



**WALKINGWISE.**

WalkingWise.com



# 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

## Legal Disclaimer

The *Walking Wise Education Guide* and all other curriculum materials (“Education Program”) offer general information intended to be informative. However, they are not guaranteed to be current or accurate under all circumstances. This information is not intended as a substitute for legal advice. You should not base legal decisions on the statements or information provided within the Education Program or any externally referenced Internet sites. Walking Wise LLC does not assume responsibility for any actions or lack thereof taken by individuals who use its Education Program, and no one may claim reliance on any information provided or expressed.

## 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 #7



## LESSON PLAN #7

### Runaways as Targets

**Objective:** To provide ideas for creating a deeper conversation that explores how running away from home increases vulnerability to sexual predators and human traffickers due to factors like homelessness.

#### 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. **Runaway:** A young person under 18 who leaves home without permission and whose location is unknown to their parents or caregivers.
2. **Family Dynamics:** The way family members interact, communicate, and relate to one another.
3. **Trauma:** A very upsetting experience that can affect a person's thoughts, feelings, behavior, and how their body responds to that stress.
4. **Neglect:** When a caregiver does not provide proper care, supervision, or basic needs like food, safety, or support.
5. **Overwhelmed:** Feeling that problems or emotions are too much to handle.
6. **Sexual Orientation:** A person's pattern of emotional or romantic attraction to others.
7. **Homelessness:** Not having a safe or stable place to live.
8. **Target:** A person chosen by someone who intends to take advantage of them.
9. **Coercion:** When someone uses pressure, threats, or intimidation to make another person do something against their will.
10. **Survival Sex:** Being pressured, tricked, or manipulated into sexual activity in exchange for basic needs like food, shelter, or protection.
11. **Prey:** A person who is seen as vulnerable and easier to manipulate, control, or harm.
12. **Lure:** To attract someone using false promises, kindness, or deception.
13. **Manipulation:** When someone tries to control another person's thoughts, feelings, or actions in a dishonest or unfair way.
14. **Disorient:** To confuse someone so that they have difficulty thinking clearly or making safe decisions.

#### III. Post Video Discussion

##### 1. About how many children go missing in the U.S. each year?

The data below was accessed in February 2024 via the provided links.

- **Missing:** Around 330,000 children are reported missing each year.
- **Run Away:** Most children reported missing ran away from home or residence.
- **Age:** Many missing children are between the ages of 12 and 17 years old. (NCMEC)
- **Duration:** Most children are found quickly, but some may be gone for days or longer. (NCMEC)

## 2. What does it mean to be a runaway youth?

- A “runaway” is a young person who leaves home without permission and whose location may be unknown.
- Running away often puts young people in unsafe or risky situations.
- Adults such as parents, caregivers, law enforcement, missing children’s organizations, or local children’s services agencies often work together to help locate missing youth.

## 3. Why might some young people run away from home?

- **Abuse:** They may experience physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect at home.
- **Family Dynamics:** Family conflict or major changes in the family, such as divorce, a death, substance use, a new stepparent, or a parent losing their job.
- **Feeling Rejected:** A young person may not feel accepted by their family.
- **Emotional Distress:** They may be experiencing mental health struggles like anxiety or depression.
- **Fear or Shame:** A young person may have experiences that cause them to fear others or feel ashamed.
- **Lured or Pressured:** They may be convinced to leave by someone they trust, who claims to love them, or who has threatened them.

## 4. What school experiences might make a young person run away?

- **Peer Rejection:** The emotional distress associated with social rejection, bullying, or cyberbullying.
- **Peer Pressure:** To be enticed by a friend.
- **Stress:** Feeling worried about school or activities, struggling with learning, or being treated unfairly by an adult.
- **Humiliation:** Feeling embarrassed over the shared private images or sextortion.

