text “BEFREE”: 233733
- Rescue America 833-599-FREE (3733)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or Hotline.RAINN.org/online
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children..... 1-800-THE-LOST (843-5678)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline..... 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TEXT: 88788
- National Runaway Safeline 1-800-RUNAWAY (786-2929)

VIDEO SCRIPT #9

The Human Traffickers of Sexual Exploitation

Link: [The Human Traffickers of Sexual Exploitation](#)

Note: The bolded words are defined in the video vocabulary list under section II.

Imagine meeting someone who seems perfect...they're kind, thoughtful, and loving. But suddenly, their behavior shifts...and you begin to see their true, evil intentions.

In the world of sex trafficking, these powerful **exploiters**...often men...are commonly called **pimps**. But women, including family members, can be **human traffickers** too.

They use vulnerable and young people to make lots of money...and to get other things they want. A trafficker's goal is to **profit** by arranging the sale of an individual... to those who pay for sex. Just as dealers sell to drug users...pimps do business with **sex buyers**.

Traffickers use different tactics, which are often glamorized in music and entertainment.

- The "Romeo Pimp" **flatters** and **seduces** their victims with gifts and affection.
- The "Gorilla Pimp" uses pure force through physical violence.
- The "CEO Pimp" shows up as the bragging businessperson, promising fake modeling and acting careers.

Traffickers often look for ways to spend time alone with young people and target those who are **vulnerable**.

- This can include individuals who are homeless, hungry, and need protection.
- Young people who have experienced sexual abuse, unsafe home lives, and drug use.
- Teens and children who feel unloved... or are missing the affection of a parent.
- Those who are easily flattered or desire expensive things to feel important.
- Young people who are vulnerable to promises of marriage, fame, adventure, and wealth.

Human traffickers have one thing in common – they claim victims as their private property. Trapping them with deep emotional bonds...that twist victims' needs as a tool of control.

They often create a **Trauma Bond**...through cycles of abuse followed by brief moments of love and affection. And **Debt Bond**...by demanding never-ending payments for basic needs like food and housing. And **Drug Bond**.... Using addiction to make it feel impossible for victims to break free.

What sex traffickers don't want anyone to know is... It seems like a choice... but it's actually **coercion**!

If this is your experience, ask a trustworthy adult for help. Dial 911 if you're in immediate danger. Or hand-motion the 'Signal for Help' to alert bystanders. Otherwise, contact a 24-hour hotline for help.



STUDENT SURVEY #9

The Human Traffickers

*Please mark an **X** in the box next to the best answer:*

1. Just as drug dealers sell drugs to users, traffickers make money from people known as:

- A. Media buyers
- B. Product buyers
- C. Wholesale buyers
- D. Sex Buyer

2. Which of the following is NOT a recognized style used by traffickers to control victims?

- A. Romeo pimp (uses romance, attention, or emotional connection)
- B. Fitness pimp (uses gym access or body building training)
- C. CEO pimp (promises success, money, or opportunity)
- D. Gorilla pimp (uses fear, threats, or violence)

3. Which of the following is NOT a method traffickers use to control victims?

- A. Drug bond
- B. Trauma bond
- C. Social media bond
- D. Debt bond

4. Why might victims not leave or report a trafficker?

- A. They are controlled through fear, manipulation, or dependence
- B. They believe the situation will improve on its own
- C. They think someone else will step in to help
- D. They believe others will notice what is happening and take action

STUDENT SURVEY #9

The Human Traffickers

The survey can be administered either after the lesson discussion or as a pre- and post-survey before students watch the video.

ANSWER KEY

KEY #9

- 1) D
- 2) B
- 3) C
- 4) A

RESOURCES #9

The Human Traffickers

Visit us online at [WalkingWise.com](https://www.walkingwise.com).

Other Resource Links – Websites accessed 11/2022

Shared Hope International – SharedHope.org: *Why Her? What You Need to Know About How Pimps Choose*
<https://sharedhope.org/2013/04/10/why-her-what-you-need-to-know-about-how-pimps-choose/>

SafeHope – SafeHope.com – *Types of Pimps/Grooming*
<https://safehopehome.com/2020/07/16/types-of-pimps-grooming/>

Demanding Justice – DemandingJustice.org: *Demanding Justice Report – 2014*
[http://www.demandingjustice.org/content/themes/dj/assets/resources/Demanding Justice Report 2014 Final.pdf](http://www.demandingjustice.org/content/themes/dj/assets/resources/Demanding%20Justice%20Report%202014%20Final.pdf)

OnWatch™ – IamOnWatch.org: Video Module 6 – *Boyfriending*
<https://www.iamonwatch.org/training/overview>

Encyclopedia.com: *Pimps Bibliography*
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/pimps>

Shared Hope International – SharedHope.org: *Trafficking Terms*
<https://sharedhope.org/the-problem/trafficking-terms/>

Urban Institute – 2014 Study: *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy...*
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/estimating-size-and-structure-underground-commercial-sex-economy-eight-major-us-cities>

Cleveland Clinic: Here's What Trauma Bonding Really Is and How to Recognize the Signs
<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/trauma-bonding>

2023 Study Review: Recruitment and Entrapment Pathways of Minors into Sex Trafficking in Canada and the United States: A Systematic Review, Trauma, Violence & Abuse
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211025241>

Major Cities Chiefs Association. (2025, April). *Highest grossing criminal trades: Reference guide* (Vol. 5, Sections 5–6).
https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/MCCA_Highest-Grossing-Criminal-Trades-Reference-Guide_April-2025.pdf

Drug trafficking is widely considered the largest illicit market globally, while human trafficking is among the most profitable and fastest-growing forms of transnational crime (ILO, 2022; UNODC, 2023).

International Labour Organization. (2022). *Profits and poverty: The economics of forced labour*. <https://www.ilo.org>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *World Drug Report 2023*. <https://www.unodc.org>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2022). *Global report on trafficking in persons 2022*. <https://www.unodc.org>

Broken link? Please notify us at support@WalkingWise.com. **Thank you!**