



WHAT A PARENT/CAREGIVER CAN DO TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM TRAFFICKING

A RESOURCE FROM THE CHILD TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION PREVENTION CURRICULUM

NOT A  #NUMBER
DEVELOPED BY LOVE146

Child. Sex. Trafficking. These three words should never be used in the same sentence, much less be a reality for many of the world's most vulnerable—including children in the United States. Human trafficking is modern-day slavery. It is the practice of using force, fraud, and coercion to exploit people through labor or commercial sex. It is the third-largest criminal enterprise in the world, and it is estimated that millions of men, women, and children are enslaved globally.

As a parent/caregiver, you can help your child and other children in your community feel empowered to protect themselves from exploitation and know that they can come to you with their concerns, vulnerabilities, and experiences.

MUST-KNOWS

Many people think, “How could a child possibly be trafficked in America?” Some are children from other countries who are brought to the United States, but many are American children. They're girls who fall in love with a man who turns out to be a pimp, boys who end up in desperate situations, or children who are vulnerable in other ways. Here's the story of Sarah. While this story is fictional, it was written based on hundreds of real stories we've heard about children trafficked in the United States:

Her best friend introduced them. Things got serious quickly, and David asked Sarah to be his girlfriend. It felt like a big step and Sarah was nervous about it. But it made sense after having felt lonely for so long. He gave her those butterfly feelings every time she saw him. He said he would do anything for her, and she would do the same.

As soon as they became boyfriend/girlfriend, David changed. He started telling Sarah she was stupid and that she was lucky he was willing to take care of her. After a while, David started asking her to do favors for him, like having sex with his friends or people he knew. He told her they needed the money to do things together. Sarah didn't like it, but she loved David and believed it was her responsibility because of everything he had done for her.

What factors do you think put Sarah at a greater risk of trafficking?

One of the factors is that Sarah is lonely and finds emotional support in David. Perhaps she hasn't been exposed to examples of what a healthy relationship looks like. She is being emotionally abused by David. She is emotionally dependent on him and has been led to believe that she “owes” him for his support.

TAKE ACTION - KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE!

1. TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Read through the following list with your child and ask them if they think the relationship is healthy or unhealthy. Use it as an opportunity to start the conversation about what a healthy relationship looks like, and let them know that they can come to you with any questions.

- I gave up hobbies when I started dating my boyfriend so I could spend all my time with him.
- I can make my girlfriend do anything I want.
- My girlfriend reads all my texts and says I don't love her if I won't share them.
- My boyfriend wants me to have sex with his friend because it will show I am in control of my body.

2. KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE ONLINE

These questions can help you determine a standard for your home: Where will Internet-enabled devices (computers, laptops, tablets, gaming consoles, electronic books) be located? What times throughout the day is the Internet allowed? What types of websites are people allowed to access both in and outside of the home? How is social media (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Omegle) used?

3. KNOW THE RED FLAGS

Grooming for trafficking and exploitation can be masked in everyday conversations and latch onto an individual's normal needs and desires. Signs to look for include the following:

- The sudden presence of an older boyfriend/girlfriend
- The sudden addition of a lot of new stuff or the appearance that a lot of money has been spent on them (e.g., new clothes, new hair styles, manicures/pedicures)
- Being secretive about who they are talking to or meeting
- Becoming more and more isolated from their regular friends (the groomer often does this to have as much control as possible over the child)
- Unexplained changes in behavior, temperament, or personality (e.g., chaotic, aggressive, sexual, mood swings)

LEARN MORE

Love146 has a free guide for parents/caregivers that covers what you can do to protect children from exploitation. The topics covered include:

- Examples of what child sex trafficking looks like
- Cultural norms that promote sexual violence
- The power of words and perceptions
- Online exploitation
- What makes children vulnerable to trafficking
- What you can do to protect your child

Access the entire guide at www.love146.org/parents-caregivers

ABOUT LOVE146

Love146 is an international human rights organization working to end child trafficking and exploitation through survivor care, prevention education, professional training, and empowering movement. The *Not a #Number* curriculum from Love146 is an interactive program that equips youth to protect themselves through information, critical thinking, and skill development on the issue of human trafficking and exploitation.