## 5. What basic needs are hard to get after running away?

- Food and clean water
- A safe place to sleep and restrooms
- Clothing and hygiene items
- Money, a job, or education
- Transportation and communication (electricity for cell phones and WiFi access)
- Protection and safety

## 6. Why does running away increase the risk of exploitation?

- Young people who lack basic needs like food and housing may feel desperate for help.
- Being away from family and friends can lead to loneliness and isolation.
- It is easier for someone to take advantage of a person who is vulnerable or in need.
- Traffickers often look for vulnerable youth and offer help to gain control.

## 7. How do traffickers try to gain a runaway youth’s trust?

- **Kind:** Predators can seem concerned about vulnerable youth and offer to help solve problems.
- **Generous:** They may want to help by providing food, shelter, and other needs.
- **Protector:** They can pretend to offer protection or be a friend.
- **Invitations:** They may invite a lonely youth to parties or offer free food, drugs, or alcohol.

## 8. Where are runaway or homeless youth more at risk of being targeted?

- **Public Transportation Hubs:** Bus or train stations and airports
- **Shelters:** Homeless shelters or temporary housing
- **Abandoned Buildings:** Empty or unsafe buildings
- **Lodging:** Low-cost motels or hotels
- **Public Places:** Crowded events or isolated public places, like parks, rest areas, or even the library.
- **Juvenile Court:** Areas around a courthouse, where youth may be alone, stressed, or without support.
- **Online:** Social media, dating apps, and gaming platforms

**9. What is “survival sex” and why is it dangerous?**

- Survival sex is when someone is pressured or tricked into trading sexual activity for basic needs like food, shelter, money, or protection.
- It is a form of sexual exploitation where someone takes advantage of a person in a vulnerable situation.
- Often, youth may not realize what they are experiencing is a form of sex trafficking.

**10. Who can a young person talk to if they are thinking about running away or needing help?**

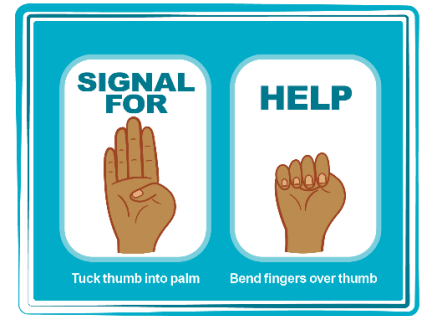
- A trustworthy adult, such as a parent, a friend’s parent, or a friend of the family.
- A trusted school staff member: Coach, nurse, social worker, counselor, or school resource officer.
- The National Runaway Safeline
- For young people who want to return home, they can contact the Home Free program for a free Greyhound bus ticket that is available to youth ages 12 to 21.

**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 \(3733\)](tel:833-599-FREE)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline ..... 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [Hotline.RAINN.org/online](http://Hotline.RAINN.org/online)
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children..... [1-800-THE-LOST \(843-5678\)](tel:1-800-THE-LOST)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline..... 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)or TEXT: 88788
- National Runaway Safeline ..... [1-800-RUNAWAY \(786-2929\)](tel:1-800-RUNAWAY)

## VIDEO SCRIPT #7

### Runaways as Targets of Child Sex Trafficking

*Link: [Runaways as Targets of Child Sex Trafficking](#)*

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

Ever wish you could run away to a dreamy Neverland like Peter Pan and Wendy?  
Have you gotten upset, packed a bag, and stormed out of your home with the intention of never returning?

Many kids report wanting to run away from home due to **family dynamics**.

- They disagree with house rules.
- Cannot get along with their parents, siblings, or blended family.
- They want to escape the **trauma** of divorce, custody battles, or the death of a family member.
- Some kids feel **neglected** by their families.
- Or are simply overwhelmed by school pressures.
- Other kids run away to protect themselves from mental, physical, and sexual abuse.
- And some teens feel forced into homelessness due to family conflict over their **sexual orientation**.

The younger the child, the more dangerous **homelessness** becomes. Imagine not having food, a warm bed, a place to wash, electronics to communicate with, and safe adults to protect you. Survival becomes a top priority when living on the streets!

Sex traffickers **target runaways** because they know most homeless kids are defenseless. Within the first several days of running away, many kids are **coerced** into having **survival sex**, often in exchange for food, shelter, transportation, and basic necessities.

Here's how child sex traffickers might **prey** on runaways:

- Traffickers often look for young people who have already experienced violence or sexual abuse.
- They take advantage of homeless kids who are hungry, tired, and lonely.
- Some traffickers disguise themselves as kindhearted, **luring** a child with basic comforts and protection.
- They can also pose as an older boyfriend/girlfriend/partner...enticing kids to run away for the freedom of parties, drugs, and alcohol.

Sex traffickers use ever-changing forms of **manipulation** to **disorient** their victims' reality.

Runaways usually feel stuck in their circumstances, with fears often reinforcing the belief there is no way out!

What child sex traffickers don't want you to know is that the streets are a trap set for runaway kids!

So, seek help from a trustworthy adult instead of running away from home!

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 #7

### The Runaways as Targets

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

**1. Someone may pretend to be a caring or “special” friend to convince a teen to leave home.**

A. True

B. False

**2. Which situation is a real risk for young people who run away from home?**

A. Being pressured to trade sexual activity for food or shelter.

B. Being encouraged to return home safely by strangers.

C. Being protected by people they do not know.

D. Staying in housing managed by trustworthy adults.

**3. What are the MAIN priorities for a young person who has run away?**

A. Watch TV or look for entertainment

B. Keep up with school assignments

C. Find food, shelter, and safety

D. Meet new friends and join activities

**4. Where are traffickers MOST likely to look for runaway or homeless youth?**

A. At organized youth activities

B. In bus stations, shelters, or online

C. At youth sports complexes

D. In school classrooms

## **STUDENT SURVEY #7**

### **The Runaways as Targets**

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 #7

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

## RESOURCES #7

### Runaways as Targets

Visit us online at [WalkingWise.com](http://WalkingWise.com)

#### Other Resource Links – Websites accessed 11/2022

Covenant House – [CovenantHouse.org](http://CovenantHouse.org): *Human Trafficking and Youth Homelessness*  
<https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-issues/human-trafficking>

National Runaway Safeline – [1800runaway.org](http://1800runaway.org): *National Trends on Youth in Crisis in the United States*  
[https://www.1800runaway.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NRS-2018-Trend-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.1800runaway.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NRS-2018-Trend-Report_Final.pdf)

National Runaway Safeline – [1800runaway.org](http://1800runaway.org): *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*  
<https://www.1800runaway.org/courses>

WorldCat® – [WorldCat.org](http://WorldCat.org): *Human trafficking prevention: strategies for runaway and homeless youth settings*  
Family & Youth Services Bureau [Washington, D.C.], 2020 - eBook  
<https://www.worldcat.org/title/1251927420>

Polaris Project – [PolarisProject.org](http://PolarisProject.org): *Sex Trafficking and LGBTQ Youth*  
<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LGBTQ-Sex-Trafficking.pdf>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children – [MissingKids.org](http://MissingKids.org): *Children Who Runaway are Missing Kids Too*  
<https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2021/children-who-run-away-are-missing-kids-too>

Parenting for Brain – [ParentingForBrain.com](http://ParentingForBrain.com): *Runaway Teenagers – Brutal Truth on What to do When They Come...*  
<https://www.parentingforbrain.com/runaway-teenager/>

Family Resources – [FamilyResourcesInc.org](http://FamilyResourcesInc.org): *Why Youth Run Away – National Runaway Prevention Month (2019)*  
<https://familyresourcesinc.org/2019/11/why-youth-run-away/>

SpringerLink.com: *An Ecological Analysis of Risk Factors for Runaway Behavior Among Individuals Exposed to...*  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40653-018-0229-5>

Voices of Youth Count – [VoicesOfYouthCount.org](http://VoicesOfYouthCount.org): *Youth homelessness in America*  
<https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness/>

**Broken link?** Please notify us at [support@WalkingWise.com](mailto:support@WalkingWise.com). **Thank you!**